

Music History and Cosmopolitanism / abstract
Zechner, Ingeborg (University of Salzburg, AU)
Session 2a / Wednesday June 1, 4:30–6:30 pm

Cosmopolitanism in Nineteenth Century Opera Management

Nineteenth Century opera business can in itself be considered as cosmopolitan in terms of the transfer of works or the frequent travelling of singers. It was highly common that a new and successful Italian operatic composition transferred rapidly from Italy to Austria, France and England – with or without more or less changes to the work itself, depending on the singers engaged or the opera house in which it was performed. In relation to the transfers of works there also evolved a transcultural and internationally fertile market for opera singers. But not only the direct protagonists of the opera business can be considered as cosmopolitan: It was also usual among opera managers to travel to foreign countries to look for new talented singers or successful works they could present on their stage.

Benjamin Lumley, from 1842 to 1852 and consecutively from 1856 to 1858 manager of Her Majesty's Theatre in London, was one of them. Through his various achievements in opera business (first performances of Verdi's works in England, reformation of legal basis of singers contracts, innovative ticket policies, reformation of the management process) Lumley can be internationally considered as one of the most influential opera managers of his time. This became especially eminent when he decided in 1850 to take over the management of two opera houses in two different countries at the same time for the period of two years: The Théâtre Italien in Paris and the Her Majesty's Theatre in London.

This paper thus aims to present the person Benjamin Lumley as well as his opera management strategies as example for the common cosmopolitanism in Nineteenth century opera. To illustrate the cosmopolitan nature of Lumley's venture aspects like the different political backgrounds of the two countries, the collaborations in productions and singers engagements and the operas performed in France and England are taken into consideration. Furthermore opportunities and chances as well as difficulties of the Nineteenth Centuries opera business' cosmopolitanism shall be discussed by putting the manager Lumley in the context of the European operatic world, which shall in the end contribute to a wider understanding of the transcultural and cosmopolitan nature of opera itself.