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Krystian Lada

Stage director and librettist

The Airport Society, Brussels

Born in 1983 in Warsaw

Studied Dramaturgy and Literary Studies at the University of Amsterdam

FELLOWSHIP

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From Ego to Eco-System - Towards More Inclusive Opera

Throughout its long history, the genre of opera both reflected and actively influenced the major political developments, social issues, and shifting gender roles of its day. At the Wissenschaftskolleg, I will examine how opera could reassert this role within contemporary society by working on the staging concepts for my upcoming productions of *Sigismondo* (Rossini), *Król Roger* (Szymanowski), *Agrippina* (Händel), *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* (Monteverdi), and *Symphony of Expectation* (Berio, Schönberg). Throughout my artistic work as an opera stage director, I have consistently explored how opera - as an art form and as an institution - can become a vital engine for the evolution towards a more inclusive society. By drawing on recent feminist and postcolonial perspectives on the classical repertoire, I seek to question the operatic tradition from within and rethink a genre that is historically entangled with imperial exoticism and the violent undoing of women.

Such an approach requires innovations both in the aesthetic and narrative strategies of opera staging and in the very mode of opera production. My inquiry into forms of opera that speak to contemporary concerns and struggles thus unfolds in three connected threads. First, I seek to question the traditional framework of opera direction, which is based on the depiction of a storyline on stage. Instead, I want to examine opera as a social event (involving a public, an institution, and a critical reception) and a cultural artefact produced within a specific socio-political constellation. Where opera staging has mostly stressed the universal scope of its stories and music, I am interested in how operas could also be very deliberate interventions in the debates and power relations of their societies. Second, I will research the (often hidden) politics of opera aesthetics: what are the real-life sources and repercussions of classical operatic archetypes? Given the centrality of male/female love relations in the repertoire, the representation of gender on stage is especially pertinent in this regard. In my upcoming stagings, I seek to uncover the pieces' implicit gender expectations and work towards the representation of non-binary identities within opera.

Finally, I believe that such new perspectives in the finished staging are dependent on changes in how operas are produced. From a system centred on the individual (director, singer, intendant ☐) that I would describe as an ego-system, I am working towards a more collective process of opera creation. With the Belgium-based opera collective "The Airport Society" that I founded in 2017, we are exploring more collaborative ways of working in opera by bringing specialists in the different aspects of production - from lighting design to musical direction - into a fruitful dialogue. I want to further develop this collaborative model through working sessions and by considering possible forms of partnerships between opera professionals, independent producers, and the big opera houses. Only by fostering a more diverse and collaborative eco-system of production can opera truly become a more inclusive and compelling art form in our heterogeneous societies.

Stage Directing Works

Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* ([youtube.com/watch?v=yMkEBqHlyjY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMkEBqHlyjY)) and Verdi's *Nabucco* as an open-air spectacle for Opera Wroclawska (youtu.be/84DzfOKqzFE).

Unknown, *I Live With You* (based on poems by Afghan women) and *Aria di Potenza* (combining opera arias and speeches by contemporary politicians) for Nuit Blanche Brussels (vimeo.com/313548240).

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOW LIBRARY

Lada, Krystian (Warszawa, 2019)

Unknown, *I live with you*

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1672833221>