




RESEARCH ARTICLE

Displaying the Magician's Art: Theatrical Illusion in Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute* (1975)

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Abstract

Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute* is a film that not only represents a performance of Mozart's opera but also reflects on the experience it generates in the theatrical audience. The opera becomes the means through which Bergman explores the magic of theatrical illusion by displaying the artifice behind it. I examine the film's take on the representation of theatrical illusion from two perspectives. First, with reference to the famous sequence of the overture, I demonstrate the crucial role of the audience's imaginative engagement. Second, I zero in on Bergman's role as omniscient director who not only uncovers the artificiality of the theatrical source but also plays tricks with the film audience. Yet our observing the 'constructed naturalness' of the magic flute and Papageno or the theatricality of the Queen of the Night's performance does not hinder the film's ability to engage us. Rather, witnessing the workings of illusion strengthens its grip on us.

Keywords: Magic Flute; Ingmar Bergman; Theatrical illusion; Film; Aesthetic experience

What exactly is Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute* (*Trollflöjten*, 1975)? This may seem quite a simple question but the diversity of given answers shows that the opposite is true. This film has been considered, among other things, 'a virtuoso "theater film"',¹ a filmed opera,² an 'opera-film',³ a film version of Mozart's opera,⁴ a film adaptation of Mozart's opera,⁵ 'a filmed TV version of Mozart's opera',⁶ 'a television film ... [that] represents a landmark of filmed opera',⁷ 'a film for television, not the movie theater ... an [example of] opera as film'⁸ and 'not an opera film; it is a television opera'.⁹ These descriptions refer to the film's connection to theatre, Bergman's particular take on Mozart's opera and his choice of television to express his perspective. As such, their focus ranges from the object of representation and the mode of imitation to the nature of the medium. Yet what the

¹ Lise-Lone Marker and Frederick J. Marker, *Ingmar Bergman: Four Decades in the Theater* (Cambridge, 1982), 112.

² Richard Fawkes, *Opera on Film* (London, 2000), 169.

³ Marcia J. Citron, *When Opera Meets Film* (Cambridge, 2010), 207, 246.

⁴ Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film* (New York, 1987), 126.

⁵ Paisley Livingston, *Ingmar Bergman and the Rituals of Art* (Ithaca, NY, 1982), 235.

⁶ Birgitta Steene, *Ingmar Bergman: A Reference Guide* (Amsterdam, 2005), 308.

⁷ Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven, CT, 2000), 57.

⁸ Ellen J. Burns, 'An Exploration of Post-Aesthetic Analysis: W. A. Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* by Ingmar Bergman', in *Analecta Husserliana*, vol. 73: *Life - The Play of Life on the Stage of the World in Fine Arts, Stage-Play, and Literature*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht, 2001), 132.

⁹ Egil Törnqvist, *Bergman's Muses: Aesthetic Versatility in Film, Theatre, Television, and Radio* (Jefferson, NC, 2003), 66.

diversity of answers tells us is that the particularity of this film lies precisely in its blurring of categorical boundaries.

Consider the location. Bergman's film does not really show a performance of Mozart's opera in the Drottningholm Court Theatre. True, the accuracy of the reproduction of the theatrical environment creates the illusion of an actual operatic performance in that theatre. Yet it was all done in a film studio.¹⁰ Thus, *The Magic Flute* is not opera as recorded by film but rather a film about an operatic performance. In particular, it is a film made for television about the experience generated by an operatic performance for the theatrical audience shown on screen.

In relation to the mode of imitation, this film is not, properly speaking, an adaptation or a version of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. It is not just that Bergman cut three numbers and had the performers sing in Swedish.¹¹ As I argue, the opera is not the end point of the film; rather, the opera is the means through which to explore the spectatorial experience.¹² Bergman articulated this experience by means of mimetic action, or what Martin Esslin called 'the dramatic mode', which underpins all the different media (e.g., theatre, film) and artforms (e.g., music, drama, scenography) involved in the production. As Esslin suggests, 'a filmed version of a staged play [opera in this case] ... clearly is still drama'.¹³ Unlike the dominant view of cinema as a visual and narrative medium, I understand films as audio-visual and mimetic creations. I argue that films 'tell' by displaying actions that are articulated through both images and sounds, and so they fall into the category of drama. Furthermore, as Giorgio Biancorosso emphasises, these images and sounds require 'a perceiving subject, who recomposes them in an imaginary world of appearances'.¹⁴ In *The Magic Flute*, Bergman consciously elaborated on the mediated and mediating nature of art inspired by his own personal experiences as both spectator and creator. To make this idea explicit, he himself appears as a member of the theatrical audience in one of the shots of the montage sequence at the end of the overture (Figure 1).¹⁵ By portraying himself among the audience in the opera theatre, Bergman is evoking childhood memories of how he had always imagined this opera at Drottningholm. At the same

¹⁰ According to Peter Cowie, 'Bergman wanted to shoot the film inside the celebrated Drottningholm Palace (in a royal park on the outskirts of Stockholm), but the scenery was considered too fragile to accommodate a film crew. So the stage – complete with wings, curtains, and wind machines – was painstakingly copied and erected in the studios of the Swedish Film Institute, under the direction of Henny Noremark.' Peter Cowie, 'The Magic Flute', *The Criterion Collection*, www.criterion.com/current/posts/73-the-magic-flute.

¹¹ Bergman cut numbers 11, 16 and 19 from the original opera, as well as some text from several spoken scenes. For a detailed comparison of the plot development in Mozart's opera and Bergman's film, see Burns, 'An Exploration of Post-Aesthetic Analysis', 135–7.

¹² In my view, the fact that the film starts with a pre-title sequence rather than the operatic overture is just one detail that corroborates this idea.

¹³ Martin Esslin, *The Field of Drama: How the Signs of Drama Create Meaning on Stage and Screen* (London, 1987), 29. Esslin does not deny the 'technical, technological, and psychological differences that arise from the different modes of conveying ... dramatic features', but he also contends that this division between theatre and film 'has become anachronistic and inhibits clear critical thinking about the very considerable number of essential and fundamental aspects that the dramatic media have in common' (31). In my opinion, his strongest argument is that 'in the real world the practitioners of drama have not made and do not make these rigid distinctions ... they regard their work in all the different dramatic media as basically the exercise of a single type of skill that can be readily adapted to the specific differences and demands of the different media' (35). Bergman is a clear case in point.

¹⁴ Giorgio Biancorosso, 'Beginning Credits and Beyond: Music and the Cinematic Imagination', *Echo: A Music-Centered Journal* 3/1 (2001), www.echo.ucla.edu/article-beginning-credits-and-beyond-music-and-the-cinematic-imagination-author/, par. 63.

¹⁵ Apart from this cameo, Bergman also appears in *Secrets of Women/Waiting Women* (*Kvinnors väntan*, 1952), *A Lesson in Love* (*En lektion i kärlek*, 1954), *Dreams/Journey into Autumn* (*Kvinnodröm*, 1955), *Brink of Life/So Close to Life* (*Nära livet*, 1958), *The Ritual/The Rite* (*Riten*, 1969) and *In the Presence of a Clown* (*Larmar och gör sig till*, 1997).

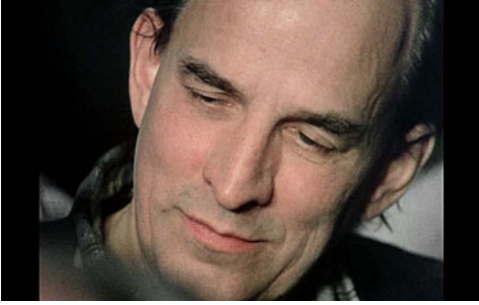


Figure 1. Bergman's cameo. (colour online)

time, through his cameo appearance, Bergman directs our attention to his role as the manipulator of the artifice that triggers the film audience's aesthetic experience. This dual role of spectator and artist is closely related to Margaret Koskinen's observation that Bergman adopted an 'artful approach' in his life through the 'self-conscious performativity of his authorial voice'.¹⁶ I argue that in his extensive and diverse artistic productions, Bergman was interested not in conveying meaning but in delving into the process of meaning-making itself. This idea also applies to the autobiographical articulations of his work. Janet Staiger's identification of certain recurrent motifs that appear in Bergman's biographical accounts illustrates the point. One of these recurrent motifs is what she calls the 'originary moment', and the example she provides is the passage in his autobiography in which Bergman emphasises the enchantment that his first film projector produced in him. Staiger argues that Bergman was 'opening the door to the famous associations of Bergman with magic and a pleasure in illusion-making'.¹⁷ The following quote – one of Bergman's most cherished personal experiences regarding the magic of the theatrical illusion – falls into the same category ('originary moment'), and it has a similar outcome, too. Bergman recalls that experience in *The Magic Lantern* as follows:

When I was 12, I was allowed to accompany a musician who was playing the celesta backstage in Strindberg's *A Dream Play*. It was a searing experience. Night after night, hidden in the proscenium tower, I witnessed the marriage scene between the Advocate and the Daughter. It was the first time I had experienced the magic of acting. The Advocate held a hairpin between his thumb and forefinger; he twisted it, straightened it out, and broke it. *There was no hairpin, but I saw it.*¹⁸

Notice how Bergman opens his recollection with an explicit reference to music: a celesta playing backstage. I find this detail relevant for several reasons: first, there is no reference to such musical accompaniment in the original play; second, the instrument itself, a celesta, is quite peculiar (particularly its magical sound); and third, Bergman's aesthetic response to what was happening on stage was not spoiled by his being aware of the backstage reality. The music of the celesta contributed to this experience, irrespective of

¹⁶ Quoting Koskinen, Bergman 'contributed to his own legend with full awareness of the difference between Bergman the biographical person of flesh and blood and "Bergman" the brand name with quotation marks'. Maaret Koskinen, 'Ingmar Bergman, the Biographical Legend, and the Intermedialities of Memory', *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 2/1 (2010), www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/jac.v2i0.5862.

¹⁷ I agree with Staiger in that '[t]he point here is not that one story or the other ... is more authentic to Bergman's persona but to point out the ease with which he and we use such stories to create for him a persona to use to construct his author-function'. Janet Staiger, 'Self-Fashioning in Authoring a Reception', in *Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts*, ed. Maaret Koskinen (London, 2008), 95.

¹⁸ Ingmar Bergman, *The Magic Lantern: An Autobiography* (New York, 1988), 33.

whether it was an attribute of that particular production or the product of Bergman's own imagination and/or memory. Bergman's 'searing experience' was the experience of a sensorial perception taken over by his imagination, the experience of theatrical illusion. *The Magic Flute* became an expressive means by which Bergman elaborated on his childhood experience, and in so doing the film literally performs reality.¹⁹

Illusion as imaginative engagement

The theorisation of aesthetic illusion has moved back and forth between the participation of the spectator and the relevance of the artwork itself in that engagement. Werner Wolf defines aesthetic illusion as a 'pleasurable mental state that frequently emerges during the reception of many representational texts, artifacts or performances'.²⁰ He later argues that '[g]enerally, illusionist representations are accessible with relative facility. They offer potential recipients with material to *lure* them into the represented worlds and create a sense of verisimilitude, a prerequisite for the emergence of aesthetic illusion, although generic conventions may serve to counteract improbable elements.'²¹ Wolf follows Ernst Gombrich's idea of 'guided projection' in the mind of the recipient, which entails taking into consideration the representation, the recipient and the context in a theory of illusion.²² I too hold this inclusive view, although I would like to stress the significance of an element that not only partakes in all three dimensions, but also lies at their core: convention. Following Raymond Williams, conventions are 'basic to any understanding of drama as a form'.²³ Williams also argues that the question of convention is not only based on a relation between form and performance, but 'it is also a question of audiences; it is there, in the theatre as a social institution, that conventions are really made'.²⁴

As described in the preceding quote and made explicit in the film, theatrical illusion does not entail any 'suspension of disbelief' (after Coleridge), any confusion between reality and fiction (the psychological understanding of the term 'illusion'), or any *alternation* between the states of being fully emotionally absorbed and being rationally detached during the aesthetic experience. Rather, theatrical illusion consists of a deep, conscious and voluntary engagement with representations based on being fully aware of their artificial and mimetic nature. This combination of absorption and distance has often been qualified as 'paradoxical',²⁵ or understood in terms of an 'asymmetrical ambivalence': for Wolf 'aesthetic illusion is gradable according to the degrees of immersion or distance

¹⁹ This notion of experience and its connection to expression and reality was first articulated by Wilhelm Dilthey and later on developed by Victor Turner in his formulation of an anthropology of experience. See Victor Turner and Edward Bruner, *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana, IL, 1986).

²⁰ Werner Wolf, 'Illusion (Aesthetic)', in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn, John Pier, Wolf Schmid and Jörg Schönert, www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/illusion-aesthetic.

²¹ Wolf, 'Illusion (Aesthetic)', italics mine.

²² Despite holding this inclusive view, Wolf's reading of Gombrich does not include Gombrich's other main contribution to the theory of representation, namely 'Meditations on a Hobby Horse or the Roots of Artistic Form'. In that famous essay, Gombrich argues that "representation" does not depend on formal similarities, beyond the minimum requirements of function. ... All art is "image-making" and all image-making is rooted in the creation of substitutes.' Ernst Gombrich, 'Meditations on a Hobby Horse', in *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (London, 1985), 4, 9. It is function (use) rather than form (verisimilitude) that matters in artistic representations.

²³ Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (New York, 1969), 12.

²⁴ Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, 345.

²⁵ Frederick Burwick: 'The controversy over dramatic illusion ... still becomes entangled in the seemingly paradoxical simultaneity of the consciousness of artifice and participation in illusion.' Frederick Burwick, 'Stage Illusion', 693, quoted in Reginald A. Foakes, 'Making and Breaking Dramatic Illusion', in *Aesthetic Illusion: Theoretical and Historical Approaches*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Walter Pape (Berlin, 1990), 217.

present in given reception situations and is thus unstable'.²⁶ Bergman's depiction of this phenomenon in the film, however, is rather closer to taking 'an interest in appearances, while maintaining intact one's awareness of the status of the physical substrata that make those very appearances possible – be they actors, pictures, printed words, moving images, or recorded sounds'.²⁷ Being aware of the nature of representations and actively engaging with them entails participating in a game of make-believe.²⁸ By representing himself among the theatrical audience in the film, Bergman made very clear that – in Biancorosso's words – '[t]here is a sense, then, in which the intensity, richness, and vivacity of our absorption into a world of make-believe is evidence not of a deceptive, illusory state of mind but rather of the opposite – an all too encompassing understanding of the nature of representation and the subject's relation to it'.²⁹

Staging opera for the screen, in a film studio

Bergman decided to elaborate on the nature of theatrical illusion not by staging but rather by directing a film rendition of *The Magic Flute*.³⁰ His choice of film allowed him to explore and control the representation of the operatic performance and the experience it induces in an audience to an extent that would have otherwise eluded him.³¹ The performance never took place. The film is in fact a mock recording of a staging. Moreover, Bergman's interest in the workings of theatrical illusion made the film medium itself transparent for the television and subsequently film audiences.

Opera on screen is as old as cinema itself, and it has continued appearing in mediated form with the advent of television as well. Despite this symbiosis between opera and film, mediated operas have been seen as derivative and therefore of lower status compared with their live counterparts. Recent scholarship has put forward different understandings of the concept and experience of liveness, and of mediated representations of opera. This shift in orientation has been triggered by a renewed focus on the spectatorial experience. Following Gadamer's idea that we engage with works of art in the present, Philip Auslander rejects both technical and spectatorial determinisms in his understanding of liveness – that is, 'liveness' as an intrinsic property of the object or as constructed exclusively by its audience – and adopts instead a phenomenological perspective from which

²⁶ Wolf, 'Illusion (Aesthetic)'.

²⁷ Biancorosso, 'Beginning Credits', par. 18.

²⁸ Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (Cambridge, 1990).

²⁹ Biancorosso, 'Beginning Credits', par. 23.

³⁰ The idea of a new production of *The Magic Flute* had been in Bergman's mind for a long time when, in 1972, the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation commissioned him to film Mozart's opera for television to celebrate their golden anniversary; see Steene, *Ingmar Bergman*, 428. Swedish Television broadcast the film on New Year's Day 1975. Jeongwon Joe points out that '[t]he original production was shot in 16mm negative in 1974, but in the next year it was blown up to 35mm for a cinematic release at the Cannes Film Festival in May'. Jeongwon Joe, 'Opera on Film, Film in Opera: Postmodern Implications of the Cinematic Influence on Opera' (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1998), 96. Marcia Citron rightly identified certain specific features that make television different from cinema – a sense of intimacy, informality and reality, for instance. She also mentioned the specific technical needs of the medium, such as the use of multiple cameras and intensified lighting. Yet, as she also observed, 'the boundary between television and cinema can be blurred, as in Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute*, originally produced for television (1975) and subsequently shown in movie theatres'. Marcia Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven, CT, 2000), 41.

³¹ Marcia Citron offers a different interpretation of the relationship between film and theatre in this film. According to Citron, Bergman thematises a distinction between these two media through the film's sound practices. She claims that 'these practices help to form a contrast between theatrical and cinematic segments'. Marcia Citron, 'Vococentrism and Sound in Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute*', in *Voicing the Cinema: Film Music and the Integrated Soundtrack*, ed. James Buhler and Hannah Lewis (Urbana, IL, 2020), 93. Her idea of a contrast gives way to 'a gentle passing from one to the other that may barely be noticed' (93).

‘digital liveness emerges as a specific relation between self and other, a particular way of “being involved with something.” The experience of liveness results from our conscious act of grasping virtual entities as live in response to the claims they make on us.’³²

In relation to mediated operatic performances, Christopher Morris and Emanuele Senici each reject the ‘ideology of authenticity’ that underpins the understanding of video recordings as derivative and lower than live performances. Using a phenomenological approach similar to Auslander’s, Morris argues that ‘[r]ecognized as an engagement, an encounter with a video assumes all the hallmarks we associate with spectatorship: absorption, immediacy, affect, and so on’.³³ For his part, Senici encourages us to consider ‘what can be gained by thinking about videos on their own terms rather than as poor substitutes for the live performance, and to reflect on their own poetics, their own aesthetics, and their own ways of signifying’.³⁴ Moreover, as Sean Cubitt argues, ‘a repeated viewing of a video is not an actual repetition: it involves not only the viewed object but a viewing subject whose engagement will never be duplicated’.³⁵ This idea is grounded in a deeper understanding of media and the processes of mediation they trigger. Following Emanuele Senici, ‘video does not simply mediate, or translate a live performance, but rather constructs it according to video’s own technical and medial characteristics as well as to a complex set of cultural and social assumptions about its function and role’.³⁶

With his film of Mozart’s opera, Bergman not only shared his individual experience, but also reflected on the constructed dimension of an operatic performance. The following quote from his autobiography, *Images: My Life in Film*, touches upon this idea:

As a boy I loved to roam around. One October I set out for Drottningholm to see its unique court theater from the eighteenth century.

For some reason the stage door was unlocked. I walked inside and saw for the first time the carefully restored baroque theater. I remember distinctly what a bewitching experience it was: the effect of chiaroscuro, the silence, the stage.

In my imagination I have always seen *The Magic Flute* living inside that old theater, in that keenly acoustical wooden box, with its slanted stage floor, its backdrops and wings. Here lies the noble, magical illusion of theater. Nothing is; everything represents. The moment the curtain is raised, an agreement between stage and audience manifests itself. And now, together, we’ll create!

In other words, it is obvious that the drama of *The Magic Flute* should unfold in a baroque theatre with the efficiency and incomparable machinery of a baroque theatre.³⁷

It is not only the acting or the music that contributes to generating the ‘magical illusion’, but also the theatrical environment. The theatre is the physical location where the performance takes place, and also, following Gay McAuley, a spatial reality that acquires multiple functions in the construction and communication of theatrical meaning.³⁸ Bergman’s words highlight how the theatre provides a space for the communicative and creative act between performers and audience. The crucial role of the latter is emphasised by the use

³² Philippe Auslander, ‘Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective’, *PAJ: Journal of Performance and Art* 34/3 (2012), 10.

³³ Christopher Morris, ‘Digital Diva: Opera on Video’, *The Opera Quarterly* 26/1 (2010), 102.

³⁴ Emanuele Senici, ‘Porn Style? Space and Time in Live Opera Videos’, *The Opera Quarterly* 26/1 (2010), 78.

³⁵ Cited in Morrison, ‘Digital Diva’, 102.

³⁶ Senici, ‘Porn Style?’, 66.

³⁷ Ingmar Bergman, *Images: My Life in Film* (New York, 1994), 353.

³⁸ Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2007), 4.

of words such as ‘bewitching’, ‘magic’ and ‘illusion’, which refer to the psychological nature of the theatrical experience, based on an ‘interplay between the physical and the fictional’.³⁹ It is the combination of the audience’s particular psychological disposition to enjoy the artifice and the careful attention paid to its crafted nature that makes the ‘magical illusion of theatre’ possible.

Much of the scholarship on the film focuses on the act of an opera being performed.⁴⁰ Ideas of theatricality and universality recur with some frequency. The former follows from the structure of the ‘play-within-a-movie’,⁴¹ a *topos* in Bergman’s filmography (and Bergman scholarship). Universality, for its part, is a *topos* in the reception of Mozart’s music and resonates across Bergman’s adaptation of the opera’s plot.⁴² My own reading of Bergman’s *The Magic Flute* will focus on how he elaborated on the phenomenon of theatrical illusion and the artificiality that lies behind it, following the main ideas of the two earlier quotations from *The Magic Lantern* and *Images*.⁴³ I will examine how theatrical illusion is considered in this film from two perspectives. First, that of the theatrical audience, whose imaginative engagement becomes crucial for the artistic experience to happen, as the overture shows. Then, that of Bergman himself, who, knowing how illusion works, not only uses tricks to guide the audience’s perception but also displays their artificiality in the film. I analyse the ‘constructed naturalness’ of the magic flute and of Papageno in his first aria, and the conspicuous theatricality of the first intervention of the Queen of the Night to show how awareness of the artwork’s artificiality does not affect the audience’s experience – in fact, quite the opposite. The display of the workings of illusion enhances the audience’s engrossment with its magic.

Overture: the audience centre stage

During the overture of Bergman’s *The Magic Flute*, music is in play on screen. There is no image of the actual orchestra playing in the Drottningholm Court Theatre, not only because the music was recorded in a studio – just like the film – but also because Bergman’s aim was not to show the musical performance as such, but rather to disclose what the music does within that particular context. In this sequence, Bergman delved into the dramatic role of the overture. Through an original audio-visual choreography, he brought the music into play by weaving together a fabric of references, spaces and motifs, all revolving around the main character of the film: the audience. What this audio-visual tapestry reveals is how music activates and engages the audience’s imagination even before the start of the operatic representation on stage.

³⁹ McAuley, *Space in Performance*, 20.

⁴⁰ Fawkes, *Opera on Film*, 169; Jeremy Tambling, *A Night at the Opera: Media Representations of Opera* (London, 1994), 128; Joe, ‘Opera on Film, Film in Opera’, 95; Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 57.

⁴¹ Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 57.

⁴² On Mozart’s universality, see Alfred Einstein, *Mozart, His Character, His Work* (Oxford, 1962), 103–7; Brigid Brophy, *Mozart the Dramatist: The Value of His Operas to Him, to His Age and to Us* (London, 2013). As for Bergman’s universal message in *The Magic Flute*, see Törnqvist, *Bergman’s Muses*, 65–79; Dean Duncan, ‘Adaptation, Enactment, and Ingmar Bergman’s *Magic Flute*,’ *Brigham Young University Studies* 43/3 (2004), 229–50; Jaume Radigales, ‘Aproximación cinematográfica a “La Flauta Mágica”: El “caso Bergman”, treinta años después’, *Revista de Musicología* 28/2 (2005), 1079–89.

⁴³ I am considering here what Sven Nykvist (Bergman’s main cinematographer) identified as an overlooked area in Bergman studies: ‘One of the most exciting and inspiring things about Ingmar is that he has never been afraid to experiment and that he has always wanted to develop the language of film. An immense amount has been written about his films – of which it is perhaps easier for a critic to have an opinion – but it seems to me that you then miss something important, the way in which Ingmar narrates, how he delivers his message.’ In Paul Duncan and Bengt Wanselius, *The Ingmar Bergman Archives* (Cologne, 2008), 425.



Figure 2. Overture. Pythian Apollo. (colour online)

Captured from a low-angle shot, a shadowed view of the sculpture of the Apollo di Belvedere and the first Eb major chord of the opera together introduce the overture (Figure 2). The sculpture is situated in front of the Drottningholm Court Theatre, amidst a pictorial chiaroscuro. The mythical reference to the Greek god Apollo is not accidental. Apollo's posture refers to the moment right after he has shot a death-dealing arrow to slay Python, the serpent guarding Delphi.⁴⁴ This Pythian Apollo, as this representation of the god is usually known, clearly foreshadows the first episode of the opera. In the first episode, Tamino (Josef Köstlinger) also encounters a serpent – in Bergman's film a dragon – although instead of confronting it as the Greek god did, he runs away from it asking for help. We are in a fully human domain now, even with the dragon.

The second and third paired chords of the overture lead to the next two shots of the statue. From the initial full shot of Apollo, the camera angle shifts towards a medium-long shot and a medium shot. As we get closer, the lighting brightens and the bodily features of the Greek divinity come into focus. Apollo becomes a more human-like figure through a closer view of the sculpture induced by the music. Thus, by means of art – specifically, sculpture – Bergman has evoked the whole mythical world surrounding the Pythian Apollo, a world that is related to the fictional musical drama that follows. This is just an example of the agreement between stage – in this case screen – and audience that Bergman claims is necessary for the experience of theatrical illusion to take place. Only an audience who pays attention to these details and engages in the magician's art

⁴⁴ Robert Graves provides the following short description of this particular episode of the myth: 'On leaving Delos he [Apollo] made straight for Mount Parnassus, where the serpent Python, his mother's enemy, was lurking; and wounded him severely with arrows. Python fled to the Oracle of Mother Earth at Delphi, a city so named in honour of the monster Delphyne, his mate; but Apollo dared to follow him to the shrine, and there despatched him beside the sacred chasm. Mother Earth reported this outrage to Zeus, who not only ordered Apollo to visit Tempe for purification, but instituted the Pythian Games, in honour of Python, over which he was to preside penitentially.' In Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Baltimore, 1992), ch. 21.



Figure 3. Blond girl in the audience in *The Magic Flute*. (colour online)

can fully enjoy the aesthetic experience (just as Bergman did during his first experience of theatrical illusion when he was twelve years old).

The commencement of the first melodic motif takes us to the theatre's interior. The viewer's attention is drawn towards a blond girl (Helene Friberg⁴⁵) among the audience attending the opera (Figure 3). This girl stands out from the crowd due to her central position in the medium shot and as a result of the camera then zooming in on her face. She is looking down, in the direction of the orchestra pit, from where the sounds to which she is listening emerge. In perfect synchronisation with the music (b. 11, first note⁴⁶), she raises her eyes to contemplate the painting that decorates the stage curtain. Through a shot-reverse shot we can trace the trajectory of her gaze, from the *putto* holding a flower garland at the centre-top of the curtain, to the goddess Minerva holding a spear at the centre of the curtain, directly below. Then, along with the *sforzando* in bar 13, we see a long shot of the whole scene depicted on the curtain. During the last bar of the Adagio, the girl's gaze lowers back to the orchestra pit, closing this opening section before the Allegro starts.

Close-ups of this girl will punctuate not only the overture, but also the rest of the operatic performance.⁴⁷ Both Miriam Sheer and Dean Duncan consider these recurrences as a visual leitmotif throughout the film. However, while for Sheer the girl's 'symbolic association with the three divine messengers in the opera becomes clear after the Overture',⁴⁸ for Duncan, the girl becomes

A visual and narrative motif that will serve as a structuring metaphor for the duration of the film. ... the child will become the site of suture, the standard technique through which the film spectator is brought into the film space and brought under the rules and assumptions that inform and structure it. ... we come to share her space and perspective as we see through her eyes, and finally by seeing her again we see what kind of response that is expected for us.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ This girl has sometimes been identified as Linn Ullmann, daughter of Bergman and Liv Ullmann (see Joe, 'Opera on Film, Film in Opera', 125; and Citron, 'Vococentrism and Sound in Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute*', 92). I, however, follow here Steene's *Ingmar Bergman*, which is the most comprehensive and updated source for Bergman scholarship. Among the cast for *The Magic Flute*, Steene identifies the 'Girl in the audience' as Helen Friberg (Steene, *Ingmar Bergman*, 308).

⁴⁶ All the musical references are based on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *The Magic Flute (Die Zauberflöte): In Full Score* (New York, 1985), www.dlib.indiana.edu/variations/scores/vaa0618/large/index.html.

⁴⁷ Miriam Sheer provides a detailed account of the girl's appearances during the overture in relation to the bars of the score. The girl appears ten times corresponding to bars 4–9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 47, 94–6, 103, 171 and 226. For a more detailed elaboration see Miriam Sheer, 'Bergman's Cinematic Treatment of Mozart's Overture to "The Magic Flute"', *Israel Studies in Musicology* 6 (1996), 62–3.

⁴⁸ Sheer, 'Bergman's Cinematic Treatment of Mozart's Overture to "The Magic Flute"', 62.

⁴⁹ Duncan, 'Adaptation, Enactment, and Ingmar Bergman's *Magic Flute*', 231.

Duncan's reading of the girl's shot as a visual motif that recurs through the cinematic representation is clear, but, in my view, its narrative function as 'the site of suture' requires some further comment. If it is through this girl that the 'film spectator is brought into the film space', where was this cinematic spectator up until the first appearance of the girl? In other words, what space is the one conveyed during the film's pre-title sequence and the opening chords of the overture? Both moments show views from outside the theatre, but they are also part of the film; they happen within *the film space*. Furthermore, regarding Duncan's comment on how 'we come to share her space and perspective and see through her eyes', I would say that this is what happens during the Adagio section just analysed, but not during the rest of the film. Bergman shifts constantly between theatrical and cinematic perspectives, giving the cinematic audience access to areas of the theatre (backstage) and dimensions of the characters' experiences (their consciousness or thoughts). He even offers shots, inaccessible to the theatrical audience (represented by the blond girl), of the audience itself. Moreover, only at very particular moments do we see the girl's reaction to what is happening on stage, and it is usually before these happenings are shown. Hence, more than guiding or modelling our reactions, the girl's changing facial expressions trigger our imagination regarding what we are listening to but cannot see (since it is happening off screen). At these moments it is the dissociation between the sounds coming from the stage and the image of the girl's reaction to them that forces us to use our mind's eye to visualise what is taking place off screen. Therefore, the film's multiplicity of spaces, perspectives and realities cannot be confined to the point of view of a girl in the auditorium of the theatre. On the contrary, it is the intermedial dialogue Bergman creates and the metatheatrical devices he uses that negate any specific 'site of suture' in this film (and the implications of that concept) for the experience the film generates.

The film focuses not only on the magic of the illusion, but also on the workings of it – it combines the naivety of a girl's gaze with a more sophisticated understanding of the artifice that prompts belief. This combination endows the aesthetic experience with a cognitive dimension that transforms a purely sensorial experience into an intellectual realisation. Bergman describes illusion as 'noble and magical'.⁵⁰ Both adjectives have positive connotations and refer to realms beyond mundane reality or everyday life. In other words, illusion is not related to deception but to the faculty of imagination. Bergman is not only aware of but explicitly states the artificial – namely fictional or representational – nature of illusion. This artificiality is what requires the 'agreement between stage and audience'. His emphasis on mutual creation clearly acknowledges the audience's crucial role in the creative and communicative process that art triggers. Bergman brings to the fore this particular idea in the next section of the overture.

The Allegro sets the pace for a montage sequence in which the rest of the audience in the film are introduced through close-ups of their faces (Figure 4). Bergman creates an audio-visual choreography in which the images follow the music, the visual changes matching the musical *sforzandi*, the entrance of new instruments, their different combinations and so on. Only one shot gives us a view of a group larger than the one that opened this sequence; however, the full audience is still not depicted, and the blond girl remains in the centre. The rest of this section consists of individual close-ups of a wide and diverse range of people in terms of age, ethnicity and so on. They share an attentive listening attitude, but each listens in their own way.

⁵⁰ I am elaborating here on the quote cited earlier: 'Here lies the noble, magical illusion of theater. Nothing is; everything represents. The moment the curtain is raised, an agreement between stage and audience manifests itself. And now, together, we'll create!' In Bergman, *Images*, 353.



Figure 4. Overture. Bergman's audiovisual choreography. (colour online)

This is a purely cinematic excerpt due to the use of montage (impossible in the theatre), the representation of the theatrical audience, and the blend of music and images. The emphasis here is the theatrical audience's focused attention. We assume their engagement to be aural, but we cannot partake of their listening experience. What we see, however, is that they are not only listening, but also looking at different parts of the theatre, some of them are moving slightly to the beat of the music, while others are distracted, and so on. Thus, more than a listening experience, what this sequence represents is a

'musical experience', a broader category which, following Georgina Born, incorporates 'the corporeal, the affective, the collective and the located nature of musical experience'.⁵¹

Most of the members of the theatrical audience are listening attentively to the music, but each person's facial expression is unique, just like their physical features. Despite the individuality of each person's experience, their shared behaviour constitutes them as a group – the audience of the opera – which reveals, quoting Born again, the 'inescapably social character of what may appear to be the individual, introspective and affective modes of subjectivity engendered by aesthetic experience'.⁵² Unlike Richard Evidon, who claimed that 'there is nothing to be learnt from watching people listen to music, and besides this instance is dishonest, since we know the performance was not given before an audience',⁵³ I argue that the representation of attention in this sequence shows a complex type of behaviour on the part of the theatrical audience that is crucial for their aesthetic experience.

The workings of theatrical illusion

Bergman had always imagined *The Magic Flute* taking place inside the Drottningholm Court Theatre in order to use the theatre's unique Baroque machinery to best advantage. Composed in 1791, Mozart's opera is a paradigmatic work of the Classical era, but it also displays features common in Baroque opera (such as the virtuosity of some of the singing and the use of machinery for spectacular effects).⁵⁴ Bergman recognised the opera's Janus-faced nature and made the most of it to serve his exploration of theatrical illusion. He adopted an informed epistemological perspective through which he produced and enjoyed the magic of illusion while revelling in the artificial nature of the representation. In what follows, I will focus on how illusion works through the *magic* of the magic flute and the 'naturalness' of Papageno's stage behaviour in his first aria.

Bergman's 'magic' flute

It was Rose R. Subotnik who first raised the question 'Whose "Magic Flute?"' in her 1991 article of the same title.⁵⁵ Some years later, Marianne Tettlebaum decided to pursue the question in her own article similarly titled 'Whose Magic Flute?',⁵⁶ in which she claimed to have shifted 'the terms of inquiry from what the opera represents to the question of representation itself, from what the opera means to how it means'.⁵⁷ Although the different typography in each title is telling, in my view Subotnik had already made that turn to 'the question of representation'. She did so by highlighting the mediated nature of the operatic representation (i.e., the reliance on conventions) and by directing our attention to the particular sonority of the opera, namely to its physicality (or the materiality of the medium).⁵⁸

⁵¹ Georgina Born, 'Listening, Mediation, Event: Anthropological and Sociological Perspectives', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 135/1 (2010), 80.

⁵² Born, 'Listening, Mediation, Event', 83.

⁵³ Richard Evidon, 'Bergman and "The Magic Flute"', *The Musical Times* 117/1596 (1976), 131.

⁵⁴ On operatic conventions, see Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley, 1991); Paolo Fabbri, *Il secolo cantante: per una storia del libretto d'opera nel Seicento* (Bologna, 1990); Evan Baker, *From the Score to the Stage: An Illustrated History of Continental Opera Production and Staging* (Chicago, 2013).

⁵⁵ Rose R. Subotnik, 'Whose "Magic Flute?" Intimations of Reality at the Gates of the Enlightenment', *19th-Century Music* 15/2 (1991), 132–50.

⁵⁶ Marianne Tettlebaum, 'Whose Magic Flute?', *Representations* 102/1 (2008), 76–93.

⁵⁷ Tettlebaum, 'Whose Magic Flute?', 78.

⁵⁸ Subotnik pointed out the 'new sound' that pervades this opera due to the extensive use of wind instruments. She observed that this emphasis on different timbres 'must be experienced in their particularity, giv[ing] the *Magic Flute* a hint of a connection to the here-and-now'. Subotnik, 'Whose "Magic Flute?"', 147.

Tettlebaum begins her critique by listening to the actual sound of the flute in the opera – Subotnik’s main focus – and realises that the flute in the orchestra conveys two different sound statuses throughout the opera: that of the orchestral instrument and that of the magic flute, ‘a quasi-character in its own right’.⁵⁹ She also realises that the music of the magic flute does not often match with the dramatic situation taking place when the instrument is played. To Tettlebaum, this ‘fluty quality’ – her words – ‘reminds us that we are not listening to Tamino himself, but to an enchanted instrument standing in for what he cannot otherwise express.

Drawing on Subotnik’s focus on the sonority of the opera, I would like to propose an alternative to Tettlebaum’s understanding of the magic flute’s ‘fluty quality’ that is based instead on how Bergman uses the flute in the film. The ‘magic’ of the magic flute lies in the fact that it has always been seen and listened to as such, although it does not look or sound like a magic instrument at all. In other words, its magic is rooted in the audience’s imagination. Bergman represents the magic flute as a rustic wooden flute, following how the instrument is described in the opera (Figure 5)⁶⁰ – indeed, the music of the magic flute does not sound magical, but rather like a normal folk instrument.⁶¹ In fact, as Bergman’s film makes clear, the magic flute does not perform wonders.⁶² Tamino receives the flute to protect him in his venture to rescue Pamina. According to the Three Ladies, the music of the flute will enchant its listeners, increase human happiness and generate human love. Yet, eventually it is Papageno (Håkan Hagegård) who rescues Pamina, using the magic bells to escape from Monostatos (Ragnar Ulfung). Then, when Tamino plays the flute, the only enchanted audience is one that consists of animals. The magic flute may be seen as ‘magical’ in the same way that Papageno’s pipes are when he uses them to enchant the birds he captures for the Queen of the Night (Birgit Nordin). Regarding the connection between the flute and happiness, the first time Tamino plays the flute is when he knows that Pamina is still alive. His joy has led him to play the instrument, but as he plays his doubts return, and he starts questioning everything again. Later, during one of the trials, Pamina follows the tune of the flute to Tamino’s location, but Tamino’s vow of silence prevents him from talking with her. Instead of increasing happiness, then, the music of the flute prompts a misleading situation for Pamina, who, in the midst of her forlorn state, considers suicide. At the end of the opera, the flute accompanies the couple through the trials of fire and water. Yet in Bergman’s film it is Pamina who guides Tamino – who plays the flute with his eyes closed.

In other words, the magic of the flute lies in the theatrical audience’s perception of the magical condition and power of the instrument. Bergman may have heard in the ‘fluty quality’ of the magic flute a ‘wink’ from Mozart, who in that transitional moment of the late eighteenth century created a whole world of fantasy out of the most mundane reality. In his fully human version of the opera, Bergman seems to tell us that, in the end, beyond the Baroque machinery, the costumes, the props and the stage scenery, the magic of this opera really lies in the music itself and in how it triggers the audience’s imagination.

⁵⁹ Tettlebaum, ‘Whose Magic Flute?’, 80.

⁶⁰ Before the last trial, Pamina (Irma Urrila) tells Tamino that her father carved it from an ancient oak in the midst of a thunderstorm, revealing that the magic flute is indeed made of wood.

⁶¹ Tettlebaum observed that, in the opera, the magic flute ‘plays set pieces, a folksy dance tune and a lightly orchestrated march’. Tettlebaum, ‘Whose Magic Flute?’, 88.

⁶² The only exception in the film is during the first quintet, after one of the Ladies gives the magic flute to Tamino: the flute flies in circles in front of the five characters on stage.



Figure 5. Tamino receives the magic flute. (colour online)

Papageno's 'naturalness'

The illusion of naturalness in artworks implies some sort of transparency in the medium, one that recalls the picturesque aesthetic category in its radical blurring of the boundaries between appearances and reality, art and life.⁶³ According to Subotnik, this 'transparent effect' is based on the existence of a 'duality of voices', namely the natural and the artificial, or the popular and the artistic.⁶⁴ In the case of the flute, its folk-like music makes it so easy to listen to that one may forget about its lack of magic. A similar situation arises with the introduction of Papageno.

Papageno's entrance aria – aria no. 2, 'Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja' – is a case in point. According to Subotnik, the 'naturalness' of his first aria lies in the fact that it is rooted in the conventions of popular theatrical genres (*opera buffa* and *Singspiel*) while also being fully integrated into the rest of the opera.⁶⁵ Subotnik's remark that 'however transparent

⁶³ I follow here Uvedale Price's notion of the picturesque based on the original Italian term *pittoresco*, which refers to a particular psychological stance on the part of the viewer in the process of sense perception. Price identifies *pittoresco* with an aesthetic view of reality that results in an enhanced experience of it. The ability to see through appearances does not disrupt, but intensifies the ensuing experience. See Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (London, 1810); and Isis Brook, 'Reinterpreting the Picturesque in the Experience of Landscape', in *The Place of Landscape: Concepts, Contexts, Studies*, ed. Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 165–81.

⁶⁴ This duality is rooted in the fact that although art is by definition a construct based on conventions – and conventions are social and historical – the main drive of most Western art since antiquity has been to imitate nature as accurately as possible. Depending on the degree of verisimilitude achieved by artists, representations were seen as more 'natural' (i.e., endowed with a high level of accuracy in the rendition of nature or reality, which entailed the medium or the conventions and techniques used not being clearly noticeable). Or more artificial (when the medium or the conventions and techniques used are evident). Thus, dealing with artistic representations, the division between natural/popular and artificial/artistic ultimately depends more on the recipient's culture, knowledge and attitude than on the representation itself.

⁶⁵ Subotnik sees this 'naturalness' in how Papageno is introduced in this aria as 'a spontaneous man at one with organic nature'. She mentions different elements that contribute to this image, among others, Papageno's panpipes, some stage props and also the tonality of G major, which creates a world in which

the effect of this song [Papageno's first aria], its images are always to be understood as mediated rather than immediate',⁶⁶ applies to Bergman's choreography of Papageno's entrance in the film.⁶⁷

As Papageno's first aria begins, the camera takes the film audience backstage. Papageno wakes up when he recognises his tune and runs down the stairs to get ready for his entrance. He takes his pipes and plays his motif (the five-note scale G–A–B–C–D) just in time while looking at the camera – namely at the film audience. He then runs to get his birdcage, responds to the orchestra with his pipes again, and, still from behind the scenes, starts singing. Everything is exceedingly well synchronised, and yet, the impression is one of spontaneity. The sense of immediacy is fully mediated, in this case by Bergman, who acts as the puppeteer pulling the strings backstage. Moreover, by taking the camera behind the scenes, Bergman is revealing that everything is done in a film studio, namely that this is not opera through film, but an audio-visual representation of an operatic performance. However, we may be so preoccupied with Papageno's absentmindedness that we do not pay attention to the mediated nature of the scene.

Both the display of the backstage area and Papageno's direct address to the camera are considered non-illusionistic features, since they take the film audience beyond and into (respectively) the dramatic world represented on stage. These non-illusionistic strategies are usually interpreted as instances of Brecht's alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*). According to Joe, by breaking the illusion, Bergman 'distances the audience from cinematic "hypnotism" – i.e. cinema's power to create an illusion of reality and to put an audience into the status of voyeuristic passivity ... and, as in Brechtian epic theater, prevents it from establishing emotional empathy with the on-screen characters'.⁶⁸ Yet the relation between Brecht and Bergman may be more elusive than it seems. Bergman's sole Brecht production was his staging of *The Three Penny Opera* at Sweden's Gothenburg City Theatre in 1950. While it is true that Bergman frequently uses non-illusionistic devices in his work, I agree with Susan Sontag when she writes that

Bergman's intention ... is quite different from – indeed, it is the romantic opposite of – Brecht's intention of alienating the audience by supplying continual reminders that what they are watching is theatre. Bergman seems only marginally concerned with the thought that it might be salutary for audiences to be reminded that they are watching a film (an artifact, something made), not reality. Rather, he is making a statement about the complexity of what can be represented.⁶⁹

To paraphrase Stephen Halliwell, while Brecht is on the side of world-reflecting mimesis (art as mirror of reality), Bergman is on the side of world-creating mimesis (art as creation of alternative realities).⁷⁰ Artworks require the active imaginative engagement of the audience for the aesthetic experience to take place. Tyrone Guthrie points out that 'the theatre makes its effect not by means of illusion, but by ritual. People do not believe

'there are no signs of conflict, no threats of disorder'. According to Subotnik, '[f]rom an Enlightenment perspective, this structure can readily be imagined as part of a natural order, accessible to all, without the intervention of culture or reflection, and grounded on a natural condition of reason'. Subotnik, 'Whose "Magic Flute?"', 134.

⁶⁶ Subotnik, 'Whose "Magic Flute?"', 140.

⁶⁷ This particular sequence can be watched in the following YouTube video: 'Mozart: Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute): "Der Vogelfaenger" (Papageno) Hakan Hagegard', YouTube, 01:57, posted by Roberto Mastro Simone, 5 October 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLeYCS0iXnY.

⁶⁸ Joe, 'Opera on Film, Film in Opera', 93.

⁶⁹ Susan Sontag, 'Bergman's *Persona*', in *Ingmar Bergman's Persona*, ed. Lloy Michaels (Cambridge, 1999), 62–85, at 78.

⁷⁰ Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton, 2002), 373.

that what they see or hear on the stage is “really” happening. Action on the stage is a stylized re-enactment of real action, which is then imagined by the audience.⁷¹ Guthrie may not spell it out but the ritual he refers to is the *ritual of spectatorship*, a ritual underpinned by the audience’s voluntary, active and shared participation in the meaning-making process triggered by representations. The audience is fully aware of the artificial nature and crafted dimension of illusion, and so the non-illusory moments push for a deeper or more complex engagement with representations more than break the spell for the audience. Furthermore, although Joe acknowledges that the ‘backstage life shown in the documentaristic shots [in Bergman’s *The Magic Flute*] is not real but “staged”, she nevertheless interprets these scenes as [r]esembling the postmodern “docu-drama”, [since] these shots complicate the sense of reality and problematize the question of what is real.⁷² While it is true that Bergman’s film presents many features that have been characteristic of postmodern art, we should not forget that metatheatrical and self-reflective strategies are not specifically postmodern but have a long history in artistic representations. Bergman’s understanding of art is deeply rooted in its potential to create alternative realities. His use of non-illusionistic devices aims at disclosing how that potential works.

The main dramatic function of the entrance aria in an opera is to introduce the character. Embedded in the music, then, are specific dramatic hints that should be translated into the staging. In this particular case, Bergman presents a highly crafted staging of Papageno’s entrance aria through cinematic means based on specific musical conventions. The aria really is a stage song, and more specifically a strophic folk-like song featuring syllabic setting, a recurring melody, duple metre and G major tonality. Together, these features convey a particular type of character and context – closer to nature than to culture. Bergman uses the long instrumental prelude of the aria to introduce Papageno’s character by taking the audience backstage first. Film allows Bergman to disclose a dimension of the theatre that is not meant to be seen and is not governed by the artificiality of the performance on stage. By showing Papageno’s reaction when he hears his tune from behind the scenes, Bergman reveals what kind of person he is. Yet, the too perfect synchronisation between music and ‘backstage’ action (Papageno’s awakening and preparation for his entrance) is the result of a deliberate plan. Neither the music in the opera nor the staging nor, finally, the camera work attempts to hide the artifice on which they rest, but the arrangements of the parts ensure that the artifice ceases to be perceived as such.

Theatricality on display

The notion of theatricality is usually associated with a type of behaviour that, quoting Marvin Carlson, ‘seems to be not natural or spontaneous, but “composed according to this grammar of rhetorical and authenticating conventions” in order to achieve some particular effects on its viewers’.⁷³ Unlike the traditional approaches to theatricality, focused on the insincerity of the performance, Carlson’s emphasis is on appreciating its crafted nature, namely its artificiality. Such behaviour is inherent in all human action, both on and off stage, as Elizabeth Burns pointed out in her study on this concept. Burns’s main insight, however, was to locate theatricality in the spectator’s perception, not in the mode of behaviour of the actor.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Tyrone Guthrie, *A Life in the Theatre* (London, 1959), 313, quoted in John L. Styan, *Drama, Stage and Audience*, (Cambridge, 1975), 181–2.

⁷² Joe, ‘Opera on Film, Film in Opera’, 128.

⁷³ Marvin A. Carlson, ‘The Resistance to Theatricality’, *SubStance* 31/2 (2002), 240.

⁷⁴ According to Burns, ‘behaviour can be described as “theatrical” only by those who know what drama is ... It is an audience term just as the *theatron* was originally a place for viewing, an audience place. Behaviour is not

Burns's notion of theatricality may shed light on Bergman's rendition of the first aria of the Queen of the Night – aria no. 4, 'O zitt're nicht, mein lieber Sohn'. Bergman makes the most of the film medium and provides a highly mediated representation of the aria through which the film audience becomes aware of their different perception of the Queen's behaviour compared with Tamino's. In this aria, the Queen resorts to rhetorical means in order to manipulate Tamino's feelings, and thus to move him into action: recovering Pamina. While Tamino is fully engrossed in the Queen's words and behaviour, and the theatrical audience may also believe her story at this point of the opera, Bergman lets the film audience see the constructed nature of her intervention, as well as the effect such efficiency of crafted artificiality has on Tamino. Through the use of camerawork and editing, Bergman offers a different perspective of the actions on the stage to the film audience.⁷⁵

The first intervention of the Queen of the Night is an example of a perlocutionary speech act, through which the Queen aims to trigger an action, in this case Tamino's saving of Pamina. Mozart transforms the speech act into a musical act by means of a carefully structured combination of musical form and rhetorical convention.⁷⁶ In turn, Bergman stages this musico-dramatic act of persuasion as a carefully crafted seduction scene. The Queen starts bewitching Tamino by sending him the portrait of her daughter. Tamino is fully enthralled by Pamina's *magical* beauty, which makes him fall in love at first sight, and then long for her physical presence. What the ensuing aria of the Queen of the Night does in the film is to let the music flesh out – almost literally – Tamino's desire.

The entrance of the Queen on stage is conspicuously theatrical. A distant clap of thunder warns the Three Ladies about her arrival, which is marked by the orchestral prelude to her opening recitative and a complete change of scenery and lighting. This is shown from the vantage point of the theatre audience, so that we can appreciate the scene changes in plain sight.⁷⁷ Not only do we see the edges, backcloths and wings all moving simultaneously, but we also hear the sounds this change entails. This is important because this was the first time a stereo soundtrack was used for a TV production. In most filmed operas, lip movements match the words heard on the soundtrack, but image scale and sound scale do not match. Here, on the contrary, the operatic voice (dialogue in narrative cinema) and sound effects are endowed with a sound perspective that locates them on a specific point of the stage, creating the impression of a three-dimensional space that

therefore theatrical because it is of a certain kind but because the observer recognizes certain patterns and sequences which are analogous to those with which he is familiar in the theatre.' Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of Conventions in the Theatre and in Social Life* (New York, 1972), 12–13.

⁷⁵ Unlike the theatrical audience, the film audience has access to two different levels of reality regarding the operatic performance. One level is the dramatic actions represented on stage; the other level is the highly mediated representation of these actions on film. These two levels of reality are not as clearly defined as it may seem. Bergman adds a new twist that blurs their boundaries by imbuing them with a quality that suggests they could be considered dreams. This detail applies to both the dramatic actions of the opera (the characters themselves wonder whether what they experienced was a dream or reality) and to their audio-visual rendering. I posit that the idea of the dream is a way for Bergman to represent the internal processes of the characters on screen. The notion and presence of dreams pervade Bergman's work; for example, dreams play a key role in *Wild Strawberries* (*Smultronstället*, 1957), *Persona* (1966), *Hour of the Wolf* (*Vargtimmen*, 1968), *Shame* (*Skammen*, 1968) and *In the Presence of a Clown* (*Larmar och gör sig till*, 1997).

⁷⁶ For more on the relevance of rhetoric in eighteenth-century music, see James Webster, 'The Analysis of Mozart's Arias', in *Mozart Studies* 1, ed. Cliff Eisen (Oxford, 1991), 101–99.

⁷⁷ This is one of the most precious features of the Drottningholm Court Theatre. For a virtual tour of the Drottningholm Court Theatre in which this particular characteristic is clearly displayed, see 'Drottningholms slottsteater', YouTube, 01:54, posted by Johanitornet', 16 February 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=EdRUdoKfPvo. For more information about the Drottningholm Court Theatre, see 'Drottningholms slottsteater: About the Theatre', *Drottningholms slottsteater*, <https://dtm.se/aboutthebuilding>.

draws the audience directly into the drama. Yet, Bergman's accurate rendition of this magical theatrical transformation is ultimately an illusion, since it is a recreation done in a film studio.⁷⁸ Bergman is deceiving us ironically, just as he is exposing the artificiality that underpins the theatrical performance.

The Queen's intervention is musically divided into two parts, recitative and aria, but it is dramatically determined by the function of her presence before Tamino, namely to persuade him by means of seduction to rescue Pamina. In order to do so, she resorts to the tools of classical rhetoric to organise her delivery.

First, the *captatio benevolentiae* (winning of goodwill), integrating words, gestures and actions, all perfectly synchronised to the music, in B \flat major. The almighty Queen of the Night shows a fully human appearance and a friendly attitude towards Tamino. She exhorts him not to fear anything, addresses him as her 'dearest friend', and kneels down to be at the same level as he is – all to capture his goodwill for specific ends. Bergman conveys the Queen's closeness through medium close-ups of both characters and frames these images as point-of-view shots of the Queen and Tamino, respectively. The mismatch between the Queen's attitude and words on the one hand, and who she really is and her plans on the other hand, seems to be revealed by a shocking discord in the distance captured by the shot-reverse shot between the Queen and Tamino. The following medium shot that includes both of them shows that they are physically closer than the former shot-reverse-shot set-up had implied.

The Queen clearly tries to seduce Tamino by means of words (exalting his strength and power) and gestures (sensual caresses from his arm to his face) that create the perfect framework for her aria. The roles seem completely upside down: the almighty Queen is now a helpless mother, and the helpless Tamino who opened the opera is now a strong and powerful candidate to assist her.

Following the recitative, the beginning of the aria introduces the section of the *narratio* (selective telling of the facts). The Larghetto part (in Mozart's meaningful key of G minor, 6/8) opens with a descending D–C–B \flat –A–G motif that sets the tone for her plaintive melody.⁷⁹ Bergman draws our attention to this moment of introspection with a medium close-up of the Queen's face, which registers a wide range of emotions from sadness to anger, sorrow and despair. She expresses her current feelings verbally and recalls past memories, even turning to direct speech – the cries of 'Help!' in the high register – to underline how much she is still haunted by them. In addition, she resorts to carefully calculated gestures, such as staring blankly, closing her eyes and nodding her head. The result is the perfect image of a weak, powerless and grieving mother. The music embodies and makes manifest the Queen's emotions and memories: her sorrow through the descending melodic lines, Pamina's trembling through the offbeat semiquavers in the strings and the latter's cries

⁷⁸ Alexis Luko refers to the technical difficulties of the sound recording for this production as follows: 'The opera singer Håkan Hagegård, who played Papageno in the production, explained that during the filming of *The Magic Flute* Bergman experimented with syncing by putting an antenna on the floor and supplying each singer with a wireless earpiece. A piano was situated in a room next to the film studio with a glass window so that the pianist could see the conductor in the next room. According to Hagegård: "the conductor would use headphones and the picture and add the orchestra in afterwards. It was tested with a small orchestra. This did not work and was not used for one single reason: we could not hear the piano when we were more than two singers on the floor. Too bad, I think, because bad lip syncing is so irritating.'" In Alexis Luko, *Sonatas, Screams, and Silence: Music and Sound in the Films of Ingmar Bergman* (New York, 2016), 15.

⁷⁹ According to Kristi Brown-Montesano, G minor is 'Mozart's favorite key for portraying grief and sadness', in Kristi Brown-Montesano, 'Feminine Vengeance II: (Over)Powered Politics The Queen of the Night', in *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas* (Berkeley, 2007), 81–106, at 90. For more on the use and meaning of this key in Mozart's operas, see Wye J. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago, 1983).



Figure 6. The Queen of the Night's performance (side glance at Tamino). (colour online)

for help echoed by the Queen. Her (apparently) absorptive state conveys a sincerity that runs counter to what she is doing – namely, performing. Tamino is fully taken in by her and does not notice her side-glance at him during the silence right before the last verse of this section of the aria (Figure 6). Bergman *hears* the Queen's trickery in the musical pause, and he stages it accordingly. Her side-glance is so subtle, however, that only the film audience (not the theatrical one) can notice this gesture via the medium close-up.

The final *Allegro Moderato* section depicts a completely different scene. After the mourning comes the resolution. The focus of attention shifts from the Queen's lament to her command to Tamino, and thus, we are back to B \flat major, and instead of the medium close-up focused on her face, we have an over-the-shoulder shot of both characters. While the first two lines of this last stanza express the main point of the whole passage (i.e., the Queen's command for Tamino to rescue her daughter), the aria concludes with what in rhetoric would be the *peroratio* (conclusion marked by emotional appeals to the audience). After making Tamino feel pity for her, she focuses on the reward: Pamina. The close-up of both Tamino's and the Queen's hands holding the locket, as well as the proximity of their faces, somehow gives presence to the otherwise absent Pamina. Leaving him fully absorbed in the portrait again, the Queen starts the coloratura passage in which language dissolves to give the musical sounds full prominence. The winding melodic design combined with the ascending scales that lead to the broken staccato chord seem to conjure up Pamina's cry for help in Tamino's mind. His furrowed brow makes visible what are otherwise images from his mind's eye. Bergman lets the cinematic audience partake in Tamino's thoughts through the moving images of Pamina and Monostatos that the locket magically displays (Figure 7).

The aria concludes with the Queen veiling her face. She approaches Tamino until she touches his face with hers. For a moment the whole shot is darkened. The Queen engulfs both Tamino and the cinematic audience with her body and leaves him with a caress on his lips, an act that constitutes the sensual climax of the aria and corroborates the physical dimension that the music has summoned up.

Instead of diminishing the aesthetic experience, the display of artificiality in Baroque operas aimed at enhancing it. Bergman's audio-visual rendition of the first aria of the Queen of the Night is based not only on the allure of artifice, but also on the enhanced experience that being aware of artifice may entail. By displaying the artificiality that constitutes theatrical illusion in plain sight alongside its alluring power, Bergman allows the film audience to realise that artifice ultimately lies in the rhetoric and conventions used to manipulate human emotions, be they those of the characters on stage or of the theatrical and film audiences.



Figure 7. Tamino's visualisation of Pamina and Monostatos as moving images in his locket. (colour online)

The magic of music

The inspiration for this article was Jerome Bruner's idea that 'it is far more important, for appreciating the human condition, to understand the ways human beings construct their worlds ... than it is to establish the ontological status of the products of these processes'.⁸⁰ As I hope I have made clear, it is precisely art's fictional status that accounts for the generative dimension of aesthetic experience through its inherent reflexivity. Aesthetic experience is constitutive because it requires the active collaboration of the audience.

My approach to the study of aesthetic experience is based on how it is articulated in artistic expression. In *The Magic Flute*, Bergman realised his figment of imagination through a film that delves into the experiential dimension of the operatic performance by using a special combination of theatrical and cinematic perspectives and by making the theatrical audience the main character of the film. Bergman's emphasis on the workings of illusion, his constant blurring of boundaries between fiction and reality, and his representation of the audience in the film perfectly illustrate the complexity and constitutive dimension of the aesthetic experience.

I have provided a theoretical account of the communicative and creative act triggered by artistic representations, and the basis of my analysis lies in the metatheatrical dimension of the film. I take the representation of the audience in the film as an instance of 'objectified spectatorship'.⁸¹ Such representation endows my analyses with at least a degree of denotation and objectivity. I consider films as expressions through which people articulate their own experiences and regard these culturally and socially constructed expressions not as mirrors, but as interpretive devices that render the experience of spectatorship intersubjectively available. The mediating role of the audience represented on screen far exceeds the role assigned to it by 'spectator positioning' theory (i.e., the target of identification processes on a par with other characters).⁸² Through the deliberate use of

⁸⁰ Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, 1986), 46.

⁸¹ I borrow the term from Darrell W. Davis, who grounds the notion of 'objectified spectatorship' in the fact that 'spectatorship exists and is represented objectively in the film, but also because spectator activity is turned into an object for aesthetic effect'. Darrell W. Davis, *Saving Face: Spectator and Spectacle in Japanese Theatre and Film* (Hong Kong, 2004), 3.

⁸² See Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (London, 1981); *The Cinematic Apparatus*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath (London, 1980); Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York, 1999), 833–44; and *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ, 1995). For a criticism of this theory, see Noël Carroll, *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory* (New York, 1998).

triggers, the film activates the cinematic audience's awareness of their own status as audience. This allows them to reflect on their active engagement in the aesthetic experience as well as on the highly mediated nature of the representation on screen. Such representation provides a dramatic and communicative context in which the rendition of spectatorship in the film is situated and can thus be interpreted.⁸³

In *The Magic Flute*, Bergman invites everyone to adopt the innocent gaze and active imagination that are essential for the experience of theatrical illusion to take place. At the same time, at the end of the overture, he himself appears among the audience. He appears as a mature artist who knows how to create the magic – that is, he is fully aware of its artificial nature – but nevertheless keeps enjoying it. In his fully human take on the opera, Bergman seems to tell us that, in the end, notwithstanding the Baroque machinery, the *crafted* naturalness of a folk song, or the rhetorical theatricality of a performance, the magic of this opera really lies in the music itself and in how it triggers the audience's imagination. The magic of Bergman's own film, as distinct from the magic of the flute, lies in maintaining, or even enhancing the aesthetic experience, while revealing how theatrical illusion works. Instead of disenchantment, witnessing the workings of illusion strengthens its grip on us.

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⁸³ That 'situatedness', as Biancorosso argues, 'like that of a participant to a ritual, is shared with others whom the representation summons as a collective before an ideally joint, albeit staggered and scattered, effort. ... Joint directedness to shared artifacts or expressive gestures does not imply agreement, but it ensures that a meaningful debate about them is possible.' Biancorosso, *Situated Listening*, 218.

Cite this article: Ibáñez-García E (2021). Displaying the Magician's Art: Theatrical Illusion in Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute* (1975). *Cambridge Opera Journal* 33, 191–211. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586722000052>