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The Use of Supertitles by American Opera Companies.

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The use of supertitles by American opera companies

Alves, Christina Margaret, D.M.A.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1991

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THE USE OF SUPERTITLES
BY
AMERICAN OPERA COMPANIES

A Monograph

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University
and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts**

in

The School of Music

by

Christina Margaret Alves
B.M.E., Arkansas State University, 1984
M.M., Louisiana State University, 1986
August 1991

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this monograph was to examine the use of supertitles in foreign language opera by American opera companies. Supertitles are the translation of an opera's text projected simultaneously above the stage during an opera performance. The use of supertitles is one of the most controversial issues in the opera world. Although the primary purpose is to enable the audience to understand a foreign text, there is an ongoing controversy over whether supertitles enhance an opera performance or detract from it. Many opera companies are using supertitles, but there are still those who have not made the investment in equipment or personnel necessary to accomplish this relatively new aspect of opera performance.

This research project included the tracing of supertitles from subtitles of silent film to present-day opera, an explanation of the technology involved in supertitle production, an in-depth documentation of the controversial issue of supertitles, and the presentation of data from an original and two previously conducted surveys regarding audience opinion of supertitles. Following these discussions, general recommendations were made on the basis of budget, equipment, and personnel available to various opera companies. Additionally, future technology and other issues related to supertitles were addressed. This research has been compiled as a service to opera companies using supertitles, to those companies who are considering the use of supertitles, and to those audience members curious about the origin and production of supertitles.

INTRODUCTION

The use of supertitles is one of the most controversial issues in the opera world, particularly in the United States. The primary purpose of supertitles is to enable the audience to understand a foreign text, yet there is a ongoing controversy over whether supertitles enhance an opera performance or detract from it. One thing is certain: supertitles have become a popular topic among operagoers. Many opera companies are using supertitles, but there are still those who have not made the investment in equipment or personnel necessary to accomplish this relatively new aspect of opera performance.

The main purpose of this monograph was to examine the use of supertitles in foreign language opera by American opera companies. This was accomplished by tracing the background of supertitles from subtitles of silent film to present-day opera, discussing the technology used in supertitle production, studying the controversial issue of supertitles in depth, and documenting preference for supertitles through an original and two previously conducted surveys.

Throughout the decades various attempts have been made to aid the audience in understanding something which is foreign. In the silent film era, subtitles were a means of "translating" pantomime. With the development of sound films, a foreign language was translated in subtitles or dubbed into the language of the vernacular. In recent years, subtitles have been applied to

televised opera broadcasts and live opera performances to help the audience understand opera in foreign languages.

In producing supertitles it is important to understand what is involved in the titling process. Titlists (those who write supertitles) take many factors into consideration, such as content of the title (which has definite limitations), visual format, timing of cues, and stage direction. It is a complicated process, but necessary to insure that supertitles are helpful and unobtrusive.

Although the basic concept of producing supertitles for live opera is relatively simple, technological advancements have been made which provide more choices to opera companies. There are two methods used in projecting supertitles which vary in cost, effectiveness, and convenience. In this document a general comparison of these methods is made and is followed by practical application for a small opera company considering supertitles.

There was controversy over the use of subtitles in the silent film era, a controversy similar to that which exists in present-day opera. As in the silent film era, there are three categories of opinion: those who stand firmly opposed to supertitles, those who strongly promote supertitles, and those who share mixed feelings. An objective look at preference is provided including survey results obtained from three separate surveys.

Following these discussions, general recommendations are made on the basis of the budget, equipment, and personnel available to various opera companies. This research has been compiled as a service to opera companies using supertitles, to those

companies who are considering the use of supertitles, and to those audience members curious about the origin and production of supertitles.

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF SUPERTITLES

Subtitles in Silent Film

According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the first appearance of the term *subtitles* was in the *The Moving Picture World* of 1909.¹ *Subtitles* refers to "dialogue translations printed directly on to the film and appearing at the base of the frame."² The history of the motion picture industry reveals that *subtitles* has two applications. In the silent film era, beginning in the late nineteenth century, subtitles denoted narrative or descriptive text superimposed below the image within each frame. This included dialogue appearing at the bottom of the screen as well as references to a time period such as "Ten years later," or a direction given to the audience -- "Ladies, please remove your bonnets!" *Inter-titles* referred to narrative and dialogue inserts between frames with images, as in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). There is, however, inconsistency in the use of terminology. For example, Kenneth Macgowan's *Behind The Screen: The History and Techniques of the Motion Picture* (1965), refers to inter-titles as subtitle cards.³

¹ "Sub-title," *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989): 81.

² "Sub-titles," Liz-Anne Bawden, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976): 668. The technical entries in this finding aid are generally quite accurate.

³ Kenneth Macgowan, *Behind the Screen: The History and Techniques of the Motion Picture* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1965): 189.

Film historian Anthony Slide states that the subtitle did not become an art form until the 1920's with such pictures as Colleen Moore's *Orchids and Ermine* (1927).⁴ Although many critics opposed the use of subtitles, some such as William C. di Mille claimed, "the subtitle is not an interruption, but is as important as the Greek chorus. There is much of life that can only be expressed with the aid of words, the psychological overtones and colours, which action alone cannot portray. We will be no more able to dispense with the sub-title in the photoplay than we can eliminate action from the spoken word."⁵

These controversies over the use of subtitles for silent film were much the same as for supertitles in present-day opera. "The views amongst the technical men can be divided into three schools of thought," wrote Fort Gerard Buckle in 1926, "those who are avowedly and relentlessly against the use of titles, declaring that since a film consists of telling a story in action, action should replace the written or spoken word; others who look upon titles as a necessary evil; and lastly those who, whilst not afraid of titles, as a matter of course guard against their superfluous use."⁶ Buckle

⁴ Anthony Slide, *Aspects of American Film History Prior to 1920* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978): 132.

⁵ as quoted in: *Aspects of American Film History Prior to 1920*, 132.

⁶ Fort Gerard Buckle, *The Mind and the Film: A Treatise on the Psychological Factors in the Film* (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1970): 97.

added that some complained about subtitles causing eye strain to the young.⁷

The subtitle in film was produced by two different methods. The first involved photography. The film was reviewed on a viewing machine and the position for the subtitle was marked. An optical printer was used in transferring the image from one piece of film to the other. Light passing through the processed film was transmitted to the unexposed raw stock by a system of lenses.⁸ The result was two pieces of film processed into one. Subtitles were superimposed over the film image.

The alternate method involved etching the subtitle onto the film stock. "The text is mounted in metal type," according to one explanation, "which is applied to the release print itself, cutting through the emulsion to create a translucent image; each letter is outlined by a fine ridge of emulsion which may give the effect of hollow lettering."⁹

Information on the physical appearance and process of writing subtitles for silent film is limited. However, some early publications, such as an issue of *The Moving Picture World* published in 1909, offer suggestions:

⁷ Buckle, 98.

⁸ Laurence Goldstein and Jay Kaufman, *Into Film* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1976): 600.

⁹ *The Oxford Companion to Film*, 668.

Many good films have been condemned because the sub-titles were either too long or not legible enough. Sub-titles have a reason, they are flashed on the screen to indicate certain actions. Now if the audience is not given time to read the sub-titles or if they are indistinct from either poor photography or a too small print, the spectators lose the thread of the plot and the moment they do not understand the actions they lose all interest in the production.¹⁰

W. Stephen Bush's article, "Perfection in Titles," appeared in *The Moving Picture World* in 1913. The advice in this article could apply to writing opera supertitles today.

With a new audience come new needs. Fit your titles to the taste and the demands of your American audience. . . . It is well to bear in mind that titles are a necessity and not a luxury. Be brief and condense. . . . Try and try again and you will presently find that twelve or even ten words will do the work which you were sure required twenty words. The mental processes of the spectator who follows the pictures with his eyes must constantly be kept in view by the conscientious titler. . . . It ought not to be the mission of the title to decorate and embellish the picture. . . . The decoration and embellishment must be done by the pictures and not by words. . . . It is all very well to play down and to title down to the lowest order of human intelligence when you are sure that this lowest grade is largely represented, but such an assumption is scarcely probable in this country of common schools and natural brightness.¹¹

¹⁰ John M. Bradlet, "On Sub Titles," *The Moving Picture World* 4 (February 1909): 235.

¹¹ W. Stephen Bush, "Perfection in Titles," *The Moving Picture World* 18 (October 1913): 25.

Bush argued that subtitles for silent feature films (more than one reel) were essential; for one reelers, optional. He insisted that subtitles become the unifying thread and that each reel of a multiple reel feature film begin with its own introduction and synopsis. He considered titling a way of measuring the value of a feature film, each requiring more generous titling in the first and second reel. "When you find that the need of titles grows less and less as you approach the middle and the end of your story you may be reasonably sure that your feature has in it the promise of success."¹²

Fort Gerard Buckle, author of *The Mind and Film: A Treatise on the Psychological Factors in the Film* (1926), discussed the appropriateness of subtitles in the musical part of silent film:

We now come to the point, if titles have a distinctive use, and that use is for the creation of the illusion of the human voice, should every word spoken on the screen be shown in a written title? If not, how often must we create the illusion of the spoken word in order to insure a perfect illusion that our 'shadows' are human beings. The answer is 'never,' unless the situation demands it . . . The kinds of conversations which take place between lovers, friends casually meeting, and in the society drawing-room, are either too well known to the viewer or are not of sufficient interest unless they bear direct relation to the plot of the story or to the emotions of the character to need more than mere insinuation. Generally speaking, a title should be either led up to by action, or itself lead up to further action. The perfect one conforms to both of these rules.¹³

¹² Bush, 25.

¹³ Buckle, 103.

Iris Barry, who published *Let's Go to the Movies* in 1926, referred to the making of subtitles as a new form of literary style. She believed good subtitles could be written by poets or "vers-librists". Barry stated that comedies tended to be better subtitled than melodramas. She was in favor of "good" subtitled films, such as Charlie Chaplin's.¹⁴

Barry continues:

As to the general badness, from a literary point of view, it is not necessary for me to flog this much-whacked old horse. Most titles are bad: they are inarticulate, long-winded, foully worded, mispunctuated and altogether idiotic. It is a matter of bad taste. They tend to be horribly ornate, . . . If the sun rises: 'The dawn's rosy chariots' almost inevitably 'race across the heavens.'¹⁵

Barry included the following example to illustrate the reaction of the audience to subtitles of poor quality. Surprising parallels can be drawn to present-day mishaps with supertitles in opera. According to Barry:

In *The White Sister*, a very superior production in many ways, when Lilian Gish was struck down by the sudden news of her lover's death, the family doctor said:

'The terrible shock has paralysed her emotions.'

The audience did laugh a little at that. But not enough. They should guffaw, yell, do something to call attention to all

¹⁴ Iris Barry, *Let's Go to the Movies* (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1972): 82-3.

¹⁵ Barry, 84.

this garlanded nonsense and obliquity and ask for the best that can be obtained, which is simplicity and directness and purity of style, the minimum of words, the least mental strain, and the best lettering type obtainable.¹⁶

Some of the earliest subjects filmed with subtitles were operas and Shakespeare's plays. Both were supposed to elevate the taste of the masses. Opera stories were actually performed as photoplays, filmed with subtitles and accompanied by piano or organ. *Carmen*, released in 1915, featured prima donna Geraldine Farrar in the title role. A *Photoplay* review praised Farrar, but not the subtitles:

No living woman has had greater stage triumphs than Geraldine Farrar; but whatever these triumphs have been her conquest in the picture *Carmen* will be infinitely greater. In perpetuating the furnace-heat of this tropic, exotic characterization the *Carmen* film will, in its own way, stand alongside *The Birth of a Nation* as an epochmaker. . . .

Some of the captions are needlessly stupid. A moment's thought should have told the caption-maker that smuggled goods should not be "goods" - - uninterestingly impersonal - but as the things they were.¹⁷

In *The Parade's Gone By*. . . , author Kevin Brownlow includes a personal interview with Geraldine Farrar. The following passage contains Farrar's comments on the art of pantomime and self expression, elements of acting which are sometimes overshadowed by emphasis on the voice in present-day opera:

¹⁶ Barry, 85.

¹⁷ Anthony Slide, ed., *Selected Film Criticism 1912-1920* (London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982): 43-5.

It was vacation time for me. I was in silent pictures and I could save my voice. The pantomime fascinated me particularly; we used our faces, our eyes, and projected *ourselves*. . . .

I have a list of abhorrences, which include microphones and records, but I don't include motion pictures. I think I liked them because they were silent. . . . You could give yourself entirely to expression. Of course, we spoke our lines aloud. Full out. So on second thought, I suppose they didn't really save my voice much after all. . . .

I went into motion pictures because the European war had closed the opera houses there. Morris Gest had seen me as Carmen, and since Famous Players was taking theatrical people at the time, he suggested I make a motion picture of it. It was wonderful- arduous, but wonderful.¹⁸

World War I offered the American film industry a chance to increase distribution overseas. When compared to other American manufacturers of exported goods, movie producers were at a definite advantage. Film used in motion pictures was a standard size throughout the world: every country used film of the same width with the same space between sprocket holes.¹⁹ "In the silent period," Robert Sklar notes, "movies had no language boundaries to cross. Printed titles could easily be replaced in non-English

¹⁸ Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By* . . . (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968): 366-369.

¹⁹ Robert Sklar, *Movie: Made America* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1975): 216.

speaking countries, or eliminated entirely, as in Japan where a storyteller narrated his own version of the events on the screen."²⁰

Not everyone agreed that printed titles in silent film could be "easily replaced." Stephen Bush notes, in 1913, the problems of translating subtitles:

Some of our European producers still insist on translating the titles into "English" before they send the films here. English as it is understood and spoken in Germany, France and Italy is delightfully free from the shackles of grammar and usage, but it is at times somewhat hard to understand. Translations made in a foreign country are nearly always a fearful handicap to the spectator.

Nor is the practice of just translating the titles on this side to be encouraged. No matter how fine the translation it will not do full justice to the film. Translating from one language into another is often impossible and generally unsatisfying. It is like taking a tree, pulling it out of its native and congenial soil and transplanting it, roots and all, into strata of strange earth. The operation never leaves the tree in its old pleasing shape."²¹

Anthony Slide ends his discussion of subtitles in the silent era with an amusing poem:

I met a very ancient man
with gray and revered head.
"It's growing dark," I said to him,
And this is what he said.

²⁰ Sklar, 216.

²¹ Bush, 25.

"Drifting shadows crept over the world, as suppliant Day knelt at the threshold of Night, pleading for the boon of darkness."

I looked at him in mild surprise.
He wept: "Ah, well-a-day!
I once wrote titles for the films,
And now I talk this way!"²²

Subtitles in Sound Film

America continued to dominate the film industry after World War I. Silent film flourished throughout the world until the arrival of the talkies in the late 1920's. At that time silent film became virtually extinct and the term *subtitles* took on new meaning. Subtitles now referred to the translation appearing at the bottom of the screen in foreign-language films. The first foreign-language film to be subtitled in English is believed to have been *Zwei Herzen in 3/4 Takt (Two Hearts in Waltz Time)* produced in Germany in 1930.²³ The production of foreign-language film was limited in the early forties due to World War II. More detailed subtitled films appeared in the late forties.

In terms of film production in recent years, the use of subtitles has not been limited to the foreign film industry. Subtitles have been used in American film productions. In Richard Fleischer's *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) and Franklin Schaffner's *Patton*

²² *Aspects of American Film History Prior to 1920*, 132-3.

²³ Anthony Slide, *The American Film Industry: A Historical Dictionary* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986): 331.

(1970), the characters speak in their native language in some places. "For such scenes, . . . contemporary film makers often prefer to have the actors use the characters' native tongue rather than simulate a foreign accent, and to translate the dialogue through subtitles".²⁴ This technique was used in *The French Connection* (1971) by director William Friedkin and in *Godfather, Part II* (1974) by director Francis Ford Coppola. Other examples of American films with subtitles providing a simultaneous translation are Sydney Pollack's *Three Days of the Condor* (1975) with French dialogue, and the Sioux dialect in Irwin Kershner's *The Return of a Man Called Horse* (1976).²⁵ In 1990-91, the films *Hunt for Red October*, *Dances with Wolves*, and *Russia House* have incorporated subtitles as well.

Supertitles In Opera

The concept of subtitles in foreign film has been carried over into the world of music through opera. There are several names used for titles including "supertitles," "subtitles," "Surtitles (tm)"²⁶ , "SurCaps", and "omni-titles." All names generally refer to the same idea meaning the simultaneous translation of the opera's text projected above the stage. For the purposes of this study, unless

²⁴ Bernard F. Dick, *Anatomy of Film* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1978): 53.

²⁵ Dick, 53.

²⁶ The term *Surtitles* became a registered trademark of the Canadian Opera Company in 1983. References to *Surtitles* relate specifically to the Canadian Opera Company.

otherwise noted, the general term *supertitles* will be used throughout.

In North America, supertitles were used for the first time on Broadway in 1964, with an Italian musical comedy called *Rugantino*. The supertitles for *Rugantino* were called "sopra-titoli." Maestro Anton Coppola, conductor for these performances, provided the following information in a personal letter:

Rugantino originated in Rome and featured such important stars as Nino Manfredi, Ornella Vanoni and Aldo Fabrizi. Alexander Cohen, the American theatrical producer, decided to bring it to the U.S.A. It would be the 1st time that an Italian musical with the original cast performing in Italian would play on Broadway. He conceived the idea of projecting an English translation onto a rectangular screen above the proscenium arch simultaneous to what was being spoken or sung on stage.

The translation was written by Alfred Drake who achieved fame as the original "Curley" in *Oklahoma*, in *Kiss Me Kate*, and *Kismet* among other vehicles. His real name is Alfredo Caputo and is an Italo-American as I am. A push-button device for synchronizing the translation on slides from the booth at the upper rear of the theatre was operated by Jack Harrold, himself a successful character singer-actor. Jack's qualification for this position was his fluent Italian despite an incorrigibly Irish accent.

It was decided to try this entirely innovative idea at the O'Keefe Auditorium in Toronto, Canada which has a large Italian immigrant population. The supertitles concept was entirely successful with the English-speaking population. After a trial run of several weeks the show was transported

to the Hellinger Theatre on Broadway. . . . *Rugantino* was a dismal failure and folded after three weeks."²⁷

According to the *New York Times* on February 2, 1964, there were problems with the supertitles for *Rugantino*. After the initial attempt of projecting supertitles, "it was found that the stage lighting affected the clarity of some titles, others could not be changed quickly enough."²⁸ Consequently, Alfred Drake spent many hours preparing a complete new set of supertitles for the opening performance.

In recent years, televised opera broadcasts were subtitled in North America. An article from the *Wall Street Journal* in 1984 states: "Nearly 13 million people went to the opera in the U.S. last year, more than double the number of a decade earlier, and the popularity of subtitled television operas is widely held to be a major reason. From the first time English titles were used on a live televised opera in 1977, for *The Barber of Seville* with Miss Sills, audiences loved them, and thereafter complained if the titles weren't used."²⁹ The New York City Opera presented this live performance of *The Barber of Seville* on the Public Broadcasting

²⁷ Anton Coppola, letter to author, 12 February 1991. According to Coppola, supertitles had their trial run in the O'Keefe Auditorium. Ironically, this was also the site for the development of supertitles for live opera performances by the Canadian Opera Company in 1983, nineteen years later.

²⁸ John S. Wilson, "Like Taking a Watch to the Swiss, " *The New York Times*, Sunday, 2 February 1964, Drama section.

²⁹ Meg Cox, "Mystique of Opera is Due for a Rude Jolt as Subtitles Arrive" *The Wall Street Journal*, 6 July 1984.

Service. The production was directed by Sarah Caldwell and the translations were written by Sonya Friedman.

On March 15, 1977, The Metropolitan Opera Company televised its subtitled production of *La Bohème* with singers Luciano Pavarotti and Renata Scotto. Since 1977 the Met has produced many successful televised opera productions employing subtitles, such as Mozart's *Idomeneo* and Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. In a review of *Idomeneo* in 1983, Donal Henahan of *The New York Times* wrote: "Speaking of televised opera, I have been impressed with the Metropolitan Opera's overall improvement to this hybrid genre, and especially with its handling of the subtitles provided by Sonya Friedman. . . . Lift up thine eyes, O opera lovers, Help for the befuddled may be near."³⁰

The Metropolitan Opera now produces three to four televised productions with subtitles each year and has a wide variety of video tapes available to the general public (See Appendix A). The broadcasts, once referred to as "Live from the Met," are now recorded in three rehearsals, the final rehearsal most often edited and used for television. In transferring subtitles to the edited version of the performance, the subtitles are stored on what is called a Chyron or character generator. The person inserting the subtitles reviews the tape and pushes a button to make the subtitles appear and disappear at the appropriate time. As with the

³⁰ Donal Henahan, "How Much Do The Words Really Matter In Opera?" *The New York Times*, 6 February 1983.

process of subtitling foreign film, the text is superimposed over the image and recorded in final form. Televised broadcasts from the Met are now called "The Metropolitan Opera Presents."³¹

In 1983, the Canadian Opera Company (COC), under the direction of Lotfi Mansouri, incorporated Surtitles projected onto a screen above the proscenium arch in a live opera performance. John Leberg, then director of operations at the COC, recalled "We were doing *Elektra* in German and *The Coronation of Poppea* in Italian. They are both very literate operas which an understanding of the text is fundamental (sic). The available English translation didn't work and Lotfi Mansouri, then director of the COC, asked if there wasn't some way we could adapt the subtitle technique which is used in movies."³² The technique was adapted with the aid of three slide projectors, 700 35mm slides, and a narrow 60-foot long screen safely suspended above the stage.³³

COC's first Surtitled production was *Elektra* on January 23, 1983 with translations written by Sonya Friedman. Miss Friedman, who had written the subtitles for about 50 televised operas, had recently titled a television *Elektra*, and she adapted her translation

³¹ Susan Erbin, Metropolitan Opera Media Department, telephone conversation with author, 7 February 1991.

³² as quoted in: Catherine Kentridge, "Surtitles: Today's Language of Opera" *Canadian Opera Company Magazine* (June 1989): 46.

³³ Dossier, "Opera Over Easy," *New Orleans Magazine* (September 1986): 1.

for the stage in Toronto.³⁴ The overwhelming response to this performance can be exemplified in the following reviews:

"Opera need never again be a cult culture. . . . That sur-titles have earned regular employment cannot be questioned. Indeed, if it were widely publicized now that next year's productions could be understood by every ticket buyer, I'd wager the COC could profitably triple the length of each run of its productions".³⁵

Audience opinion ran strongly in favor of the projected subtitles used in the Canadian Opera Company's presentation of *Elektra* last night at the O'Keefe Centre. . . . Superlatives such as 'marvellous' and 'fantastic' were common among the patrons, and only two of the 23 questioned expressed unqualified disapproval of the technique.³⁶

Company general director Lotfi Mansouri would like to use surtitles in future productions in the hopes of reducing one more obstacle in attracting the general public to its productions. On its first night out, the technique proved it might just be the barrier-breaker opera needs to grow in the '80's.³⁷

Although the Canadian Opera Company developed Surtitles in opera, China and Japan have been using the basic concept for decades. Chinese opera and unfamiliar dialects in spoken drama

³⁴ Cox, *The Wall Street Journal*, 6 July 1984.

³⁵ Wilder Penfield III, "Opera's Sur-Titles Take the Cult Out of Culture," *The Toronto Sun*, 24 January 1983.

³⁶ Arthur Kaptainis, "Audience likes to read between lines," *Globe & Mail*, 22 January 1983.

³⁷ Jane Harrison, "Surtitles Work for COC Opera" *Canadian Press*, 22 January 1983.

are translated in supertitles which appear on hand-turned scrolls on the side of the stage.³⁸ Beverly Sills, former general director of the New York City Opera Company, observed the use of supertitles at a live performance of the Peking Opera Company a year or so prior to 1983. She remembers:

I glanced at the side of the proscenium and saw vertical rows of Chinese characters. "That's a translation of our dialect, designed for visiting peasants from nearby villages," one official informed me. I thought, if only our English alphabet ran north to south, we could project opera translations on screen!³⁹

Lotfi Mansouri invited Beverly Sills to the performance of *Elektra*. Sills was so impressed by the enthusiasm of the audience she decided to experiment with supertitles in New York.⁴⁰ The New York City Opera, under Sills's direction, was the premier opera company to use supertitles in the United States. Their first titled production was Massenet's *Cendrillon* in September of 1983 with Surtitles borrowed from The Canadian Opera Company. Response to these titled performances was overwhelming:

³⁸ Steven Winn, "How Supertitles Are Readied for the Stage," *Datebook*, October 1985.

³⁹ as quoted in: Gary D. Lipton, "Everybody's Doing It!: Surtitles are suddenly the hottest new trend in the opera world." *Opera News*, (September 1984): 16.

⁴⁰ Danny Wm. Abreu, New York City Opera Director of Marketing, interview with author, New York City Opera, 21 October 1990.

A simple device-- maybe even an obvious one, except that it has never been done here before, and it makes all the difference in the world. BRAVO to the N.Y. City Opera.⁴¹

The New York City Opera Company continued experimenting with supertitles and now titles all of its performances, including those in English. With the success of supertitles at New York City Opera, other opera companies were convinced to try supertitles in their productions. Within four years, 94 companies were using supertitles. Opera America recently surveyed 109 North American opera companies. The 1989-90 survey results of opera companies using supertitles in North America reveal the following: of 105 companies responding, 77 companies or 71% of all companies responding affirmed their use of supertitles (See Appendix B).⁴²

In February of 1984, John Leberg was invited to Sydney, Australia to introduce supertitles for the performance of *Adriana Lecouvreur*. The following account was written:

In the foyers on the opening night one heard animated exchanges of opinion, generally favourable, and the principal Sydney critics also reacted favourably, feeling the system was not a distraction to the performance and could be of great assistance to audiences.⁴³

⁴¹ Martin L. Sokol, "Through the Opera Glass" *WBAI FM* Transcript, 25 September 1983.

⁴² *Annual Repertoire Survey*, Opera America, March 1991.

⁴³ W.L. Hoffmann, "Opera 'translation' system wins favourable response" *Canberra Times*, 5 February 1984.

The Glyndebourne Touring Opera Company was the first to use supertitles in England during its 1984-85 season for *Così fan tutte* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*.⁴⁴ Brian Dickie, by this time general director of the Canadian Opera Company and general administrator at Glyndebourne, was responsible for introducing the idea. He explained that he had seen the titling technique in China in 1980, but he recognized the value of supertitles at a performance of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* in San Francisco in 1984. In 1988, supertitles were used during the Glyndebourne Opera Festival for a performance of *Kata Kabanova* sung in Czech. Dickie stated that it was a great success.

The Royal Opera House Covent Garden employed supertitles for its production of Leos Janacek's *Jenůfa* on November 17, 1986. The performances were well received and the majority of the audience appreciated the supertitles because they were unfamiliar with the original Czech. As one critic wrote: "The surtitles seemed to go down well with the often critical black-tie audience."⁴⁵ Contrary opinion existed among those opposed to the innovation, such as critic Max Loppert of the *Financial Times of London*.

⁴⁴ The following information has been extracted from the extensive article written by Catherine Kentridge in *The Canadian Opera Company Magazine* (1989). This article has proven invaluable in supplying historical information about foreign opera companies influenced by the effective use of supertitles in North America. Specific references to the term *Surtitles* have not been altered.

⁴⁵ as quoted in: Associated Press, "Innovation," *Guelph Mercury, Ontario*, 19 November 1986.

Loppert referred to supertitles as "the first London outbreak of that virus of international opera, subtitles."⁴⁶

One of the first companies to introduce supertitles in Europe was La Scala. In August 1986, La Scala produced *I Lombardi* complete with supertitles for the Vancouver Expo 86. Supertitles are used at La Scala in Milan whenever the company performs an opera in a language other than Italian.

According to the *Canadian Opera Company Magazine*, the opera company at Cologne was the first to use supertitles in West Germany and is credited with having influenced other European opera companies to do the same. Dr. Michael Hampe, director at Cologne, had directed Surtitle productions of *Fidelio* in San Francisco and *Matrimonio Segreto* in Washington in mid-1987. After that, Hampe directed *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in Florence with Italian Surtitles. "There was an astonishing and overwhelming reaction from the audience. For the first time, Italian audiences understood what this very German opera by Wagner meant."⁴⁷

With the success of *Meistersinger*, Hampe introduced what are called *übertitels* in Cologne in December of 1987. *Übertitels* are used for nearly every foreign-language opera in Cologne. The exceptions, Russian and Slavic repertoire, are performed in German because of the difficulty which singers have in learning the language.

⁴⁶ as quoted in: Kentridge, 46.

⁴⁷ as quoted in: Kentridge, 46.

French audiences experienced Surtitles for the first time with Michael Hampe directing *La Gazza Ladra* for the Paris Opera at Champs Elysees. Surtitles were also used in February 1988, for Paris Opera's productions of *The Magic Flute* and *Kata Kabanova*. On March 10, 1988, the Opera Comique initiated French Surtitles for the production of Janacek's *From the House of the Dead* performed in Czech.

Cologne influenced Spain's use of Surtitles with a production of *Parsifal* brought to Barcelona with Spanish titles. Supertitles can also be seen in Brazil, Scotland, Switzerland, and Scandinavia. In Canada, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa was the first to use bilingual Surtitles for their production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Bilingual Surtitles, French and English, are used by many Canadian companies and projected on two screens one on either side of the stage. Japan and China continue to project supertitles on vertical screens adjacent to the proscenium.

It is evident that the development of supertitles, from silent film to opera in North America, has had an enormous impact on the opera world in virtually every country. North America's efforts in technology and translation have served as the catalyst for worldwide use of supertitles in opera.

TECHNOLOGY OF SUPERTITLES

The technology involved in producing supertitles for opera can be divided into three areas: (1) the titling process, (2) the equipment, and (3) the practical application. The titling process involves many issues including the decisions made in translation, timing, and visual format. The equipment used in projecting supertitles onto a screen over the proscenium of a stage varies in technical difficulty. Two commonly used methods will be discussed with regards to availability, cost, and other pertinent factors. These two methods will be compared as options for a small opera company considering the use of supertitles.

The Titling Process

A great deal of cooperation is involved in producing effective supertitles. Among the many people with whom titlists must work are conductors, stage directors, and singers. Communication skills are extremely important in this complex task.

Once the edition of the vocal score has been selected, the conductor indicates any cuts or specific changes to be made before the score is given to the titlist. The titlist also receives any information which would affect the libretto. This information may include a change from the original setting or period or perhaps an unusual conception of the opera which deviates from the traditional.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Maria F. Rich, "Opera Titles Go Live," *Opera Quarterly* (Summer 1984): 84-85.

Maria F. Rich, author of "Opera Titles Go Live," explained that at times, the titlist accommodates the stage director. Rich used the example of *Cendrillon* produced by New York City Opera (NYCO) in 1983. The original text indicated that *Cendrillon* was setting the table. The stage director chose to have *Cendrillon* fold linen rather than set the table because there was no table. To accommodate the director's decision the supertitle read "doing household chores." Alternately, the stage director sometimes accommodates the titlist by moving the character into a position set apart from the crowd so the title can be more easily associated with the particular character singing.⁴⁹

Directorial decisions can be a challenge for the titlist. Francis Rizzo refers to the "this/that factor." He explains that if a character is referring to something, he might be given the direction to point at the object or hold the object, depending on what the stage director prefers.⁵⁰ "This" would only be appropriate if the character was holding the object. Changes in minor stage directions such as these may warrant a change in the supertitle.

In addition to dealing with conductors and stage directors, the titlist must deal with singers. Supertitles adhere to the stage directions given to the singers, but it becomes difficult when the singer changes his/her actions late in the rehearsal stage. Whether it was a choice on the part of the singer or the stage director, the supertitles may have to be altered. It is not uncommon for a singer

⁴⁹ Rich, "Opera Titles Go Live," 85.

⁵⁰ Francis Rizzo, "The Reluctant Titlist," *Opera News* (May 1990): 21.

to forget a vocal line or perhaps sing the text incorrectly. Usually, errors are pointed out to the singer during rehearsals, but there are no guarantees in live performances.⁵¹ If the person calling the cues can detect an error quickly enough, that particular supertitle can be skipped.

Titling truly has become an art form. Many companies commission titlists or employ their own staff to write supertitles. The task of writing supertitles is difficult and requires a full understanding of the opera as well as sensitivity to the music and words. Roberta Vincent Edles, NYCO Supertitle Administrator, described the commissioning of a titlist. The appropriate candidate for the job possesses "language facility, writing ability and innate musical and theatrical sense."⁵² Some titlists may have studied foreign languages extensively while others may be native speakers. No matter what the language background of a titlist may be, the opinion exists that command of the English language is most important. An understanding of correct grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation is absolutely essential.

The initial approach to writing supertitles varies among titlists. Generally speaking, titlists study the opera in depth, listen to recordings repeatedly to become familiar with the music, and then proceed to write a literal translation of the original text. Translations of most operas are available on the market, but most

⁵¹ Roberta Vincent Edles, New York City Opera, Supertitles Administrator, conversation with author, New York City Opera, 22 October 1990.

⁵² as quoted in: Barry Laine, "The Subtle Work of Making Titles," *The New York Times*, 27 July 1986.

writers choose to write their own translations. Titlists who are not proficient in a particular language are usually assisted by language coaches or native speakers.

Christopher Bergen, who writes supertitles for some of San Francisco Opera's (SFO) productions, mentioned the occasional difficulty of dealing with a particular verb tense in certain languages. Bergen compensates by translating the phrase into a language in which he feels more comfortable before actually translating the phrase into English.⁵³ Bergen is fluent in German and French and has a good working knowledge of Italian and Russian.

One of the most difficult decisions made in the writing process is the selection of phrases to be projected. These phrases may include "anything that is pertinent to the plot, moves the story forward, or reveals character traits of the major protagonists."⁵⁴ Once the phrases have been selected some titlists, such as Frank Rizzo at Washington Opera, apply a technique referred to as scanned lines. The number of syllables from a single phrase of original text is determined and coordinated with an English supertitle having the same or similar number of syllables. In this way, the audience is reading a phrase of translation that corresponds in length and meter to what they are hearing. The audience is given the illusion that they are receiving verbal

⁵³ Christopher Bergen, San Francisco Opera Supertitles Coordinator, telephone interview with author, 13 March 1991.

⁵⁴ Rich, *Opera Quarterly*, 85.

meanings directly and are almost unaware that they have read a title.⁵⁵ The English phrases are organized on a script sheet and numbered to correspond with slides/video and cues in the musical score. Once the final script has been approved, the text is typeset for photographing onto slides or stored on disc for video projection.

Another complex factor is what to title in large ensembles such as in Mozart or Rossini operas. Quite often the stage director strategically places the characters in a focused area on stage so the audience will be able to associate specific lines with specific characters. Titlists frequently precede phrases with the character's name to clarify the intent of the words, whether or not the character's name is mentioned specifically in the libretto. Other titlists choose to project the dominant phrases among the characters singing. It is also possible to include up to three characters' lines projected simultaneously. The visual format may be as follows:

Character 1

Character 2

Character 3

There is some discrepancy over interpretation of dialogue in supertitles. Some titlists believe that the language used in translation must be as neutral as possible. This sentiment is expressed in the words of Edles at NYCO: "We avoid adjectives and adverbs that have highly charged emotional content. The music

⁵⁵ Rizzo, *Opera News*, 22.

and the singer's movements should convey the emphasis. We don't try to direct."⁵⁶

A contrasting opinion exists among titlists such as Speight Jenkins at Seattle Opera. Jenkins promotes supertitles "in the character and flavor of the opera. The diction for *Rigoletto* should not be the same as it is for *Manon* or *Die Walküre*."⁵⁷ A technique used to retain the style of the original language in supertitles is "the adoption of a more formal language between characters that speak using the formal form of address and a more intimate, colloquial form for those who speak to each other in the familiar."⁵⁸ With a variety of typefaces available, some titlists go as far as associating a particular font with a particular character.

While writing supertitles, the titlist must keep in mind the intended function of supertitles. Supertitles are not intended to become the focus of audience attention. As Friedman stated: "What's my best compliment? 'I don't remember if the show was titled or not.' . . . I script titles with an eye to dramatic impact, character development, introduction of new information, humor (only when called for) and style."⁵⁹ Rizzo's first concern, as a titlist, is to do no harm. He explores the physical, emotional, and psychological factors in writing effective supertitles. "The audience

⁵⁶ as quoted in: Steven Winn, "The Supertitle Row: Should an Art Form be Captioned or Left In Its Natural State?" *Datebook*, 13 October 1985.

⁵⁷ as quoted in: Winn, *Datebook*, 13 October 1985.

⁵⁸ Lynn Luciano, "The Supertitle Revolution," *Opera Monthly* (June 1990): 38.

⁵⁹ as quoted in: Gary Lipton, "Everybody's Doing It!" *Opera News* (September 1984): 16.

must be given the illusion they have direct access to the verbal content of the opera. You are translating the *experience* of the opera. Your work must reflect everything, even the tempo the conductor has chosen."⁶⁰

Once supertitles are written, rehearsals incorporating their use is crucial. As Rizzo states: "Just as you would never judge an opera by reading the libretto, you can't judge a title script by merely reading it."⁶¹ It is important that supertitles are rehearsed prior to performances to determine what adjustments, if any, must be made. Dress rehearsals are especially important because they present the closest semblance of live performances. In dress rehearsals the orchestra accompanies, the conductors' actual performance tempi can be determined, the singers are most likely singing in full voice (which is important to be able to follow cues in the score), and the stage directions are carried out while maneuvering in sometimes cumbersome costumes. Some opera companies open the final dress rehearsal to the public. This is beneficial because the titlist is given the opportunity to observe audience reaction prior to the opening performance.

There are several issues which must be coordinated during actual opera performances. These issues must be worked out ahead of time and rehearsed for effectiveness. First is the issue of timing. Well-known titlist Sonya Friedman states, "You must take your cue

⁶⁰ Rizzo, 21.

⁶¹ Rizzo, 21.

from the musical phrasing."⁶² Titles should appear as the line is sung and never before. The audience must be able to scan the line and associate the words with the character. "Timing is also marked on the vocal cue score, indicating the length of time a slide should remain on the screen. The maximum time is considered to be seven seconds; the audience should not have time to reread titles."⁶³

Fading is also important. There are situations when supertitles must appear quickly, such as in recitative passages. A quick fade may be appropriate and effective. In contrast, arias are often repetitive and may require a slower fade. According to Rizzo, many people who have only been exposed to televised opera complain about fading when they see his work for the first time. As Rizzo explained:

The fade-in, fade-out has a lot to do with my idea that titles have to be a homogeneous part of the performance. Television is entirely different from the stage and not much different from cinema. The text is appearing in the same visual field, so it doesn't seem to require the plasticity that goes with the music. I don't know why but it doesn't. And you can put up a lot more, because you can read it faster. You're taking it all in with one eyeful."⁶⁴

Another technique used in effective title projection is called the "quick cut" or "double cut". This technique involves a direct change from one slide to the next with no fade between slides. The

⁶² Sonya Friedman, President, Four Corners Productions, Inc., telephone interview with author, 25 March 1991.

⁶³ Rich, 85.

⁶⁴ Rizzo, 22.

quick cut is used for musical passages taken at a quick tempo or for recitative passages. Recitative passages can be challenging because of the amount of information delivered in a short period of time.⁶⁵ Interpretively, the recitative is somewhat more flexible in tempo compared to other elements within the opera. The timing of supertitles during these recitatives depends on tempo as well as stage business incorporated as the text is sung. Recitatives require quick reflexes on the part of the cuer/operator.

Additionally, titlists are concerned with the physical appearance of supertitles. The common format used is a two line supertitle with thirty-eight to forty characters per line. Interestingly, Frank Rizzo applies the Evelyn Wood speed-reading approach to his titling. The theory states that people normally read two lines at one time. Rizzo incorporates this idea dividing one phrase into two lines rather than one extended line of text. Rizzo also finds that people can read a title more easily if the lines are asymmetrical; the second line is often shorter and centered beneath the first line.⁶⁶

All operas are not equally accessible to titling. Sonya Friedman claims the toughest composers "are the brooding romantics, who try to probe the murky, weighty truths of the human condition. Verdi is 'murder' because the poetry of his libretti evaporates if you try to translate it."⁶⁷ Friedman remarked

⁶⁵ Bergen, telephone interview with author, 13 February 1991.

⁶⁶ Rizzo, 22.

⁶⁷ as quoted in: Howard Reich, "Queen of Captions," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 October 1986.

that Wagner is by far the most difficult, particularly *The Ring Cycle*. "The problem is that this mythology has enormous inconsistencies. At one point in the cycle the world is ruled by he who can forge the ring, at another point the world is ruled by he who can hold Wotan's spear, and at another point Wotan's invincible spear can be shattered by a mere boy! These things are extremely difficult to straighten out."⁶⁸

Christopher Bergen claims that comedy presents the most difficulty. "You can't bring up lines too late because people learn to expect them when the actor starts singing his lines. If they don't see it soon, they think something is wrong with the projector. But you also don't want to spoil a punch line. It's a fine line."⁶⁹ Cori Ellison, free-lance titlist in New York, explains, "You want the eye to see the laugh at the same time you hear the funny line. . . . In general, it's best to go with the musical phrase, and put up the slide as the singer is taking a breath."⁷⁰

Mozart and Rossini operas are examples of composers' music which require special consideration. The text in their operas is extremely repetitive and it is not necessary to continuously repeat the same supertitle. Rizzo explained this idea in relation to overall rhythm of the timing of titles, "If you don't give the audience this

⁶⁸ as quoted in: Reich, "Queen of Captions," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 October 1986.

⁶⁹ as quoted in: Randy Lewis, "Spelling It Out," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 September 1986.

⁷⁰ as quoted in: "The Subtle Work of Making Supertitles," *The New York Times*, 27 July 1986.

little food pellet in predictable, reassuring pulsations, they get preoccupied with the whole business and say, "'What happened to the titles machine?'"⁷¹ Passages with repetitive text receive special attention. Some titlists effectively reiterate the text after a short period of time. Sometimes the reiteration is offered in a slightly more condensed state using ellipses points to show that the thought is continued as it was before. In addition, a slow fade may be incorporated for effectiveness.

Equipment

There are two commonly used methods of projecting supertitles: slide projection and computer-generated video projection. Slide projection is the oldest method and involves the use of a slide projector, dissolve unit, numerous slides with text, slide carousels and a projector screen. The opera companies effectively using this method include: the Washington Opera, San Francisco Opera, Baltimore Opera, New Orleans Opera, and Baton Rouge Opera.

There are various brands and models of slide projectors on the market. Smaller companies sometimes invest in less expensive models such as those used for home slide shows. There are more sophisticated, high-powered projectors available, such as the Xenographic Eclipser developed by the Optical Radiation Corporation in California.

The number of slide projectors used in a production usually varies from one to three projectors depending on company

⁷¹ Rizzo, 22.

preference. San Francisco Opera, for example, uses only one projector per performance with a back-up projector available. Baton Rouge Opera uses two projectors, side by side, alternating the slides between projectors. Washington Opera fills two projectors, one stacked on top of the other, and alternates the projectors. New Orleans Opera uses the same procedure as Washington Opera with the exception that the projectors are situated side by side. Baltimore Opera uses three projectors in alternation. Projector locations are dictated by the layout of the projection booth.

Opera companies using slides in the early stages of titling practiced a cross-fading technique involving two alternating projectors. As a slide from projector A was fading out, the next slide was fading in from projector B. Sometimes, opaque or black slides were used in alternation with text-filled slides. Cross fading is used by some companies today, but it is considered rather obsolete because it may require almost twice the number of slides with more risk of complications. Other companies have remedied the situation by fading the slides clearly on and off the screen using one projector at a time.

The process of making slides for opera is relatively simple. Supertitles are typed on a word processor and printed on special paper which is sent to a contractor to be photographed on slide film. When the film is processed, the slides are cut and mounted in frames. Plastic frames with glass covering are usually preferred to inexpensive paper frames with plastic covering because glass helps to protect the film. The price of commercially made slides may range from \$6.00 to \$20.00 per slide depending on the contractor.

Approximately 400 to 500 slides are needed for most repertory operas, while Wagnerian operas, such as *Die Meistersinger*, may require up to 1000 slides.⁷²

Slides are obtained in two ways. Some American opera companies choose to produce their own slides. It is not uncommon for companies, particularly larger opera companies, to commission a titlist and hire a contractor to produce slides. Other companies choose to rent slides.

San Francisco Opera (SFO) chooses to produce their own slides, but their approach is somewhat unique. Supertitles Administrator Christopher Bergen, explained that SFO has the facilities to produce slides "in house" with the exception of film processing. Phil Dworsky, a computer expert and patron, designed a sophisticated software program that enables a Hewlett-Packard Vectra computer to convert word-processing data into graphics data. A Hewlett-Packard Film Recorder films the images on high-contrast positive 35 mm film. The type of film used reacts very slowly to light and requires five or six minutes to expose each frame.⁷³ The result of this process is text of clear, precise definition.

Rental, the alternative method of obtaining slides for opera, is popular among both small and large companies. Many opera companies producing their own slides create an extra round of slides for the purpose of renting to other companies, a lucrative

⁷²"Score to Screen," *Opera News* (May 1990): 24.

⁷³ Molly Roth, ed., "Text And Technique: Supertitles at San Francisco Opera," *The San Francisco Opera Newsletter* (Spring 1988): 6.

business for opera companies and titlists. Several companies who have converted to computer-generated video projection continue to rent slides to other companies using the slide method.

Ray Delia, Supertitles Coordinator of New Orleans Opera, explained that the process of producing slides "in house" is particularly advantageous to companies who rent supertitles from SFO. If any changes need to be made in a supertitle, to fit a specific stage direction, for example, the request can be dictated over the telephone, the slides produced in a matter of hours and sent overnight express.⁷⁴ SFO claims to offer lower prices for rental because of their "in house" production.⁷⁵

Supertitles are usually rented in a package that contains the script of supertitles, a musical score with supertitle cues, slides or disc, and instructions. Rental prices and agreements vary for different companies. Washington Opera rents their supertitles for \$2,000 per production with an additional \$200 per performance for royalties to titlist Frank Rizzo.⁷⁶ The Lyric Opera of Chicago (LOC) does not rent supertitles separately from the production as a whole. According to Drew Landnesser, Supertitles Coordinator, supertitles are designed to coordinate with a particular production; therefore, a company renting LOC's supertitles rents the sets, costumes, and

⁷⁴ Ray Delia, New Orleans Opera Supertitles Coordinator, interview with author, 13 March 1991.

⁷⁵ Bergen, telephone interview with author, 13 February 1991.

⁷⁶ Catheryn Dowd, Washington Opera Supertitles Coordinator, interview with author, 11 February 1991.

supertitles as a complete package.⁷⁷ Many companies stipulate that their rented supertitles must be projected with specific equipment to protect slides or disc from damage. Some companies may have the necessary equipment while others rent the equipment per production. In addition, an agreement is often made insuring the integrity of the supertitles throughout performances. This includes the translation of the supertitles as well as their physical appearance.

Equipment and/or personnel are available through various opera companies. Washington Opera, for example, rents the equipment to project slides at a cost of \$300 per day. Supertitles Coordinator Catheryn Dowd is hired at a rate of \$500 per performance to operate the equipment.⁷⁸ Renting equipment and/or hiring personnel is particularly popular among smaller opera companies. Many opera companies search for underwriters to finance these services rather than pay for the expense out of the general budget.

Information on rental sources for supertitles is provided by Opera America in the annual *Directory of Scenery, Costumes, Musical Materials, and Title Projections*. The name of the opera is followed by a list of opera companies who rent their materials to other companies. Individual opera companies have listings of supertitles for rent (See Appendix C) and should be contacted on an

⁷⁷ Drew Landnesser, Lyric Opera of Chicago Supertitles Coordinator, telephone interview with author, 1 February 1991.

⁷⁸ Dowd, interview with author, 11 February 1991.

individual basis to obtain prices. There are other rental sources such as Four Corner's Productions, Inc., a company run by titlist Sonya Friedman and her husband Herman J. Engel. This company has an extensive list of supertitles available in both slide and video projection (See Appendix C).

Todd Snick, technician at the LOC, has had considerable experience in projecting supertitles. During an interview, Snick explained a few of the problems involved with the slide method.⁷⁹ On occasion, the shutter on the projector can become locked in an open or closed position causing the slides to jam. Another problem occurs when a slide is removed from the carousel. All remaining slides must be moved forward and renumbered. It is also not uncommon for slide film to melt or buckle under the extreme heat of a projector lamp.

Another common problem in using the slide method is condensation of moisture on the slides. When slides are kept in an air conditioned theater prior to the performance, then subjected to the heat of a powerful projector, they have a tendency to sweat or appear foggy. Slide film is sensitive and should be protected from moisture. To prevent the condensation problem, several techniques have been used. Initially, many companies preheated slides beneath an old-fashioned upright hairdryer. Later, a special heated box called a convection oven was used and is still used by some companies today. The most recent solution has been to store the

⁷⁹ Todd Snick, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Technician/Supertitles Operator, interview with author, 20 March 1991, .

slides under an electric blanket for approximately two hours prior to the performance.⁸⁰

In addition to slides and projector, the slide method requires a dissolve unit, an instrument which fades the slides from view so the transition from one slide to the next is carried out smoothly. The actual mechanism performing the dissolve is located within the projector itself. A type of keyboard connected to the projector is needed to program the dissolve. Technicians refer to this keyboard as the "dissolve unit", however, for the purposes of this study, this device will be referred to as the dissolve control unit.

Two models of dissolve control unit have been researched, one called the Dove unit manufactured by The Audio Visual Laboratories in New Jersey and the second called the Arion Mate-Trac Two, manufactured by the Arion Corporation in Minnesota. The Dove unit is sold in two models, the Dove x2 and the Superdove. The Dove x2 is the simpler of the two models and is perhaps more applicable to opera performance. The Dove x2 has the capability of programming up to three projectors simultaneously and is particularly effective because the dissolve can be preprogrammed. As the button is pushed to change each slide, the dissolve or fade will occur automatically. It is difficult to change the speed of dissolve during a performance because some time is required to re-program the dissolve. However, dissolves can be changed during the rehearsal periods or between performances. The main advantage of the Dove unit is efficiency; pushing one button causes

⁸⁰ Dowd, interview with author, 11 February 1991.

both change of slide and fade to occur. SFO has had great success with this type of dissolve control.⁸¹ The Dove unit is more expensive than the Arion system, but Christopher Bergen considers it to be worth the investment.

Effectiveness of the Dove unit depends on another piece of equipment manufactured by the Audio Visual Laboratories called the Genesis Board Set. The Genesis Board Set functions as an interface card which is loaded into a compatible computer for programming the Dove unit.⁸² The type of computer software needed to operate the Genesis system is called PROCALL (Programmable Computerized Audio-Visual Language Library). PROCALL is the industry standard Audio-Visual programming language which allows testing of new ideas, experimenting with different sequences and effects, and fine-tuning of timing and synchronization.⁸³

Catheryn Dowd, Supertitles Coordinator at Washington Opera, has been using the Arion system for several years. The Arion Mate-Trac Two system is not preprogrammed. Dowd considers this to be advantageous for slide projection in opera. In observation of the process at the *Manon* dress rehearsal, Dowd watched the score (marked with both fade and slide cues) and controlled the changes manually. At first glance, this method seemed to be rather

⁸¹ Bergen, telephone interview with author, 13 February 1991.

⁸² T. Barton Kenney, Exhibition Director, Communication Technologies, Inc., interview with author, (Baltimore, MD.) 27 February 1991.

⁸³ Marketing Brochure, Audio Visual Laboratories, 1991.

complicated, but Dowd prefers having the opportunity to change the dissolve instantly for dramatic effect during the performance. Two Optical Eclipser projectors were programmed by Washington Opera's Arion system. One minor complication which Dowd has dealt with is a slightly different rate of action between projectors; a two-second fade with projector A is not equal to a two-second fade with projector B. Dowd must remember which projector is operating at all times to adjust the fades accordingly.⁸⁴

Slide carousels, such as the Kodak Model 2, are generally used for slide projection in opera. The Kodak Model 2 is used by many companies because it can accomodate up to eighty thick glass-mounted slides.⁸⁵ Approximately eight to twelve slide carousels are used per production.

The number of people employed in the process of slide projection varies depending on the opera company. SFO uses two people, one person to call the cues from the score while a technician operates the slide projector. Washington Opera employs two people for the projection process, but the tasks are slightly different. At Washington Opera, Catheryn Dowd listens to the production with headsets from the light booth, follows the cues in the score, and pushes the button to change the slides. Electrician Philip Yunger is on hand at all times in case complications occur and assists in changing the slide carousels at the appropriate time. New Orleans Opera and Baton Rouge Opera are examples of companies using an

⁸⁴ Dowd, interview with author, Washington Opera, 13 February 1991.

⁸⁵ Bergen, telephone interview with author, 13 February 1991.

approach similar to Washington Opera. Agreements on the responsibilities of an individual, such as an electrician, may vary according to union contracts.

The slide method is initially the most economical means of producing supertitles and is most often used by smaller opera companies whose budgets are extremely limited. The slide method produces a text with sharp, clear definition providing for easy reading. There have been improvements made in equipment available helping to make this method more efficient.

The second option in producing supertitles is computer-generated text with video projection developed by the Houston Grand Opera Company (HGO) in 1984. The idea was inspired by an electronic advertisement in the window of a Chinese restaurant in Manhattan. David Gockley, HGO general director, saw the advertisement in 1983 and called it to the attention of Drew Landnesser, former technical director for HGO.⁸⁶

Landnesser began working with General Electric's Talaria projector in 1984.⁸⁷ Text is generated on a personal computer and projected above the stage using the Talaria system. Textual changes can be made instantly, by retyping characters. Other features include a variety of typefaces, sizes of print, and color. Supertitles for an entire opera can be stored on a single computer disc.

⁸⁶ "Simple Little System," *Opera News* (May 1990): 51.

⁸⁷ The Talaria projector is a registered trademark of the General Electric Corporation.

Most companies using the Talaria method employ at least two people, one to call the cues and one to operate the computer/projector. Larger opera companies, such as New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Cincinnati Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and Tulsa Opera use this method effectively.

The basic differences between the slide projector and the Talaria video projector can be seen in Figure 1, an illustration adapted from *Projections*, a publication of the General Electric Corporation.⁸⁸

Figure 1

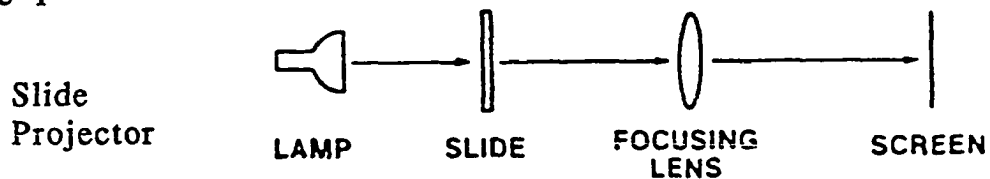
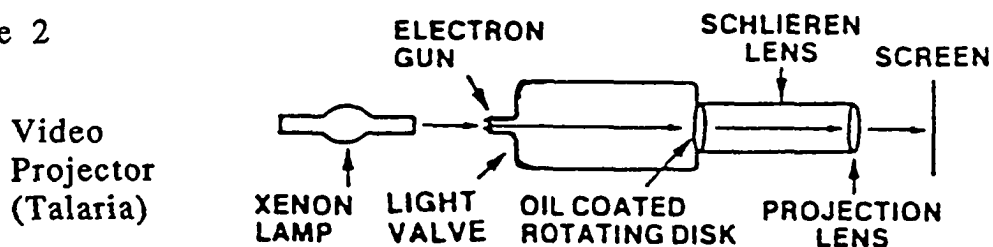


Figure 2



⁸⁸ Bill Baldwin, "Talaria technical update," *Projections* (Fall 1990): 9. Illustration adapted with permission of the General Electric Company.

The lamp of a slide projector projects light which is filtered through the slide and focused onto a screen by a lens. The Talaria system is much more complex. The lamp projects light which passes through a light valve and is focused on the screen by a special lens system.

According to Bill Baldwin, Field Service Manager for the General Electric Company, the light valve of the Talaria projector is actually a sealed glass bottle containing a strong vacuum to exclude moisture and dirt.⁸⁹ The electron gun located directly in front of the light valve shoots an electron beam which is deflected by plates to different areas of the oil-coated rotating disk. Fresh oil is supplied as the disk rotates allowing exposure to light and electron energy. When the electron beam comes in contact with the thin film of oil, tiny dimples or impressions are made on the surface. Each tiny dimple represents one dot of the dot matrix typeset. Light passes through each dimple and continues through the Schlieren lens, a sophisticated optical system which generates a complete new image 30 or more times a second resulting in a kind of dynamic slide.⁹⁰ The text is projected from left to right. Where the oil has no electron charge, the surface of oil is flat and opaque preventing any light from passing through to the screen. The result is a black screen.

According to Pete Cunningham, General Electric Sales Representative, the cost to replace the light valve for a Talaria

⁸⁹ Baldwin, *Projections* (Fall 1990): 8.

⁹⁰ Baldwin, 8.

monochrome projector (retail price as of June 1991) is approximately \$24,970.00. The estimated warrantee is 3 years or 4,000 hours of use. Extended warrantees are available.⁹¹

One area of concern with the Talaria system is the oil within the light valve. "To create high video images, it's necessary to carefully control the electrical and mechanical properties of the fluid."⁹² The life of the oil is extended by careful temperature regulation and the addition of special chemicals. Research is underway to develop a durable composition of oil subjected to light and electron energy within a vacuum.

The standard models of the Talaria projector available for supertitle projection are the PJ7050, PJ7055, and the PJ7155. One of the latest models, the LV4000 is a colorchrome projector with a wide range of frequency input, unlike the previous models. The LV4000 is becoming more widely used because of its color capabilities for stage effects and supertitles (\$49,970.00 retail price as of June 1991).

Some advantages of the using the Talaria system are the ability to change text instantly, the convenience of storing supertitles for an opera on a single computer disc, general brightness, a virtually "maintenance free" system, and free monthly training seminars. As new phrases of text are added using this system, these phrases can be numbered fractionally to fit between

⁹¹ Pete Cunningham, Sales Representative, General Electric Company, telephone interview with author, 18 April 1991.

⁹² Baldwin, 8.

existing phrases. Modular construction of the Talaria projector is considered to be advantageous aiding in effective maintenance. For example, if the lamp module burns out during a performance, a new module can be inserted within 5 to 7 minutes. When other repairs need to be made by General Electric, the module can be sent rather than the entire projector.

The disadvantages of the Talaria system are the cost (initially more expensive than the slide method), the cost of replacing parts, and a quality of text resolution which is not quite as clear as traditional slides. Five types of lenses are available to be used with the Talaria projector. One lens (with a focus ratio of 3.0:1) comes with the projector as part of the package. The other four lenses are available at an additional expense (June 1991 retail prices range from \$1,350.00 to \$3,000 depending on the lens).

One final disadvantage of this projector must be considered. The Talaria projector was not designed specifically for supertitles; therefore, an adjustment must be made to improve its effectiveness in opera. A defractional grading effect is produced when light passes through oil, the same effect which occurs when light passes through a prism. The defracted light of a Talaria monochrome projector appears white on the screen. Cunningham explained that this white light is emitted outside of the area where text is projected. The problem, referred to as "fringing," requires that the area surrounding the text be masked. Fringing can be eliminated by using an expensive lens called a Buel Raster Mask. This 3' lens

attaches to the front of the projector and masks the excess light.⁹³ According to Cunningham, the economical way to solve the problem is to move the projector away from the light booth window and apply duct tape directly to the window in the shape of a square. Line up the edges of the square until the "fringing" disappears, and only the area for supertitles clearly shows on the screen. Lyric Opera of Chicago accomplished this masking device by attaching Velcro strips to the window of the light booth directly in front of the Talaria projector. Pieces of cardboard attach to the Velcro and can be adjusted to narrow the space surrounding the projected text.⁹⁴ Charles Venus, National Sales Representative for General Electric, claims that another lens is under development by G.E. to eliminate fringing and may be available in 1992 for an additional price.

There are several companies who are not yet convinced to change to the Talaria system, such as San Francisco Opera, New Orleans Opera and Washington Opera. These companies are satisfied with slide projection for the time being. Bergen of SFO claims the resolution of Talaria projectors is still not equal to the resolution of slide projection.⁹⁵ The initial cost of Talaria monochrome projectors prevents many other companies from using them. In actuality, the present retail cost (ranging from \$34,860 to \$52,780) is less than in recent years because of the lack of demand.

⁹³ Cunningham, telephone interview with author, 18 April 1991.

⁹⁴ Snick, interview with author, Chicago, 20 March 1991.

⁹⁵ Bergen, telephone interview with author, 13 February 1991.

Generally, opera companies and hospitals are the only institutions using Talaria monochrome projectors.⁹⁶

One essential piece of equipment for slide and video projection is the screen. The type of screen selected is dictated by the needs of the company, the location of the viewers, the size of the image to be projected, the location and power of the projection equipment, and the cost. Some companies choose to have the screen "custom-made" by a company such as Adirondack Scenic, Incorporated in New York. Others choose to make their own screens. No matter which practice is preferred, the quality of the screen does make a difference.

While the size of screens vary among opera companies, the standard screen is relatively half the width of the proscenium. Frames for projection screens are usually made of tubular steel.⁹⁷ Tom Lloyd, of the Adirondack Scenic Corporation, recommends that the frame be covered in a soft fabric such as velour to give the screen a finished look, to prohibit the penetration of light, and to help preserve the screen. Once this is completed, a projection surface (either plastic or canvas) is applied. Plastic is considered the best projection surface because light is reflected more efficiently. The surface can be attached permanently or designed to be removable. A nonabrasive cleanser is applicable for easy cleaning.

⁹⁶ Cunningham, telephone interview with author, 18 April 1991.

⁹⁷ Tom Lloyd, Administrator, Adirondack Scenic, Inc., telephone conversation with author, 26 April 1991.

Some American opera companies have chosen a plastic surface manufactured by Gerriets International, Incorporated. Nick Bryson, company president, explained that the plastic (\$14.95 a running yard) is textured on one side, the side facing the audience. The texture is important because it allows for increased luminosity resulting in a sharper image. Gerriets' plastic is described as portable, easy-to-clean, flameproof, durable, and virtually seamless. Bryson added that the surface provides for a 180 degree viewing angle.⁹⁸ People sitting on the far right or left of the stage have a better chance of viewing supertitles because the text does not "fall off" the outer edges of the screen.

The color of projection screens is also a matter of preference. The standard colors are gray, black, and white. Light is reflected most efficiently on white screens; however, gray screens are less noticable and often preferred to white or black. While the most important consideration is the quality of the projector, the surface and color of projection screens make a difference in clarity of supertitles and should be chosen with specific characteristics of the individual theater in mind.

Practical Application

With the information set forth in this chapter, the author has chosen to compare two applications. The first would be the approximate cost for a small opera company to rent supertitles in slide form for *Le Nozze di Figaro* and purchase the slide projection

⁹⁸ Nick Bryson, President, Gerriets International, Inc., telephone conversation with author, 26 April 1991.

equipment required (See Figure 3). The second application would be the approximate cost for a small opera company to rent supertitles in video for *Le Nozze di Figaro* and purchase the video projection equipment required (See Figure 4). The choice of equipment varies among opera companies.

Figure 3

SMALL OPERA COMPANY
Basic Slide Projection Equipment & Rental

SUPERTITLES

Opera: *Le Nozze di Figaro*/Mozart

Supertitle Rental: Washington Opera - \$2,000.00 rental fee plus \$200.00 per performance for royalties. Package includes script, cued score and slides in carousels. **Titlist:** Francis Rizzo.

EQUIPMENT

Projectors: 2 Kodak Ektagraphic III A Projectors. Retail Price in June 1991: \$481.85 each. Projectors have auto-focus and remote control. **Contact:** local Kodak dealer.

Lense: Ektagraphic zoom lense (100-150mm.). Retail Price in June 1991: \$118.00. **Contact:** local Kodak dealer.

Dissolve Control and Keyboard: Arion Mate-Trak Two Plus
Dissolve Control and Keyboard. Retail Price in June 1991: \$695.00.

Contact:

Arion Corporation
701 South 7th Street
Delano, MN 55328
1-800-328-0595

Screen Materials: (screen made "in house") tubular steel frame, soft fabric underlay, muslin painted dark gray or a gray plastic surface. Costs may range from \$300.00 to \$1000.00 depending on the size and projection surface selected. A plastic surface will be more expensive, but is recommended.

Approximate Total Cost: \$ 4,800.00

(2 performances of *Le Nozze di Figaro*)

Figure 4

SMALL OPERA COMPANY
Video Projection Equipment and Rental

SUPERTITLES

Opera: *Le Nozze di Figaro*/Mozart

Rental: Houston Grand Opera: \$250.00 rental fee per performance plus \$250.00 royalties per performance. Package includes script (which must be typed into a program), and cued score. **Titlist:** Scott Heumann.

Projector: G.E. Talaria PJ7055 Monochrome Projector. **Retail Price** June 1991: \$47,750.00. Includes lense 3.0:1.

Other lenses (optional):	Power	Retail Price (June 1991)
	1.0:5	\$1350.00
	4.0:2	\$1700.00
	4.0:9	\$3000.00
	7.0:1	\$3000.00

Contact:

GE Projection Display Products
 General Electric Company
 Electronics Park, Building #6
 Syracuse, New York 13221
 1-(800)-626-2004 or
 Pete Cunningham (315) 456-2562

Video Signal: Videoshow 160. Retail Price June 1991: \$4595.00.
Contact a local Lanier dealer or:

General Parametrics
1250 Ninth Street
Berkeley, California 94710
(415) 524-3950

Computer Software: PictureIt Software (International). June 1991
Retail Price: \$495.00. Contact a local Lanier dealer or General
Parametrics (address above):

Computer Setup: IBM PC/AT or compatible, 40MB, 360K drive,
and a VGA monitor. June 1991 Retail Prices range from: \$2000.00 to
\$3000.00. Contact a local computer dealer.

Dissolve Control Unit: Dub Fader. June 1991 Discount Retail
Price: \$765.00. Contact:

Accurate Video Systems
Attn: John Jay
5320 Garden Grove Avenue
Tarzana, CA 91356
(818) 774-0090

Screen Materials: (screen made "in house") tubular steel frame,
soft fabric underlay, muslin painted dark gray or a gray plastic
surface. Costs may range from \$300.00 to \$1000.00 depending on
the size and projection surface selected. A plastic surface, although
more expensive, is recommended.

Approximate Total Cost: \$ 58,000.00
(2 performances of *Le Nozze di Figaro*)

The addition of supertitles to live opera is welcomed by many, but the risk of error is increased within each production. There are myriad variables involved when dealing with humans or equipment created by humans. Conductors' tempi, singers' mistakes, the unique audience reaction to one particular performance, and equipment malfunction are among the many unpredictable and often uncontrollable problems which must be considered when dealing with live performances. It is important to keep in mind that supertitles will never become fully automated because each opera performance is different from any previous performance.

PREFERENCE FOR SUPERTITLES

As discussed in Chapter 1, the use of subtitles in silent film was a controversial issue. It is evident from major newspapers and opera publications in the past nine years that a similar controversy has developed around the use of supertitles in opera. It is for this reason that an in-depth study of the issue is warranted.

The Controversy Surrounding Supertitles

As in the silent era, there are those strongly opposed to supertitles in opera, those strongly in favor, and those who have mixed opinions. Perhaps the main reason for opposition is the opinion that supertitles degrade opera as an art form. Several experts agree that a full understanding of what is being sung is not necessary; rather it is a total integration of text, music, movement, and visual effect which result in one piece of artwork. This opinion is conveyed in the words of Hugh Southern, General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera Company:

. . . enjoying opera is not consistently grounded in close understanding, line by line, of the libretto. Many plots, and much dialogue, are not distinguished-- sometimes they are nonsensical. It seems to us that translating them might be unhelpful and irritating.⁹⁹

Francis Rizzo, who considers himself "The Reluctant Titlist," believes titling is: "an artistic impertinence that threatens to

⁹⁹ as quoted in: Donal Henahan, "Read My Supertitles? Why Not, If It's Appropriate?" *The New York Times*, 13 May 1990.

undermine four centuries of artistic development. They are inherently cheap, vulgar and trivial."¹⁰⁰

There are several reasons for opposition which have to do with the quality of opera performance. Those opposed to supertitles often complain of poor translations. There is a difference of opinion over the selection of phrases projected as well as the quality of translation. Will Crutchfield, music critic for the *New York Times*, published the following example in 1984:

In the second act of *La Bohème*, Marcello is pretending to ignore his flirtatious former lover Musetta, but cannot hide from her his passionate attraction. "Ma il tuo core martella," she insists, goading him to give in to his true feelings: "But your heart is pounding." The supertitle says "You've got a heart of stone." If a City Opera Musetta acts in accordance with the words she is singing, she is made to seem foolish; her not very appealing alternative is either to contradict herself or to adopt a neutral attitude so as not to cause confusion.¹⁰¹

Another comment frequently heard is that supertitles are distracting. The location of supertitles requires that the audience look above the stage to read the text. In the meantime, the attention of the audience has been taken away from the music, the action, and the singer. Subtlety of interpretation is often missed in the time it takes to glance upward. Opera singer Eleanor Steber commented: "I think the business of putting the translation above

¹⁰⁰ as quoted in: Jerry Floyd, "SURTITLES AND THE OPERA: An Asset or an Intrusion?" *The Washington Times Magazine*, 25 October 1985.

¹⁰¹ Will Crutchfield, "Review and Overview of Opera Supertitles," *The New York Times*, 30 August 1984.

the proscenium is horrendous! . . . To be distracted by having to look up and down all the time takes away from the opera itself."¹⁰²

Singers also complain of being distracted when the audience reacts inappropriately to poorly written supertitles or problems with equipment. Several mishaps have occurred in the past. The classic example, which has appeared in newspaper articles around the country, happened with Houston Grand Opera's production of *Tosca*. Soprano Eva Marton, in the title role, told her lover in the first scene to paint the eyes in a portrait like hers. The supertitle read "give her black eyes," and the guest audience at the dress rehearsal broke into laughter. Marton demanded that the supertitles be stopped immediately and re-edited for the opening performance.¹⁰³

There are some who believe singers have faulty diction as a result of supertitles. The aid of having a projected translation becomes a crutch for singers who in turn are lazy in proper pronunciation. Similarly, there are singers insulted by the use of supertitles, reasoning that they are perfectly capable of communicating the meaning of the text without outside help. World renowned opera star Anna Moffo remarked:

I hate them! I hate them! Because they have nothing to do with what's going on. What does this tell us? That the people who are on the stage, or the composer, that we're unable to give you our message?. . . If you want to understand by

¹⁰² as quoted in: McGovern and Winer, *I Remember Too Much*: 374.

¹⁰³ Cox, "Mystique of Opera Is Due for a Jolt As Subtitles Make Their Entrance," *The Wall Street Journal*, 6 July 1984.

reading, then you shouldn't come to the opera. You should get a recording and read it while you're listening.¹⁰⁴

Others who are opposed to supertitles likewise oppose singing in a language other than the native language. For them, the rationale that opera should be sung in the singer's native tongue or in the vernacular of the country is most important, eliminating the issue of supertitles entirely. This opinion is expressed in the words of David Hamilton, author of "Another Option":

Not until well into the twentieth century did the principle of original language become the overriding one. . . . When observed in smaller houses and even frequently in big ones, the original-language principle often yields a result that in the past would have been absurd, especially by most of the great composers: opera sung by people in a language they don't really speak, before audiences who don't understand it.¹⁰⁵

The use of supertitles is considered by some people to be typical of the American automated way of life. Americans have fast-food, computers, and instant money machines at the bank. Why not have supertitles? They claim that the use of supertitles is spoon-feeding the audience because some people are too lazy to read the libretto at home.

Similarly, supertitles are referred to as a gimmick to sell tickets. It is true that American opera companies emphasize the addition of supertitles in opera advertisements as a means of

¹⁰⁴ as quoted in: Dennis McGovern and Deborah Grace Winer, *I Remember Too Much: 89 Opera Stars Speak Candidly Of Their Work, Their Lives And Their Colleagues* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1990): 372.

¹⁰⁵ David Hamilton, "Another Option," *Opera News* (May 1990): 30.

attracting audience members who might not otherwise attend. This idea is looked on as extremely negative by many people. Robert Jacobsen, the late editor of *Opera News*, deplored supertitles and considered them "a pathetic marketing grab for the fringe public."¹⁰⁶

The architectural design of opera houses and the location of projected supertitles pose another problem. Supertitles are not easily visible to everyone in every opera house. Unfortunately, those audience members who purchase "Standing Room Only" tickets most often are placed on the ground level to the rear of the main seating area, an area with an obstructed view. Seating areas to the extreme right and left of the stage (especially box seats) are often outside the adequate viewing range. Ironically, those people who have paid high prices for "good seats" have the most difficulty seeing supertitles.

The expense of supertitles is also considered to be a negative factor. As discussed in Chapter 2, the equipment, slide or video rental, and personnel can be costly forcing many companies to seek funding within the corporate sector.

Conversely, a variety of positive reasons exist among those who are in favor of supertitles. Supertitles are considered to be an educational tool. With the aid of supertitles, children and adults may be able to develop an understanding and appreciation for opera, an artform which otherwise may be unappealing or

¹⁰⁶ John von Rhein, "Bravo, Supertitles! (Translated, that means an opera hit in any language)," *The Chicago Tribune*, 15 December 1985.

inaccessible. As one author states: "Music written for words can only be fully appreciated when you know what the words mean."¹⁰⁷ Supertitles enable the audience to experience opera with new understanding; opera is no longer an exclusively elitist form of entertainment. Those who have little or no foreign language background are now able to understand the sentiment of what is sung.

Many advocates of supertitles emphasize this ability to break the language barrier and also to unravel complicated plots. The variety of characters and their relationships to each other can be confusing in many operas. The added difficulty of a foreign language discourages some people from attending opera performances. Supertitles are helpful to these individuals. Supertitles are also beneficial to the deaf and hard of hearing, eliminating the need for closed captions or an interpreter.

Supertitle advocates also claim that supertitles need not be distracting to those who choose to look primarily at the stage. An interesting point was made by Donal Henahan, music critic for the New York Times: "If I set my mind to it, I can more easily be distracted by the gyrations of a conductor whose figure interposes itself between me and a singer when my seat is on the orchestra level (at the Met), or by the comings and goings of intermittently employed pit musicians when I sit upstairs (at the City Opera)." ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ William Glackin, "Supertitles: Help, hindrance?" *The Sacramento Bee*, 27 October 1985.

¹⁰⁸ Donal Henahan, "Supertitles: The Eyes Have It," *The New York Times*, 13 March 1988.

Complaints of inappropriate response from the audience can be minimized with improved projection techniques, improved technology, and a carefully written translation. The titlist can never be absolutely sure how the audience will react, but with careful planning, preparing, and rehearsing, supertitles can be produced more effectively.

Supertitles expand the range of repertoire for many opera companies. Rather than scheduling standard repertoire in rotating cycles, more obscure works can be performed. These works may include foreign contemporary opera or opera in languages other than the traditional German, Italian and French repertoire. Many companies, such as the Paris Opera or New York City Opera, have had great success in producing Janacek operas sung in Czech. The 1991-92 season of Washington Opera will include the premier performance of Jin Xiang's *Savage Land*, sung in Chinese with supertitles.¹⁰⁹

Many supertitle promoters believe supertitles are a compromise to performing opera in English translation. Supertitles enable opera companies to produce operas in the original languages, a preference of many singers and listeners. The problem of singers trying to remember a variety of English translations to suit individual productions can be alleviated. Supertitles make it possible for singers to learn virtually one version, the original. Beverly Sills, retired opera singer and prime advocate of supertitles, explained:

¹⁰⁹ Dowd, interview with author, 13 February 1991.

It is impossible to to sing p's and b's and m's when you are trying to shriek out a high B or a high C. . . . I detest opera translated into English. I do not like the translations. When I was singing, I learned five translations of everything, because every opera company had its favorite translator. This one is more literate. This one is not literate. This one the public understands. This one, hopefully, the public won't understand. (laughter) I can not tell you how many *Don Giovanni's* I learned in my career until finally I said, "Enough, Italian or nothing."¹¹⁰

Supertitles are said to have increased ticket sales, improving the financial status of several opera companies. Advocates view this as a positive influence which helps insure the future of American opera companies. Amusingly, Beverly Sills is quoted "When a man writes me and says he normally bought four seats and this year he has come for twenty-seven tickets, he is going to get his subtitles up to his kazoo."¹¹¹

Unfortunately, many articles concerning supertitles focus on the audiences' viewpoint rather than the singers' viewpoint. It is important to consider how singers are affected by the presence of supertitles. While there are those who refuse to sing with supertitles, there are those who prefer supertitles. Supertitles encourage singers to know the literal translation of what they sing because the audience understands and expects proper emotional

¹¹⁰ as quoted in: "CENTRAL OPERA SERVICE NATIONAL CONFERENCE: AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM," Central Opera Service, New York 1 and 2 November 1985: 26.

¹¹¹ as quoted in: "CENTRAL OPERA SERVICE NATIONAL CONFERENCE," New York, 1 and 2 November 1985: 27.

expression from the singer. When the audience understands what is sung and reacts accordingly, singers react to the audience and become energized. This type of communication between singers and audience makes for an exciting performance. Similarly, the quality of acting can be improved with supertitles. Many singers feel there is less chance of mugging or over-exaggeration in performance. There is more freedom to concentrate on a natural style of acting.

Apart from those critics who single-mindedly oppose or favor supertitles, there are those who have mixed opinions about the controversy. A number of positive and negative factors can be combined to represent this attitude. Journalist Peter Stack writes:

I am of two minds about this major development at the opera. One mind feels subtitles are relatively non-intrusive, and may be a boon to boggled opera-goers who simply want to make some sort of succinct, specific sense out of exactly what is occurring onstage. . . . My other mind, being left-handed, figures that grand opera will never be grand again with subtitles.¹¹²

Mixed opinions are also found in the book entitled *I Remember too Much: 89 Opera Stars Speak Candidly about Their Work; Their Lives; and Their Colleagues*. When asked for their opinions of supertitles the following responded¹¹³ :

¹¹² Peter Stack, "Words and Music," *Datebook*, 13 October 1983.

¹¹³ The following quotations are found in: McGovern and Winer, *I Remember too Much*, 373-375.

Jerome Hines: Yes, I do like them. It's a very practical thing. It's a little distraction, but doggone it, it's worth it.

Regina Resnik: If the audience gets distracted by the reading, well, half the audience will be riveted to me- and if the other half is riveted to understanding me, so be it.

Roberta Peters: I don't like supertitles, because I think it takes away from the stage, and from concentration. That's the one side of the coin. The other side I know very well--that it's important for people who don't know opera. . . .

Marilyn Horne: I think surtitles are a mixed blessing. An artist hates to think that some subtle moment or expression may go for nothing because people are glued to the screen above just at that moment. . . By the way, I hear that there is much less sleeping during performances since the advent of surtitles.

Nell Rankin: As a performer, I would accept it with grace. Yes, I think it takes away, but still I think it is something one must suffer-although people will say, "Well, you've had your career, and you didn't have to go through this." But I believe if it had come during my time, I would have felt the same way. Also, it gives you another challenge. The stronger you are, the less they'll look at that.

Still others believe supertitles are only appropriate for certain productions such as operas in obscure languages or matinees for children. These people tend to agree that standard repertoire should be maintained in the original language without supertitles because the majority of operagoers are somewhat familiar with the stories. World-reknown opera singer Mignon Dunn shares this opinion:

I fought it for a very long time, I think it's wrong for operas that are very well known. If people can't take a little time to

find out what's going on in *Bohème*, then I think that's stupid. If you're going to do Czech opera like *Jenůfa*, then I think the surtitles are fine. . . . But I object to it being done for all operas.¹¹⁴

In addition, there are those who believe supertitles are not suitable for every opera company. Factors to be taken into consideration are: the physical limitations of the theater, the type of repertoire associated with specific companies, and the needs of the audience. Beverly Sills explained:

Now the question as to whether we should all do it? I would have to tell you no. We should not all do it. We should look at our audience and ask ourselves, 'What does that audience require?' If it is a kind of audience that would like to have the subtitles, it does not make sense to deprive them. . . .

I am a subscriber at the Met, which is the mainstay, as we all know, of all our opera companies. I know the subscriber at the Met does not want them. I have been to the Met. It is a different audience we are looking at. . . .¹¹⁵

Many of the arguments presented in this controversy have substantial merit. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution which will satisfy everyone. The preference for supertitles varies among opera companies, opera audiences, and individuals. Perhaps a little flexibility would not be out of place.

Thus far, the opinions of individuals directly associated with the arts have been the focus of this controversy. Various surveys

¹¹⁴ as quoted in: *I Remember Too Much*, 375.

¹¹⁵ as quoted in "CENTRAL OPERA SERVICE NATIONAL CONFERENCE," New York, 1 and 2 November 1985: 26.

have been conducted in a variety of populations to gauge overall response to supertitles. Valuable information can be obtained from these surveys which may benefit the opera world.

Survey Reports

The first survey selected for discussion is entitled "The Effects of Title Projections on Opera Audiences and Opera Companies."

Felix Racelis, former Management Fellow in the Opera-Musical Theater Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, conducted this survey in 1987. The survey report was compiled from questionnaires sent to General Managers and Artistic Directors of twenty-eight leading North American opera companies. Of the 28 questionnaires sent to General Managers, 15 (or 54%) responded. Of the 28 questionnaires sent to Artistic Directors, 11 (or 39%) responded. The identity of respondents was kept confidential.¹¹⁶

Racelis received overwhelmingly positive responses from both General Managers and Artistic Directors in regards to supertitles. When asked if the use of supertitles would continue, responding General Managers answered unanimously "yes." While General Managers found it difficult to credit supertitles as the main reason for increased attendance, the majority (60%) believed that supertitles contributed to this increase. General Managers also clearly felt supertitles were useful for educational purposes (93%). Some (53%) have received complaints from the audience which involved technical imperfections or physical limitations of the

¹¹⁶ Felix Racelis, "THE EFFECTS OF TITLE PROJECTIONS ON OPERA AUDIENCES AND OPERA COMPANIES," Survey for the Opera-Musical Theater Program of the National Endowments for the Arts, 1987: 2.

theater, however, comments from the General Managers indicate that these are minimal.

Artistic Directors responded with equal enthusiasm. Ten out of 11 respondents claimed to be satisfied with the results of supertitles. "A majority also felt that their use has caused no serious artistic complications, does not interfere with what the artist is singing, and creates no difference in quality of diction."¹¹⁷ (Majority = 91%)

When Artistic Directors were asked "What is your honest opinion of the use of title projections?" a few of the comments were:

Feel they work well for serious operas but not for farcial operas because it is hard to get the timing right for comic action on stage and words projected above the stage.

Excellent. More audience involvement and response.

I think they are the most important addition to opera performance in this century, and that they move the balance of emphasis away from pure singing to lyric drama.

I am thrilled not to be fighting over the merits of opera in translation.¹¹⁸

When asked to comment on drawbacks to the use of supertitles, General Managers' comments included encumbered visibility, equipment problems, and a feeling that professional translations were not adequate or perhaps not suitable for their

¹¹⁷ Racelis, "THE EFFECTS OF TITLE PROJECTIONS ON OPERA AUDIENCES AND OPERA COMPANIES," 1987: 3.

¹¹⁸ as quoted in: Racelis, "THE EFFECTS OF TITLE PROJECTIONS ON OPERA AUDIENCES AND OPERA COMPANIES," 1987: 10.

particular productions. With regard to translations, there seems to be some disagreement among Artistic Directors as to preference for a more literal translation as compared to a poetic translation. One Artistic Director remarked that the type of translation depended on the piece; others stressed the importance of supertitles which are easily comprehended while concise in length and content.

The results of this survey have provided important information which may be helpful to companies using supertitles, to companies considering the use of supertitles, to those who develop supertitle technology, and to those who write supertitles. The overall survey response was positive. It is clear that the majority of those professionals surveyed have endorsed and implemented supertitles today.

Audience opinion has been considered extremely important in the decisions made by many American opera companies. In the words of author Stephen Bush, "Fit your titles to the taste and the demands of your American audience. . . ."¹¹⁹ New York City Opera (NYCO) conducted a survey in October of 1989 to measure audience preference on the issue of supertitles. The survey was distributed to audiences at various opera performances in the New York State Theater, the home performance hall of NYCO.¹²⁰

The first portion of the survey required the audience to define the term *supertitles*. The results showed that most

¹¹⁹ Bush, "Perfection in Titles," 25.

¹²⁰ Danny William Abreu, New York City Opera, Director of Marketing, interview with author, 21 October 1990.

respondents (81.5%) who had attended NYCO, at least once prior to the surveyed performance, were able to define supertitles correctly as a simultaneous translation of the opera's text projected above the stage. Those respondents who were considered "Prospects" could not define supertitles correctly(24.8%).

NYCO found that "an understanding of what supertitles are is (sic) clearly related to attending a performance where (supertitles) are employed-- 91% of Current Attendees and 86% of Former Subscribers have attended a performance with supertitles, while only 21% of Prospects have done so."¹²¹

Another area mentioned was how the presence of supertitles might affect the decision of audience members to attend an opera. The results showed "while many prospects indicate that the presence of supertitles has a positive affect on their willingness to attend an opera, the effect of supertitles is clearly more potent among attendees who have some familiarity with them."¹²² (Prospects "more likely to" attend performances with supertitles- 29%; Attendees-52.2%)

NYCO used the survey results to evaluate audience opinion as well as marketing strategies. It was decided that "the company should devote more space in advertising to supertitles, particularly explaining what they are and how they work, given that they have

¹²¹ New York City Opera Study, New York City Opera, 31 October 1989: xxxiv. Excerpts from the New York City Opera Study c 1989 are reprinted with permission.

¹²² NYCO Study, xxxiv.

a demonstrable affect on those who know about them, and most Prospects don't know."¹²³

In order to compare responses from audience members attending opera performances of a large opera company (NYCO) to audiences members attending performances of a smaller company, the author conducted a preliminary survey of the Baton Rouge Opera (BRO) to evaluate audience preference for supertitles. (BRO began using supertitles for foreign language opera performances in its 1990-91 season). The survey was distributed prior to titled performances of *La Traviata* on November 15 and 18, 1990. Surveys were distributed to 2,182 audience members; 29% of all surveys were returned. In contrast to NYCO's survey, the audience was given the definition of supertitles as the opening statement (See Figure 5). Of 617 responding to the question of gender, 38.2% of the respondents were male and 61.8% were female. In response to age categories, 25.5% of all respondents were 29 years old or younger, 46.8% were between the ages of 30 and 59, and 26.7% were over 60 years old. One percent chose no answer (See Appendix D for BRO Survey Data).

Of 627 respondents, 499 indicated that they had attended at least one opera prior to this performance. When these audience members were asked if they had ever attended an opera with supertitles prior to this performance, 55.9% answered "Yes," 43.1% answered "No," and 1.0% gave no response. Given the relative newness of titled performances in Baton Rouge, it is somewhat

¹²³ NYCO Study, xxxiv.

Figure 5

BRO Survey

SUPERTITLES SURVEY

Baton Rouge Opera

Date: _____

Supertitles are the simultaneous translation of the opera's text projected above the stage.

Please circle your answer.

1. Is this the first opera you have attended?

yes

no

If "yes" go to question #4.

If "no" go to question #2.

2. Have you ever attended an opera with supertitles prior to this performance?

yes

no

3. Have you ever attended an opera without supertitles?

yes

no

4. Would the presence of supertitles influence your decision to attend an opera?

more likely

less likely

no effect

5. Do you like or dislike supertitles?

I like them

I dislike them

Why? _____

6. Gender:

M

F

7. Age Group:

9 and under

30-39

60-69

10-19

40-49

70-79

20-29

50-59

80 and above

8. Do you speak a language other than English?

yes

no

9. Which one (s) ? _____

10. Your attendance at Baton Rouge Opera performance is described as:

a season subscriber

a single ticket buyer

Please place this form in the survey box as you exit.

surprising that the percentage of people with previous exposure to supertitles was substantially greater than the percentage of people viewing supertitles for the first time. When asked if they had ever attended an opera without supertitles, 92.8% of 499 people answered "Yes," 5.2% answered "No," and 2.0% gave no response. First time operagoers comprised 20.3% of the respondents. The responses to these questions indicate that the majority of respondents are regular operagoers, many perhaps having attended performances by other opera companies in other cities. Or in the very least, most of these respondents have taken an interest in opera on a least one occasion.

The overall response to the question "Would the presence of supertitles influence your decision to attend an opera?" is as follows: of 627 responses, 5.6% answered "More likely," an overwhelming 57% answered "Less likely," 35.3% decided the presence of supertitles would have "No effect" on their attendance, and 1.6% chose no answer. When considering only first time operagoers, the majority (59.8%) of respondents decided supertitles would have no effect on their decision to attend an opera.

Responses to the same question were further categorized by type of attendees: season subscriber or single ticket buyer. Of 243 known season subscribers attending these performances and responding to the survey, 7% decided that the presence of supertitles would "more likely" affect their attendance, an overwhelmingly 63% decided that the presence of supertitles would "less likely" affect their attendance, 28.4% decided supertitles would

have "no effect," and 1.6% chose no answer. In response to the same question concerning the affect of supertitles on attendance, 374 single ticket buyers answered: 4.8% for "more likely," 53.9% for "less likely," 39.7% for "no effect," and 1.6% with no response. Interpretively, these figures show that the presence of supertitles would "less likely" affect or have "no effect" on the majority's decision to attend an opera. The trends for both groups were the same across categories of choices indicating that supertitles have little differential affect between the decisions of season subscribers versus single ticket buyers. The trend is different across categories, however, for first time ticket buyers.

When the audience was asked if they liked or disliked supertitles, the overall response was positive. Six hundred and twenty-seven responses were received. The answers are as follows: 82.5% liked supertitles, 6.4% disliked supertitles, and 11.2% did not answer the question.

Oddly enough, while a large majority of respondents genuinely liked supertitles, an overwhelming percentage of respondents agreed the presence of supertitles would "less likely" affect or have "no effect" on their decision to attend an opera. This information may suggest that this particular BRO audience supports opera as an art form and attends opera performances regardless of any language barrier. If so, the Baton Rouge Opera can only benefit from this strong support.

Other pertinent information came from the assessment of the language background of the audience. It was evident from the responses that the survey was conducted in a population with

predominantly French heritage. Of those people claiming to speak at least two languages (N=355), English and one or more other languages, the largest percentage of people (38%) identified "French" as a second language, followed by 21% "Spanish," 18% answered "German," and 6% "Italian." The 17% of remaining respondents identified the following languages: Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Japanese, Russian or other. These figures are useful in understanding the capability of audience members to comprehend the text when a foreign language opera is sung in the original language.

The results of this survey have provided important information regarding the general preference of BRO audiences attending these *La Traviata* performances. The figures show an overall positive response to supertitles, similar to the other surveys discussed. While supertitles cannot be isolated as the reason for an increase in attendance, supertitles are believed to have been a contributing factor to this increase.¹²⁴ This information has been used by the Baton Rouge Opera in assessing supertitle preference as well as basic demographic information about those attending BRO performances. It is important to understand that while this information is exclusively related to Baton Rouge Opera, general trends may be observed from the results. The Baton Rouge Opera audiences remain unique as do audiences of other opera companies.

¹²⁴ Sam Gray, Baton Rouge Opera General Manager, telephone conversation with author, 21 April 1991.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Supertitles have undoubtedly added a new dimension to the field of opera. Artistry in the titling process and quality of projection equipment are of primary concern among many opera companies employing supertitles today. On the basis of information previously discussed, general recommendations will be made in the areas of translation and equipment. Also, future technology and other issues related to supertitles will be addressed.

Translations and the manner in which they are projected are matters of company preference. Many times this preference is dictated by cost, the size of the theater, the approach of the director, and the audience. No matter which of these factors impact decisions, it is recommended to use professionally written translations versus translations written by those who have no experience in the titling process. As this research reveals, writing supertitles requires a number of high level skills. While freedom from inappropriate audience response can never be guaranteed, most professionally written supertitles have been tested and proven effective.

Supertitles for standard as well as rather obscure repertoire can be rented from select companies at reasonable rates, a practice preferred by both small and large opera companies. Large opera companies who have adequate resources often choose an alternative which is commissioning a titlist to write "custom-made" translations to accomodate a particular production. This may be preferable to renting supertitles because translations can be

oriented to specific stage direction as well as an overall concept for the production. Whatever a company chooses, the most important factors seem to be the quality of translation and affordability.

Equipment is another area in which opera companies have some options. Slide projection is quite satisfactory for smaller opera companies performing in relatively small theaters. It is not necessary to purchase expensive high-powered slide projectors or video projectors. The expense of video projectors and replacing parts is usually not within the budgets of the majority of small companies. In fact, some small opera companies must limit titled productions to only one per season due to budget constraints. Until the cost of video projection, such as the Talaria projector, can be diminished, it is recommended that smaller opera companies use slide projection.

Opera companies specifically interested in video projection should research not only variations of the Talaria projector, but they should investigate the latest video projectors under development which operate on a liquid crystal light valve rather than hot oil. Hughes Aircraft, Inc. produces a monochrome projector which operates on this system. While not known to be used by any American opera companies, the Hughes monochrome projector Model 800 is popular with European opera companies, particularly in Scotland, Switzerland, and France.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Michael Frank, Sales Representative, Hughes Aircraft, Inc., telephone conversation with author, 4 April 1991.

According to Michael Frank, Sales Representative for Hughes Aircraft, Inc., liquid crystals do not require a high temperature (nor do they function well under heat); therefore, the Hughes projector can be turned on and operating in approximately 5 minutes.¹²⁶ The Talaria projector, on the other hand, requires at least 45 minutes of warm up time prior to each performance.¹²⁷ Additionally, the cost of the Hughes projector is comparable to the cost of replacing a single Talaria light valve. The Hughes monochrome projector does not project as brightly as the Talaria monochrome projector, but the Hughes could be used effectively by opera companies performing in smaller theaters.

Frank claims the Hughes projector is unique in that highly skilled technicians are not necessary to operate it. There is a single on/off switch on the projector itself; the other functions are operated by infrared remote control. Another advantage is the wide range of frequency input meaning that a variety of computers may be used in conjunction with the projector. The list price (April 19, 1991) for the Hughes monochrome projector is \$35,000.¹²⁸

In May 1991, the General Electric Company and Ritz Audio/Visual, Inc. sponsored a Projection Seminar in Washington, D.C. General Electric National Sales Representative Charles Venus introduced the Imager LCD10, a colorchrome projector operating with a liquid crystal light valve system. The crystals, arranged in a

¹²⁶ Frank, telephone conversation with author, 4 April 1991.

¹²⁷ Snick, telephone conversation with author, 29 April 1991.

¹²⁸ Frank, telephone conversation with author, 4 April 1991.

double matrix, are flat against the surface of three discs. Each crystal appears as a pixel on the screen resulting in a miniature honeycomb effect. The luminosity of the Imager LCD10 is not as bright as the Hughes or Talaria PJ model projectors. The LCD10 is under improvement, however, and may be effective for supertitle production within the next five years. Venus stated that increasing luminosity within a liquid crystal light valve requires the addition of liquid crystals. Ironically, this procedure raises the temperature within the valve making it difficult for the liquid crystals to operate properly.¹²⁹ The author does not recommend the Imager LCD10 for supertitle production at this time, but this projector may be worth investigating in the future (June 1991 retail price \$4995.00). As with all technology discussed in this monograph, improvements are underway, new equipment is being developed, and prices may change at any time.

While slide and video projection are the options available to all opera companies, for large opera companies video projection is recommended to those companies able to make the investment. The effectiveness and efficiency of the Talaria monochrome projector are quite remarkable and constantly under improvement. The ability to change text instantly and store supertitles for an opera on a single computer disc is a distinct advantage. Debate over clarity of text between slide and video projection will continue; however, the difference is minimal. Video projection is worth

¹²⁹ Charles Venus, National Sales Representative, General Electric Company, conversation with author, 29 May 1991.

sacrificing minor clarity of text for efficiency and is a good investment, especially for the majority of larger opera companies titling more than one production per season.

Controversy over supertitles has spurred an interest in improving the methods whereby supertitles are viewed. Several ideas for future technology are under consideration. The first is a type of hand-held monitor comparable in size to children's video toys. The monitor could be optional at the door for a small rental fee; however, the cost to produce the number of monitors needed could be astronomical. Another expensive option is to attach a small television screen to back of each seat in the theater. A minor complication, however, would be installing screens for seating on the front row.

An alternative might be the use of a reflective glass monitor such as the one used by the President for presidential addresses. The President can see his speech on the side of the monitor facing him, but the audience cannot. This concept may be adapted and applied in opera performances. The advantage of this type of monitor might be the location of supertitles in relationship to the performance. Potentially, supertitles could be projected in the same field of vision as the actual performance, eliminating some of the complaints concerning distraction. The balcony areas; however, may require special attention. Perhaps a monitor could be installed on the backs of seats or within box seating areas only.

Other controversial possibilities include special eyeglasses that disclose supertitles specifically to those who wish to view them or translations heard over individual headphones (similar to the

United Nations proceedings). Headphones could be rented at the door and would operate on an infrared system similar to radio transmission. If this idea were incorporated in American opera, concise translations could be "piped in" at regular intervals. Although the system generally is accepted in China and Japan, it is debatable whether or not the American public would be as openminded.

At one time, San Francisco Opera provided performances to accomodate those who have definite preference for supertitles. SFO offered performances with and without supertitles and received positive response in appreciation of its efforts.¹³⁰ According to Assistant Director Sandra Bernhard, SFO discontinued this policy because their audiences generally have become accustomed to supertitles. Speculation has it that the policy served to familiarize the audience with supertitles gradually leading to general acceptance. The policy was successful and is recommended to any opera company with discontented audience members. Small companies may wish to limit this approach to one production each year due to budget restrictions. Performances offered with and without supertitles may be a temporary solution until more effective technology can be developed or audiences have grown to accept supertitles on a fairly regular basis.

Experts have not limited their discussions to technological improvements. Another important issue has been the function of

¹³⁰ Sandra Bernhard, San Francisco Opera Assistant Director, interview with author, 29 April 1991.

supertitles within the creative process. Stage director Peter Sellars has developed a new function for supertitles in productions such as *Tannhauser*, as performed by Lyric Opera of Chicago (LOC). Sellars employed supertitles in the traditional manner by projecting text on the screen above to aid the audience. In addition, supertitles were used creatively as special effects on stage during the performance. Single words were projected on scenery in a variety of colors. These words were the underlying emotions within the opera, such as "Love," "Hatred," and "Sorrow."¹³¹ In *Tannhäuser*, supertitles functioned as an integral part of the production, not solely as an aid in understanding the text. Sellars' ideas, although well received by some, generally have been controversial.

In September 1989, Houston Grand Opera (HGO) produced *New Year*, a contemporary opera composed by Sir Michael Tippett. This production also contained special effects, in this case, produced by the Talaria colorchrome LV8000. At one time during the performance, a large, clear box was positioned downstage. The box was filled with smoke and became the screen for projecting moving images. One of the main characters hid behind the box, appearing mysteriously when the smoke had vanished. Although words were not projected on the box, the same process can be applied using words.¹³² The Talaria colorchrome LV8000 has a variety of capabilities including the projection of color images in still or in motion. The advantage of this projector for opera is the ability to

¹³¹ Snick, interview with author, 20 March 1991.

¹³² Cunningham, telephone interview with author, 17 April 1991.

use one projector to flash traditional supertitles above the stage, or to project text and/or other special effects on stage.

The creative use of supertitles is among many topics for future discussion. Until now, certain issues related to supertitles have been mentioned briefly or eliminated entirely because they were beyond the scope of this monograph. These issues are important; however, and should be addressed.

One issue is the need for supertitle preference surveys. Some opera companies who have been using supertitles for several years, such as Washington Opera and San Francisco, have had few complaints concerning supertitles and find a preference survey irrelevant at this time.

Conversely, supertitles are relatively new to the Baton Rouge Opera Company and preference surveys are recommended. For future surveys, the question concerning the influence of supertitles on attendance may be phrased differently to gather more specific information. Rather than "Would the presence of supertitles affect your decision to attend an opera?" the alternatives might be (1) "Would you attend a foreign language opera performed in the original language with supertitles?" and (2) "Would you attend a foreign language opera performed in the original language without supertitles?" or simply "Would you prefer to attend a foreign language opera with supertitles rather than without?"

Other suggestions may include alternatives for increasing the percentage of surveys returned (only 29% of BRO audiences returned the preliminary survey). Rather than surveys handed to audience members at the door, surveys may be inserted in the

program (many opera companies use this approach). Additionally, pencils could be provided with surveys and perhaps an envelope attached to the end of each row of seats for easy deposit.

The issue of foreign-language opera versus opera in English translation was mentioned briefly in Chapter 3. Many people view supertitles as a compromise while others prefer opera to be sung in the vernacular of the country in which it is performed. It would be informative to expand audience surveys specifically targeting preference for English translation. An important focus should be the investigation of how many people actually understand the text when sung in English translation. Another question might be the preference for English translation versus the original foreign language with supertitles. Some Canadian opera companies offer bilingual supertitles, projection of French and English texts, while opera is sung in its original language. During the 1990 convention of Opera America, the issue of bilingual supertitles was mentioned briefly by opera companies located in largely Hispanic communities such as Miami.¹³³ While the process of projecting bilingual supertitles is relatively simple, American opera companies are skeptical. Future audience surveys might focus on the use of bilingual supertitles to determine whether or not operagoers consider them beyond the scope of unobtrusiveness. There may be limits imposed on a movement to enhance opera while making it accessible to everyone.

¹³³ Marioara Trifan, Director, Baton Rouge Opera, conversation with author, 24 January 1991.

Another debate, prevalent among several American opera companies, is the use of supertitles for opera originally composed in English. Operagoers often complain about the inability to understand text when sung in English. Many singers agree English is a difficult language to project, especially in the extreme ranges of the voice. This author feels supertitles should not be used to "translate" faulty diction.

While the underlying factor is comprehension, the preference of supertitles for English language opera may depend on the structure and acoustics of the theater itself. For example, New York City Opera uses supertitles for its English language productions because the theater in which NYCO regularly performs was originally designed for ballet rather than opera. The acoustics are not suitable to opera performances; therefore, City Opera has compensated by using supertitles and a sound system.¹³⁴ Preference varies according to individual companies and theaters.

The preference for seating in titled performances raises more discussion. Operagoers sitting in the most expensive seats, such as the orchestra level or box seating areas, often have the most difficulty viewing supertitles. If the choice between sitting close to the stage/orchestra and reading supertitles is to be avoided, some changes must be made. Many advocates consider supertitles to be an aid to the audience; others argue that supertitles attract larger audiences. Ironically, faithful patrons who have paid high prices for

¹³⁴ Abreu, interview with author, 21 October 1990.

"good seats" are often deprived of supertitles. The debate is legitimate; however, it may not easily be resolved.

This discussion leads to the possibility that supertitles may have an effect on the architectural design of opera theaters in the future. The idea may take on considerable importance to opera companies who plan to invest in technology. Changes in opera production and opera companies, in order to artistically incorporate supertitles in performances, may necessitate the need for architectural reform.

New York Times critic Will Crutchfield offered a few suggestions to artists who have definite preference for supertitles. These suggestions can be applied to anyone directly involved with opera employing supertitles. In essence, Crutchfield suggested that artists request the right to review supertitle scripts prior to performances. Rather than complain about poorly written supertitles, perhaps singers can help make necessary improvements.¹³⁵ It is important for singers to know the translations of the lyrics they are singing, but it is perhaps equally important to be aware of what the audience comprehends through supertitles. Singers may learn, from reviewing the script, what the basic audience expectations are in terms of proper emotional expression. Individual interpretation does not have to be stifled.

Crutchfield, an obvious opponent of supertitles, made this final suggestion in "Crutchfield at Large":

¹³⁵ Will Crutchfield, "CRUTCHFIELD AT LARGE," *Opera News* (May 1990): 43.

Artists who feel strongly that canned text is out of place in live theater, and who have clout, could perhaps do more. A contract clause reading, say, "Miss Marton does not sing with titles" would be not an act of prima donna presumption, but a genuine service to opera.¹³⁶

The controversy over supertitles may never be resolved; however, there are three important factors which take precedence over all other arguments. The first is the consideration of the needs of individual companies and audiences. There are definite preferences among those involved in opera productions, but there is also something to be said for preference among those buying the tickets and the facilities at hand.

Secondly, the processes involving translation and projection should not be taken lightly. Effective supertitles can be achieved with careful preparation and quality projection equipment. Those involved have a great deal of responsibility. Mistakes or problems with equipment distract from the stage and detract from the overall performance. However, effective supertitles enhance the production and are relatively unobtrusive. The element of unpredictability adds to the difficulty of the task.

Lastly, supertitles should never become the focus of opera performances. The attention of the audience should remain on the music, drama, and artists; important elements which make opera unique among other art forms. Many who do not understand foreign languages find opera more accessible with supertitles. While not accepted by everyone, supertitles may insure the future of opera in America.

¹³⁶ Crutchfield, *Opera News* (May 1990): 43.

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APPENDIX A

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA

**Subtitles Available on Home Video and Compact Laserdisc
February 22, 1991**

PARAMOUNT and PIONEER

Subtitles on VHS Home Video & CD Laserdisc

Beta:	Paramount Release Date: VHS	Pioneer Release Date: CD Laserdisc
1. Don Carlo (Domingo)	Nov 85	Jul 84
2. Lucia di Lammermoor	June 86	Jul 84
3. Un Ballo in Maschera	Nov 85	Mar 85
4. Centennial Gala	Nov 85	Apr 85
5. Hansel and Gretel	Feb 87	Nov 85
6. La Bohème(Zeffirelli)foreign only	Nov 85	Nov 85
7. Idomeneo	Feb 86	Nov 85
8. Les Troyens	Jun 86	Feb 86
9. Tannhäuser	Feb 86	Oct 86
10. Tosca (Zeffirelli)	Feb 86	Aug 86
11. L'Elisir d'Amore	Dec 87	Jun 87
12. Ernani	Jun 86	(VHS only)
13. Highlights Vol. I	Jun 86	Sep 88
14. Manon Lescaut foreign only	Feb 87	Fall 89
15. Francesca da Rimini	Feb 87	Sep 87
16. Elektra	Dec 87	Aug 89
17. La Forza del Destino	Jul 88	Fall 89
18. Simon Boccanegra	Jul 88	Fall 89
19. Lohengrin	Jul 88	Aug 89

For information on store locations call:

Paramount 1-800-445-3800

Pioneer 1-800-255-2550

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON GESELLSCHAFT mbH
 Subtitles on CD Laserdisc and Home Video

	Release Date: VHS	Release Date: CD Laserdisc
1. Carmen	Feb 90	Mar 90
2. Turandot	Oct 90	Jan 90
3. Sutherland/Pavarotti Gala	-----	Apr 90
4. Ariadne Auf Naxos	May 90	Dec 89
5. Aida	May 91	May 91
6. Barber of Seville	Mar 91	Apr 91
7. Il Trovatore	Mar 91	Apr 91
8. Das Rheingold	Sept 91	Sep 91
9. Die Walküre	Sept 91	Sep 91
10. Siegfried	Oct 91	Oct 91
11. Götterdämmerung	Oct 91	Oct 91

DECCA INTERNATIONAL
 Subtitles on CD Laser disc

	Release Date: CD Laser disc
1. Luciano Pavarotti and James Levine in Recital	Mid 1991

Information on purchasing Met Opera NTSC (US standard)
 audio/video releases can be obtained by calling or writing either:

The Metropolitan Opera Gift Shop
 Lincoln Center
 New York, NY 10023 USA
 212-580-4090

The Metropolitan Opera Guild
 or 1865 Broadway
 New York, NY 10023 USA
 212-769-7000

APPENDIX B

**OPERA America Companies Using Title Projections
1989/90 Season**

Anchorage Opera	Nashville Opera
Arizona Opera Company	National Arts Centre
The Atlanta Opera	Nevada Opera
The Austin Lyric Opera	New Orleans Opera Association
Baltimore Opera Company	New York City Opera
Baton Rouge Opera	Opera Carolina
Boston Lyric Opera	Opera Colorado
Calgary Opera	Opera/Columbus
Canadian Opera Company	Opera Delaware
Chattanooga Opera	Opera Grand Rapids
Cincinnati Opera	Opera Hamilton
Cleveland Opera	Opera Memphis
Colorado Opera Festival	L'Opera de Montreal
Connecticut Opera	Opera/Omaha
The Dallas Opera	Opera Pacific
Dayton Opera Association	Opera San Jose
Edmonton Opera	Orlando Opera
Eugene Opera	Pacific Opera Theatre
Fargo-Moorhead Civic Opera	Palm Beach Opera
Florentine Opera of Milwaukee	Piedmont Opera Theatre
Fort Worth Opera	Pittsburgh Opera
Gold Coast Opera	Portland Opera
Greater Buffalo Opera	San Diego Opera
Greater Miami Opera	San Francisco Opera
Greensboro Opera Company	Sarasota Opera
Hawaii Opera Theatre	Seattle Opera
Houston Grand Opera	Southwest Virginia Opera
Indianapolis Opera	Spoletto Festival U.S.A.
Kentucky Opera	Syracuse Opera
Knoxville Opera	Toledo Opera
Los Angeles Music Center Opera	Townsend Opera Players
Lyric Opera of Chicago	Tri-Cities Opera
Manitoba Opera	Tulsa Opera
Marin Opera	Utah Opera Company
Metropolitan Opera	Vancouver Opera
Michigan Opera Theatre	Virginia Opera
The Minnesota Opera	The Washington Opera
Mobile Opera	Whitewater Opera Company
	Wolf Trap Opera Company

APPENDIX C

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA SUPERTITLES

Available on slides or floppy disk

All translations are by Christopher Bergen except where otherwise noted.

Adriana Lecouvreur (F. Zambello)	Lulu (Francis Rizzo)
L'Africaine (Clifford Cranna)	Macbeth (Joseph DiRugeriis)
Aida (Jerry Sherk and F. Zambello)	Madama Butterfly (Sherk, Zambello)
Un Ballo in Maschera (Sherk)	Manon
Il Barbiere di Siviglia	Manon Lescaut
La Bohème (Cranna)	Maometto Secondo
Capriccio	Mefistofele
Carmen	Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg
Cavalleria Rusticana (Paul Moor)	Nabucco (Cranna)
Les Contes d'Hoffmann	Le Nozze di Figaro (Cranna)
Così fan tutte	Orfeo (Cranna)
Don Carlo (Moor)	Orlando (Cranna)
Don Giovanni	Orlando Furioso (Cranna)
Don Pasquale (Sherk, Zambello)	Otello
Don Quichotte	I Pagliacci (Moor)
L'Elisir d'Amore (Sherk, Zambello)	Parsifal
Die Entführung aus dem Serail	Das Rheingold (Sherk, Zambello)
Eugene Onegin	Rigoletto (Sherk)
Falstaff (Moor)	Il Ritorno d'Ulisse (Cranna)
Faust (Moor)	Roméo et Juliette (Sherk)
Fidelio	Der Rosenkavalier
Die Fledermaus	Salome

Der Fliegende Hollander	Siegfried (Sherk, Zambello)
Die Frau ohne Schatten	Suor Angelica
La Forza del Destino (Gregg Tallman)	Tosca (Zambello)
Gianni Schicchi	La Traviata (Sherk)
Götterdämmerung (Sherk, Zambello)	Il Trovatore
Idomeneo	Turandot
Jenůfa (Yveta Synek-Graff)	La Voix Humaine
Khovanshchina (Sherk, Zambello)	Die Walküre (Sherk, Zambello)
Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk	Werther
Lohengrin	Wozzeck
Lucia di Lammermoor (Moor)	Die Zauberflöte

For information on San Francisco Opera Supertitles contact:

San Francisco Opera
 Attn: Christopher Bergen
 War Memorial Opera House
 301 Van Ness Avenue
 San Francisco, CA 94102-4509
 Telephone: (415) 861-4008
 Fax: (415) 621-7508

OPERA SUPERTITLES BY SONYA FRIEDMAN **INVENTORY OF OPERA SUPERTITLES**

Revised 10/10/90

<u>OPERA</u>	<u>MEDIUM</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>COPYRIGHT</u>
Alcina/Handel	e/p	Four Corners	90
Anna Bolena/Donizetti	tv	Lincoln Center	11/85
	e/p	Four Corners	91
Aida/Verdi	tv	Met	85 & 89
Ariadne Auf Naxos/Strauss	tv	Met	88
	e/p	Four Corners	90
Un Ballo in Maschera/Verdi	tv	Met	80 & 91
Il Barbiere Di Siviglia/ Rossini	tv	Lincoln Center	76 & 84
	slides	NYCO	1/84
	e/p	Four Corners	90
	tv	Met	2/89
La Bohème/Puccini	tv	Met	1/82
	slides	NYCO	8/84
	e/p	Four Corners	
Boris Goudonov/Mussorgsky	tv	Lincoln Center	5/85
	e/p	Four Corners	88
Carmen/Bizet	tv	WNET	79
	tv	Lincoln Center	8/84
	slides	NYCO	8/84
	e/p	Four Corners	
Carmina Burana/Orff	tv		12/89
Cavalleria Rusticana/ Mascagni	slides	NYCO	5/84
	e/p	Four Corners	9/90
Cendrillon/Massenet	slides	NYCO	5/84
	e/p	Four Corners	
La Clemenza di Tito/Mozart	tv	WNET	81
Les Contes D'Hoffmann/ Offenbach	tv	MET	88
	e/p	Four Corners	90
The Cunning Little Vixen	tv	Lincoln Center	10/83
La Damnation De Faust/Berlioz	e/p	Four Corners	89
Dialogues Des Carmelites/ Poulenc	e/p	Four Corners	89
Don Carlo/Verdi	tv	Met	80 & 83
Don Giovanni/Mozart	tv	Met	78 & 90
	tv	Lincoln Center	89
	e/p	Four Corners	91
Don Pasquale/Verdi	tv	Met	79
	e/p	Four Corners	82 & 86
Elektra/Strauss	tv	Met	2/80
L'Elisir D'Amore/Donizetti	tv	Met	2/81
Ernani/Verdi	tv	Met	11/83
Erwartung	tv	Met	89
Faust/Gounod	tv	WNET	79
	slides & e/p	Four Corners	90

La Fille Du Regiment	e/p	Four Corners	90
Die Fledermaus/Strauss	tv	WNET	81
Der Fliegende Holländer	slides & e/p	Four Corners	88
La Forza Del Destino/Verdi	tv	MET	4/84
Francesca da Rimini	tv	MET	4/84
Gianni Schicchi/Puccini	e/p	Four Corners	90
La Gioconda/Ponchielli	tv	Lincoln Center	9/79
Gotterdammerung/Wagner	e/p	Four Corners	86
	tv	Met	90
Idomeneo/Mozart	tv	Met	11/82
L'Incoronazione di Poppea/ Monteverdi	tv	WNET	80
	e/p	Four Corners	
Iris/Mascagni	slides	New Jersey	88
L'Italiana in Algieri/ Rossini	tv	Met	1/86
	slides & e/p	Four Corners	86
Lakmé/Dèlibes	slides	NYCO	9/84
	e/p	Four Corners	
Lodoletta/Mascagni	slides	New Jersey	88
	e/p	Four Corners	
I Lombardi/Verdi	slides	New Jersey	91
	e/p	Four Corners	91
Luisa Miller/Verdi	tv	Met	1/79
Lucia di Lammermoor/ Donizetti	tv	Met	2/83
	tv	Lincoln Center	4/85
	slides & e/p	Four Corners	
LuLu/Berg	tv	Lincoln Center	10/77
Madama Butterfly/Puccini	tv	Lincoln Center	10/82
	slides	NYCO	1/84
	e/p	Four Corners	91
Manon/Massenet	tv	Lincoln Center	10/77
	slides & e/p	Four Corners	85
Manon Lescaut/Puccini	tv	Met	8/80
	slides & e/p	Four Corners	85
Mefistofele/Boito	slides	NYCO	7/84
	e/p	Four Corners	
Die Meistersinger/Wagner	e/p	Four Corners	89
Norma/Bellini	e/p	Four Corners	89
Le Nozze di Figaro/Mozart	tv	Met	2/86
	e/p	Four Corners	88
L'Orfeo/Monteverdi	tv	WNET	81
	slides & e/p	Four Corners	86
Orpheè et Eurydice/Gluck	e/p	Four Corners	87
Otello/Verdi	tv	Met	9/78
	slides & e/p	Four Corners	86
I Pagliacci/Leoncavallo	tv	WNET	84
	slides	NYCO	1/84
	e/p	Four Corners	
The Passion According to St. Matthew/Bach	slides	Summerfair (Four Corners Copyright)	
	e/p	Four Corners	
Das Rheingold/Wagner	e/p	Four Corners	86
	tv	Met	90
Roméo & Juliette/Gounod	e/p	Four Corners	88

La Rondine/Puccini	slides	NYCO	8/84
	e/p	Four Corners	
	tv	Lincoln Center	10/85
Der Rosenkavalier/Strauss	tv	WNET	80
	tv	Met	10/82
Salome/Strauss	e/p	Four Corners	91
Samson et Dalila/	tv	WNET	81
Saint-Saëns	slides & e/p	Four Corners	91
Siegfried/Wagner	e/p	Four Corners	86
	tv	Met	90
Simon Boccanegra/Verdi	tv	Met	90
La Sonnambula/Bellini	slides & e/p	Four Corners	85
Suor Angelica/Puccini	slides & e/p	Four Corners	88
Tannhäuser/Wagner	tv	WNET	80
	tv	Met	12/82
	slides	Seattle	84
	e/p	Four Corners	
Tosca/Puccini	tv	Met	78
	slides & e/p	Four Corners	85
La Traviata/Verdi	tv	Met	8/80
	slides	NYCO	84
	e/p	Four Corners	
Il Trittico/Puccini	slides	NYCO	84
	e/p	Four Corners	
	tv	Met	87
Ulisse Torna in Patria/ Monteverdi	tv	WNET	81
Le Villi/Puccini	slides	New Jersey	88
	e/p	Four Corners	
Die Walküre/Wagner	slides	Seattle	85
	e/p	Four Corners	
	tv	Met	90
War and Peace/Prokofiev	e/p	Four Corners	90
Werther/Massenet	e/p	Four Corners	89
Zanetto/Mascagni	slides	New Jersey	88
	e/p	Four Corners	
Die Zauberflöte/Mozart	slides	Lyric of Chicago	86
	e/p	Four Corners	

For information contact:

Four Corners Productions
 Attn: Sonya Friedman
 73 Spring Street
 New York, NY 10012
 1-(212)-941-6311

ENGLISH SURTITLES AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL

<i>PRODUCTIONS</i>	<i>TRANSLATOR</i>	<i>YEAR</i>
L'AMICO FRITZ	FRANK RIZZO	1988
UN BALLO IN MASCHERA	FRANK RIZZO	1985
IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA	FRANK RIZZO	1988
LA BOHÈME	FRANK RIZZO	1984
COSÌ FAN TUTTE	FRANK RIZZO	1989
DON GIOVANNI	FRANK RIZZO	1985
FIDELIO	FRANK RIZZO	1987
GOYA	FRANK RIZZO	1986
LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR	FRANK RIZZO	1989
MADAMA BUTTERFLY	FRANK RIZZO	1987
MANON	FRANK RIZZO	1991
IL MATRIMONIO SEGRETO	FRANK RIZZO	1986
LE NOZZE DI FIGARO	FRANK RIZZO	1984
EUGENE ONEGIN	CAROL PALCA	1985
RIGOLETTO	FRANK RIZZO	1991
ROMÉO ET JULIETTE	FRANK RIZZO	1987
TOSCA	FRANK RIZZO	1988
LA TRAVIATA	FRANK RIZZO	1988
IL TROVATORE	FRANK RIZZO	1986
THE TSAR'S BRIDE	FRANK RIZZO	1986
WERTHER	FRANK RIZZO	1988

For information, contact:
THE WASHINGTON OPERA
KENNEDY CENTER
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20566
202 416 7894

APPENDIX D

**RESULTS OF BATON ROUGE OPERA SUPERTITLES SURVEY
CONDUCTED BY CHRISTINA ALVES
November 15 and 18, 1990**

QUESTION 0. WHICH PERFORMANCE DID YOU ATTEND?

	Number
November 15	356
November 18	271

QUESTION 1. IS THIS THE FIRST OPERA YOU HAVE EVER ATTENDED?

	Overall	Overall %	Show 1	Show 2
Yes	127	20.3	85	42
No	499	79.7	270	229
No response	1	0.1		
Total	627			

QUESTION 2. HAVE YOU EVER ATTENDED AN OPERA WITH SUPERTITLES PRIOR TO THIS PERFORMANCE?

	Number	Percent
Yes	279	55.9
No	215	43.1
No response	5	1.0
Total	499	

QUESTION 3. HAVE YOU EVER ATTENDED AN OPERA WITHOUT SUPERTITLES?

	Number	Percent
Yes	463	92.8
No	26	5.2
No response	10	2.0
Total	499	

BATON ROUGE OPERA SURVEY
(Continued)

QUESTION 4. WOULD THE PRESENCE OF SUPERTITLES INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO ATTEND AN OPERA?

	<u>Overall</u>		<u>First Time Attend</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
More likely	35	5.6	5	3.9
Less likely	361	57.6	44	34.7
No effect	221	35.3	76	59.8
No response	10	1.6	2	1.6
Total	627		127	

QUESTION 5. DO YOU LIKE OR DISLIKE SUPERTITLES?

	<u>Overall</u>		<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>		<u>Single Tickets</u>		<u>Season Tickets</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Like	517	82.5	197	83.5	309	81.1	309	82.4	199	81.9
Dislike	40	6.4	15	6.4	25	6.6	22	5.9	17	7.0
No response	70	11.2	24	10.2	47	12.3	44	11.7	27	11.1
Total	627		236		381		375		243	

QUESTION 6. WHAT IS YOUR GENDER, MALE OR FEMALE?

	<u>Overall</u>		<u>Single Tickets</u>		<u>Season Tickets</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	236	37.6	135	36.0	94	38.7
Female	381	60.8	233	62.1	147	60.5
No response	10	1.6	7	1.9	2	.8
Total	627		375		243	

BATON ROUGE OPERA SURVEY
(Continued)

QUESTION 7. TO WHICH AGE GROUP DO YOU BELONG?

	<u>Overall</u>		<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No age	6	1.0	0	0	4	1.1
<9	5	0.8	2	0.8	3	0.8
10-19	68	10.8	20	8.5	45	11.8
20-29	87	13.9	34	14.4	52	13.6
30-39	73	11.6	23	9.8	49	12.8
40-49	106	16.9	45	19.1	61	16.0
50-59	115	18.3	44	18.6	70	18.3
60-69	110	17.6	46	19.5	64	16.8
70-79	46	7.3	20	8.5	26	6.8
>80	11	1.8	2	0.8	8	2.1
Total	627		236		382	

QUESTION 8. DO YOU SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH?

	<u>Overall</u>		<u>Single Tickets</u>		<u>Season Tickets</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	247	39.4	*157	41.9	# 86	35.4
No	371	59.2	214	57.1	153	63.0
No response	9	59.2	4	1.1	4	1.6
Total	627		375		243	

*43 spoke more than one. #26 spoke more than one.

BATON ROUGE OPERA SURVEY
(Continued)

QUESTION 9. WHICH LANGUAGES DO YOU SPEAK?

	Number That Speak English Plus...
French	135
Spanish	74
German	64
Other	29
Italian	21
Chinese	7
Japanese	4
Russian	3
Arabic	1
Hebrew	1
Portugese	0
Slavic	0
No response	9
Yes, but no language given	7

QUESTION 10. ARE YOU ATTENDING BATON ROUGE OPERA PERFORMANCES AS A SEASON SUBSCRIBER OR A SINGLE TICKET BUYER?

	Overall	
	No.	%
Season subscriber	243	38.8
Single ticket	375	59.8
No response	9	1.4
Total	627	

BATON ROUGE OPERA SURVEY
(Continued)

DATA ANALYSIS NOTES.

A total of 627 survey forms were returned for analysis. However, all respondents did not answer all questions. When analysis included information from more than one question, priority was given to one question to establish the total number. For example, when gender was used in combination with another question, the 617 that identified gender served as the total number. Similarly, 618 was the total when questions were compared to season subscribers and single ticket buyers.

VITA

Christina Margaret Alves was born in Medford, Massachusetts on June 26, 1962 to Edward and Christine Seavey. One of seven children, Christina and her family moved to Fort Smith, Arkansas in 1970. She attended Arkansas State University and graduated with a Bachelor of Music Education degree in 1984. Christina completed a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from Louisiana State University in 1986 and began her doctoral studies under the instruction of Robert Grayson and Martina Arroyo. In August of 1991, she graduated from LSU with a Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance.

Christina's performance experience includes three seasons with the Ohio Light Opera, the role of "Cinderella" in LSU's production of *La Cenerentola*, "Nicklausse" in Baton Rouge Opera's production of *Les Contes D'Hoffman*, "LuLu" in *The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* with the Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia, and "Mad Margaret" in *Ruddigore* with the Young Victorian Theatre of Baltimore. Christina has appeared as soloist with various organizations including the University of Notre Dame Chorale and Glee Club, the Concert Choir of New Orleans, the Acadian Chorale of Lafayette, and LSU's Choirs. She received many academic and music scholarships throughout her education. One music scholarship, through Kent State University, enabled her to participate in the "Kent in Florence" program during the Fall of 1988. In addition to performing, Christina is active as a voice teacher, church musician and a music consultant. She and her husband Thomas reside in Baltimore, MD.

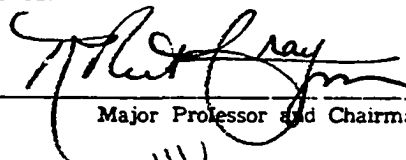
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT


Candidate: Christina Margaret Alves

Major Field: Music

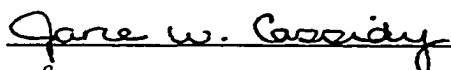
Title of Dissertation: THE USE OF SUPERTITLES BY AMERICAN OPERA COMPANIES

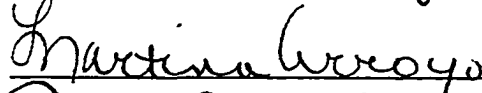
Approved:


Major Professor and Chairman


Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:











Date of Examination:

July 8, 1991