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Chapter 2

L'opera dei pupi, Torneo, and Early Opera: Shared Traditions and Intangible Experiences

Naomi Matsumoto

Introduction

In 1998 UNESCO launched a new programme of registering and protecting ‘masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity’.¹ The first proclamation of such pieces in May 2001 listed 19 items including the marionette theatre practice, *l'opera dei pupi*,² long considered as a characteristic Sicilian cultural tradition. The standard repertoire of *L'opera dei pupi* consists of chivalric stories based mainly on Italy’s renowned epics *Orlando furioso* [The Frenzy of Orlando] by Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533) and *Orlando innamorato* [Orlando in Love] by Matteo Maria Boiardo (1440 or 41–1494). The interludes between the acts of the main programme present another, separate story in lighter vein often featuring characters from the *commedia dell’ arte* tradition. A form of puppet theatre in Italy seems to have existed in Roman times but there appears to be very little link between the ancient practice and what we now know as *l'opera dei pupi*.³ Arguably, its direct archetype may have been formed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but it is during the nineteenth century that *l'opera dei pupi* established itself. During that century, versions of it could found in Rome, Puglia and Naples, but it became particularly successful in Sicily (Morse 2007: 36–42).

The UNESCO ‘masterpiece’ scheme in 2001 was superseded by the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003. After the enforcement of that convention in 2006, all the ‘masterpieces’ listed between 2001 and 2005 (including *l'opera dei pupi*) were automatically inscribed as examples of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008 (Lixinski 2013: 33).⁴ *L'opera dei pupi* was included by UNESCO both as a ‘masterpiece’ and as ‘intangible cultural heritage’ because it was able to fulfill the criteria concerning its uniqueness, historical roots and importance for affirming the cultural identity of the communities involved in the tradition.⁵ The UNESCO website also explains that *l'opera dei pupi* was under threat from the ‘development of the entertainment industry and the advent of television’ and adds that that ‘social changes in Sicilian towns and neighbourhoods also took their toll’.⁶

When considering the criteria that enable *l'opera dei pupi* to be promoted as intangible cultural heritage, it is interesting to examine its historical connections with other related genres. For instance, when comparing the so-called ‘minor’ and ‘endangered’ genre of *l'opera dei pupi* with ‘mainstream’ opera from the early modern era, the two traditions are strikingly close in various respects. Both of them often derive their subject matter from cultivated literature and make it more

accessible to the wider public by condensing the stories, and by occasionally vulgarizing and parodying them. They also incorporate many aspects linked directly to their respective communities, traditions and surrounding cultures. Yet early modern opera is not promoted as intangible cultural heritage.

This chapter examines the anomaly that, despite many links and similarities, *l'opera dei pupi* has been acknowledged by UNESCO while the operatic tradition has not. A thorough investigation of the historical record reveals hidden parallels between the plots found in the puppet theatre and those of early modern opera. This implies that opera influenced the puppet theatre, especially since it was not fully developed until the nineteenth century. In turn, opera emerged out of traditions in the sixteenth century and earlier, which predate the formation of opera as a distinct genre. The examples I use include not only fully fledged operas but also related forgotten genres from the mid-seventeenth century. Methodologically, my research focuses on written musical as well as literary sources, which have a complex relation to what the theatre anthropologist, Eugenio Barba calls 'empirical memory' (Barba and Savarese 2011: 164),⁷ the unwritten, orally transmitted 'intangible'. As I aim to demonstrate, many intangible fragments of the past and the cultural environment of the intangible arise from between the written lines and the musical staves of the tangible, archived sources. In the conclusion, I engage with the thorny issue of the justifications for preserving genres of cultures which are considered to be fundamentally elitist, and the role of heritage policies in supporting musical culture which is by nature fluid and ever developing.

Opera and *L'opera dei pupi*: The Retelling of Chivalric Epics

One of the original purposes of *l'opera dei pupi* was to enlighten the wider public by retelling Renaissance literary masterpieces, a purpose it also shared with opera. The epic poem *Orlando furioso*, completed in 1516 by Ariosto after many years of labour, is amongst the most frequent sources for the plots of operas, comparable only to *Gerusalemme Liberata* [Jerusalem Delivered] by Torquato Tasso (1544–1595). The main plot of *Orlando furioso* is partly derived from the Old French epic, *The Chanson de Roland* [The Song of Roland], but Ariosto's work, in the course of its 46 cantos, expands and interpolates rather fantastical stories concerning three soldiers serving under Charlemagne: Orlando, who succumbs to insanity after discovering the betrayal of his beloved Angelica; Ruggiero, who despite being captured by the sorceress Alcina eventually secures a wife and a dynasty; and Astolfo, who, riding a fantastical beast called the hippogriff, flies up to the moon and overviews the world. Throughout the history of Italian opera, there are over 100 operas featuring various episodes from *Orlando furioso*.⁸ However, the plots and the characterisations are not necessarily faithful to the original. For example, seventeenth-century composers were attracted more by the story concerning Ruggiero and Alcina, rather than that of the main characters Orlando

and Angelica. This concentration on the witch Alcina led to the establishment of the ‘magic opera’ genre.⁹

In Ariosto’s original epic, Orlando’s madness is portrayed in a serious and violent way – he slays innocent villagers (Ariosto 2006: Canto XXIV, 5, p.614), and orders a shepherd to swap his old nag with Orlando’s dead horse and, upon the shepherd's refusal, he murders him (Ariosto 2006: Canto XXX, 5-8, p. 771–772). However, the operatic representation of Orlando tends to lack the violence of the original; rather he is represented in humorous terms. This amusing characterisation in the operatic genre led to the use of parody as well; in *Amor e dover* [Love and Duty], Carlo Francesco Pollarolo’s opera premiered in a Venetian public theatre in 1696, the ever pugnacious and frenzied German soldier Gernando drags a chair across the stage in imitation of Orlando’s dead horse.¹⁰

In this regard, Orlando in the *opera dei pupi* is similar to his operatic counterpart. The Orlando character in the puppet theatre in Palermo is always represented by a cross-eyed puppet,¹¹ and his characterization connotes stupidity rather than dignified frenzy (Croce 2014: 14). Such parallels between opera and *l'opera dei pupi* concerning chivalric subjects do not seem coincidental. This is probably because the local performances of operas based upon such themes played a role in the standardisation of the repertoire of *l'opera dei pupi* during the nineteenth century, as has been argued by some scholars (Pasqualino 2008: 18–19). Originally, tales concerning Charlemagne were transmitted to, and spread within, the Italian peninsula by itinerant storytellers or (the Italian equivalents to) minstrels. Renaissance itinerant street performers who played the *lira da braccio* [arm-held viol] also recited and sang chivalric epics. They seem to have been responsible for producing the famous Ruggiero tune which was used to chant verses of the epic. And this kind of declamation had an influence on the new recitative style in opera (Brand 1984: 54–56).

For centuries, even up to the second half of the twentieth century, Sicily enjoyed two related but distinct types of street performer. These were the *cantastorie* who ‘go around singing to the people stories and legends written in poetry’ and the *contastorie* who ‘recite [stories] by heart accompanying their narration with vivacious gestures’ (Li Gotti 1978: 46; English Translation, Croce 2014: 28). As time passed, the *cantastorie* became concerned more with amusing local news, while the *contastorie* continued to specialize in chivalric stories (Croce 2014: 28). *L'opera dei pupi* established as late as the 1840s was a ‘newcomer’ to such story-telling traditions (Croce 2014: 7). It does not have a ‘long enduring history’ despite the implications of its being nominated as ‘heritage’ by UNESCO. Rather, it seems suddenly to have soared to popularity in relation to Sicilian sentiments during the Risorgimento (Croce 2014: 22), and it is for that movement that *l'opera dei pupi* seems to have acquired its ‘outstanding value’.

It seems that, in part, the *opera dei pupi* made itself popular by incorporating local anecdotes as comic interludes in dialect (called *farse*) during the performance. This resulted in a convivial, sometimes decidedly rowdy, entertainment for the ‘community’ (Croce 2014: 58). Exactly who constitutes the ‘community’ here will be discussed further below, but the tendency to incorporate local references and make adaptations for a particular community can also be found in many early operas, as we shall now see.

Opera as Direct Speech to the Community

The easiest way of localizing an already composed opera seems to have been by adapting the *prologo* [prologue], the introductory section with its own brief self-contained episode extraneous to the main plot.¹² Many such examples survive, including Monteverdi’s *Arianna* (1608) and *L’incoronazione di Poppea* [The Coronation of Poppaea] (1642/43). The former was premiered in Mantua as part of Francesco Gonzaga’s wedding celebrations but in 1640 when it was revived for a Venetian public theatre, the original reference in the Prologo to ‘Carlo’ – Carlo Emanuele I, Duke of Savoy, the father of the bride – was replaced with one to the Venetian Doge. The change can be seen in a libretto printed in Venice in 1639 prior to the performance.¹³

...
 Odi Carlo immortal come sospiri
 Tradita Amante in solitaria riva,
 Fose avverrà, che de la scena argiva.
 L’antico honor ne’ novi canti ammiri¹⁴
 (Rinuccini 1608: 8).

...
 Odi Duce immortal come sospiri
 Tradita Amante in solitaria riva,
 Fose avverrà, che de la scena argiva.
 L’antico honor ne’ novi canti ammiri.
 (Rinuccini 1639: 12).

There are some local references within the main body of an opera as well. Examples include Francesco Saccati’s opera *La finta pazza* [*The Pretended Madwoman*] of 1641 on a libretto by Giulio Strozzi, and Pietro Andrea Ziani’s opera *Le fortune di Damira e Rodope* [*The Fortunes of Damira and Rodope*] of 1657 on a libretto by Aurelio Aureli. In Saccati/Strozzi’s opera, in the middle of her mad scene, the title role suddenly breaks off and archly refers directly to the ‘Novissimi Theatre’, where the premiere took place:

...
 Che melodie son queste?
 Ditemi? Che Novissimi Teatri,
 Che numerose scene
 S’apparecchiano in Sciro?
 Voglio esser ancor’ io
 Pel faticare a parte.... (Strozzi 1641: 87).

....
 What melodies are these?
 Tell me, in the Novissimi Theatre
 what numerous scenes of Skyros
 Are being prepared?
 I want to be
 Part of the work as well ...

When the opera was disseminated to other areas of the Italian peninsula, this reference was naturally deleted,¹⁵ and the sole surviving music (I-IBborromeo: MS AU298) which seems to reflect a Milanese performance does not contain this scene.

Another interesting example can be found in Ziani/Aureli's opera which was premiered during the Venetian Carnival in 1657.¹⁶ In Act I, Scene 21, two minor characters – Nerina, the heroine Damira's adoptive mother and Lerino, a pageboy – watch a masked procession (Aureli 1657: 42–43), and later in the final act, the secondary heroine Rodope wearing a mask, pays a visit to her admirer who is confined in a dank prison cell (Aureli 1657: 83). Although the plot was set in Egypt, the reference to a mask was topical for the Venetian audience – it was a custom that during the Carnival season in Venice those attending opera performances wore masks.¹⁷ However, when the opera was revived at the Rodino theatre, in Palermo in 1669, those references to 'masking' were omitted.¹⁸

These examples of localization and emphasized topicality may well have been aspects that opera as a genre acquired from somewhat similar theatrical genres, which mutually influenced and co-existed with opera. In the cases I have just discussed, *Commedia dell' arte* seems to have offered the model for the practice (Cf. MacNeil 2003). In other genres – related closely to opera but now largely forgotten – we find more signs of 'the intangible' in operatic traditions, to which I will now turn my attention.

Intangible Distinctions: the Sub-genres of Early Opera

Any discussion of the sub-genres of early modern opera must include an assessment of the activities of the Marquis Pio Enea degli Obizzi.¹⁹ The 17th-century chronicler Cristoforo Ivanovich credited Obizzi as the person who prompted the Venetian Republic to accept 'opera' and open the first-ever public opera house in 1637 by authoring and presenting a work entitled *Ermiona* in Padua in 1636. He tells us:²⁰

In 1664, when I visited Marquis Pio Enea Obizzi in his most beautiful residence in Battaglia. There I saw a series of paintings of 'theatrical machines' with cavaliers on horseback. Upon my request, the marquis explained courteously to me: 'this is in 1636 when, requested by my friends, and to my great pride, I held a tournament in Padua, and presented a story of Cadmo [and Erminona] as an introductory musical entertainment, which was eventually published. As these pictures show, the work was an utterly magnificent spectacle.... And in the following year 1637, under the protection of patrons, by diverse skilled musicians, Benedetto Ferrari's *L'Andromeda* was performed at the Teatro di S. Cassiano. Thus, it was this very illustrious Cavalier and *letterato* who should be given the credit of introducing opera to Venice (Ivanovich 1688: 390–391).²¹

Ermiona seems to have been sung throughout and tells a continuous story, and it was presented for an audience consisting of various strata from society, exactly like a fully-fledged opera in Venice. Moreover, the surviving illustration of a scene from *Ermiona* tells us that the staging involved elaborate machinery, much comparable to that employed in later operatic productions. However, the genre description provided by Obizzi for this work was *Introduzione d'un torneo e d'un balletto* – The prelude to a tournament and a ballet. During the 1630s and 40s, Obizzi supervised and/or authored five works (see: Table 2.1.), but only one – *Il Pio Enea* [Pious

Enea] – is described as an opera *per se*; the remaining opera-like works all functioned as the introduction or postlude to a type of stylized battle called either *Giostra* or *Torneo*. Their preceding or concluding popular entertainments were sung to music in a style exactly the same as that of early opera, and were thus linked directly to the formation and development of opera as a genre.

<Insert Table 2.1. here>

The theatrical spectacle accompanying the tournament at that time was presented on the purpose-built stage sometimes in the open-air and sometimes indoors. For example, *L'Amor pudico* [Bashful Cupid], which Obizzi supervised, was shown outdoors. This work was produced in Padua on the evening of 15 June, 1643 as part of the local wedding celebrations for Elisabetta Landi and Bartolomeo Zeno. The venue of the event was La Piazza dei Signori, which had been frequently used from the sixteenth century as a venue for spectacles owing to its rectangular shape (Mancini et al 1988: 85). The centre of the piazza functioned as the stage, surrounded by scaffolding which acted as the general public's seating spaces. The scaffolding also supported torches to increase the visibility during the evening performance. The balconies of buildings overlooking the piazza were used as box seats for the nobility.

Obizzi, the supervisor of this event asked Luigi Manzini, a Bolognese Count, to write an official report of the production (L. Manzini 1643: 3), and his report contains not only the libretto but also several illustrations which show the stage set of each act and the disposition-plans of cavaliers participating in the tournament (See, for example: Figures 2.1. and 2.2.).

<Insert Figure 2.1. and 2.2. here>

The event as a whole must have been an impressive pageant as even giraffes and elephants participated in the processions leading the acts, as the illustrations show. The pictures also give us evidence of musical instruments used such as percussion and trumpets. Instrumental as well as vocal music clearly played a vital role as Manzini frequently refers to it. Although no singer's name has come down to us, the composer was, as Manzini reports, Padre Antonio dalle Tavole, the maestro di cappella of Il Santo, a church in the city (1643: 56). Regrettably, however, no musical source connected to this event survives.

The libretto of this work, consisting of four separate acts labeled as 'inventioni' [inventions], was co-authored: Obizzi wrote the verses for the opening and for Inventione 1. Under Obizzi's guidance, two other writers 'versified' the remaining inventioni: Intenzioni 2 and 3 were written by Bartolini (who had previously published the official report of the *Ermiona* premiere) and Inventione 4 was the work of Michelangelo Torcigliani (L. Manzini 1643: 23, 32, 36, & 40). These details from *Amor pudico* give us a glimpse of those rich spectacles whose traditions lay behind their rather schematic, small-scale counterparts crammed on to the narrow stages of early theatres, and they

allow us to sense the intangible echoes of one in the displays of the other.²² For further indications of these lost traditions, we need now to turn to a work produced by Obizzi four years earlier than *Amor pudico: Furori di Venere* [Furies of Venus].

Performed in June 1639, *Furori di Venere* was Obizzi's second musical drama after *Ermiona*. The work was produced in honour of Cardinal Giulio Sacchetti (1586–1663), the papal legate to the city of Bologna at that time. The production seems to have had the support of several Bolognese academies: the overall director was Cornelio Malvasia, a member of the Gelati;²³ the libretto was co-authored by Bernardino Mariscotti, the director of the Gelati (Cfr. Zani 1672: 32) and Carlo Possenti, a member of the Confusi. The official report of the performance was written by Giovanni Battista Manzini, a member of the della Notte. Likewise, Obizzi was a member of the Gelati, and he was known as 'il Rigenerato [the regenerated one]' (Cfr. Zani 1672: 354).

In early modern Italy, the academies operated as institutions parallel to universities or courts. The members, representative of both sexes and all social classes, consisted of pioneering scientists, authors, artists and political thinkers who debated many subjects from different disciplines. Through their publications and correspondence with intellectuals elsewhere in Europe, Italian academicians disseminated their ideas widely and, through this, made themselves central to the development of early modern intellectual culture of Europe (Everson and Sampson 2016: esp. 1–7). As the example of *Furori di Venere* demonstrates, however, each academy was deeply embedded in its own local community, and in the ways of local culture.

Furori di Venere consists of two parts which respectively act as the prelude and the postlude to a stylized battle between 4 squadrons of cavaliers named 'Sea', 'Forest', 'Navy' and 'Rome'. The battle was held outdoors but *Furori di Venere* was produced inside in La sala del senato cittadino nel Palazzo del Podestà – the Senate Chamber of the mayor's palace—which was converted into a make-shift theatre of grand scale (Monaldini 1999: 126).

The action of the story takes place in Sicily, and the subject matter is concerned with the conflict between Venus and Juno and the chaotic situation amongst the Gods which resulted in the Trojan War. Giovanni Battista Manzini's official report of the production tells us that 'the events unfolded in this entertainment ultimately led to the wedding between Aeneas and Lavinia' (G. B. Manzini 1639: 69–70). Therefore, *Furori di Venere* as a whole can be considered as a direct preamble to Obizzi's later fully-fledged opera *Il Pio Enea* whose subject matter is indeed that very wedding between Aeneas and Lavinia, which Monteverdi also featured in his (now lost opera), *Le nozze d'Enea con Lavinia* [The Wedding between Enea and Lavinia] (1641).

Regrettably, again, no music survives for this entertainment and we do not know who the composer was. Yet, music must have played a vital role in the work, and it may even have been even sung throughout because (1) the margin of a page in a manuscript libretto currently in the

possession of the Estense library, Modena,²⁴ records the voice types and provenances of persons who acted the roles of the Gods such as ‘Astrea by Castrato di Colonna; Vulcan by Basso di Ferrara’, and (2) Manzini in his report frequently comments upon the music, and particularly upon the singers’ superb techniques, and the brilliance of the vocal music (G. B. Manzini 1639: 34).

The front pages of all the MS libretti give us the title ‘*Furori di Venere, Favola del Sig.^{re} Obizzi*, which implies the importance of Obizzi’s role. However, Obizzi was not the librettist nor was he the director or the promoter, but was the plot-deviser or ‘ideas man’ of the spectacle. It may have been fortunate for Obizzi not to be the general director of such a large-scale tournament (*torneo*) – if he had been, he would have had a specific and rather difficult task: finding and hiring a large number of horses and horsemen. Cornelio Malvasia who took up the position of director for this occasion, left for us several letters to nearby noblemen to negotiate and arrange with much struggle the hire of animals – one such example to Ferdinando II de Medici is as follows:

My Most Serene Lord,

These cavaliers are determined to present a tournament from the forthcoming Monday [18 April of that year] to the second Sunday after Easter [8 May].²⁵ And thus, I have come to ask Your Highness to honour them by sending to them some horses, as on the other occasion, you indeed humbled them by giving such permission to them. In the meantime, I will remain, with other cavaliers, most of all, kneeling happily to you. At Bologna 14 April 1639, Your most humble, devoted and grateful servant, Cornelio Malvasia (I-Mos: b. 33).²⁶

Naturally, in presenting a *torneo* and its accompanying pageants, the horse was an indispensable component. Sometimes, however, the poor animals seem to have been mistreated. In a pageant, they frequently had to carry heavily armoured and extravagantly decked-out riders while pulling an enormous festival-float at the same time. In an even more extreme case, in the underworld scene of *Amor prigioniero in Delo*, a *torneo* [Cupid imprisoned in Delos] presented by the Academy Torbidi in Bologna in 1628, some horses were disguised as dragons by make-up and costumes and were somehow made to bellow fire (Lodio 1628).

In this historical context, noteworthy is the situation concerning the Intangible Cultural Heritage nomination of the Palio di Siena, a centuries-old horse race.²⁷ In 2010, the nomination was prepared by several Sieneese organisations including the municipality of Siena, the official organiser of the event. At first sight, it seemed only legitimate to include in the Intangible Cultural Heritage the famous horse race which has been backed up by the enthusiastic participation of the local community and is centuries old. The earliest record of the Palio dates back to 1239. By that time, the event had been established as part of the celebrations of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on 15 August (Parsons 2004: 20). The current form of the event, however, originated in the seventeenth century and was preceded and concluded by varying forms of spectacles with music – exactly in keeping with the traditions of the *giostra/ torneo*.

Interestingly, the main motive for the nomination of the Palio was not solely cultural – for several years, animal rights activists were challenging the organiser over the welfare of the animals and those behind the nomination of the event hoped to exploit the status of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in order to silence the debate (Broccolini 2013: 297). In the end, the Ministry of Tourism and that of Cultural Heritage and Activities of the right-wing Italian government at that time, who opposed the administration of Siena, decided to block the nomination, much to Siena’s fury and disappointment (Ibid: 298).

This case clearly indicates a serious problem. As Maggi has indicated (2014: 239), in Italy, where the consolidation of different states occurred as late as 1871, even a seemingly innocuous project such as safeguarding cultural heritage becomes affected strongly by the rivalries between central and local administrative forces. I will touch upon this later in the chapter. Before doing so, however, let us go further into the comparison between *l’opera dei pupi* and early modern operatic repertoire, particularly in terms of their musical practices and audiences.

The Intangible: Tradition, Community and Experience

As part of my research into the current practice of *l’opera dei pupi*, I conducted interviews with two particular practitioners in Sicily: the Fratelli Napoli company in Catania and the Turi Grasso company in Acireale in the province of Catania (Napoli 2015 and Grasso 2015). This ethnographic research provided illuminating insights and the practices of these two troupes from the Catanese region will be contrasted with the traditions found in Palermo, further west on the Island.²⁸

As just implied, within *l’opera dei pupi*, there are two distinct regional schools (Palermo and Catania), although the previous literature, focusing mainly on Palermo, has never clearly made such a distinction. The two schools differ first in the size and the physical forms of their puppets and in their maneuvering techniques. In Palermo, puppets are approximately 80cm tall, weighing around 6kg and have maneuverable knees. They are controlled not only from above but also from the side of the stage by the puppeteer’s manipulation of rods and strings (Morse 2007: 2). In Catania and its province, on the other hand, each doll is from 120 to 140cm tall, and has fixed knees, the weight reaching between 15 and 30kg (Grasso 2015)²⁹. Their sturdier physique requires different controlling techniques – by wires attached to puppets’ heads and hands bearing swords and shields (Grasso 2015). Perhaps the physical differences between the dolls of the two schools derive from different origins: the Catanese tradition seems to have been indebted to the Spanish puppet theatre (from which the Catanese Giovanni Grasso by happenstance acquired one doll in 1861), while the smaller, Palermitan doll may have been a fusion of the Neapolitan hand-puppet theatre traditions and the more general string-controlled marionette figures (Grasso 2015).

<Insert Figure 2.3. here>

Moreover, there are further characteristic differences between the two. In the Catanese theatre, all the programmes highlight fierce battle scenes between armoured knights (Grasso 2015), while in Palermo more varied themes can be found. Also in the Catanese practice, story-telling is designated solely to a separate narrator and puppeteers are not involved in the voicing and acting of the role which each puppet plays. Hence, those in Catania and its region proudly claim their more direct connection to the *contastorie* tradition and allegedly earlier establishment than the Palermo institution (Grasso 2015).

Music used for the puppet theatre performances is not standardized, and differs from company to company. In Palermo, a small group of live musicians seem to have accompanied performances in the second half of the nineteenth century, but nowadays small player-pianos or barrel-organs take over the entire role (Croce 2014: 58). They often borrow from preexisting ‘masterpieces’ such as Rossini's *William Tell* overture and Mozart's Turkish March or even excerpts from Wagner's musical dramas (Croce 2014: 67). In Catania, the practices vary widely: the Grasso company, following older traditions, uses very little music, only a drum roll to announce the entrance of each character or to accompany a battle scene and the sound of a strip of sheet metal for thunder effect (Grasso 2015), while the Napoli company has recently started performing the stories of four famous operas by puppets with the music: Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Rossini's *Tancredi*, Falla's *Retablo de Maese Pedro* and Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* (Napoli 2015). However, these Napoli family practices are exceptional. In *l'opera dei pupi* music generally plays only a supplementary role.

Behind such disparate practices are different audience groups. Originally, *l'opera dei pupi* was performed only for male commoners from the neighbourhood. In particular, the Catanese theatre, due to its celebration of virility through many battle scenes, was intended almost solely for local adult men. Such an homogenous audience is now a thing of the past.³⁰ Nowadays each company must prepare itself for diverse audiences (Morse 2007: 133), ranging from local wedding guests, children on school excursions, to foreign tourist groups (Grasso 2015). As a result, it is no longer possible for Sicilian puppeteers to present *farse* using their own dialect and peppering their plots with local incidents. For most current audiences, *l'opera dei pupi* is a one-off experience; rarely will they become an avid member of the ‘community’. Regrettably, despite the claim of UNESCO, the ‘traditional’ *opera dei pupi* of Sicily may no longer be rooted in the local ‘community’. Such a metamorphosis is inevitably a danger with itinerant performers who seek a wide audience. However, a situation similar to that of *l'opera dei pupi* has been noted regarding Sardinia's *Canto tenores*, another Italian practice inscribed as ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’. Sardinian singers are requested to perform only tourist-friendly repertoire, which critics have argued has resulted in the ‘trivialization’ of the genre (Maggi 2014: 242).

It may be rather ironic that there is a move within the realm of Italian ‘art music’ – which is often considered to transcend all provincial contexts and region-specific meanings – to show more concern for the local community. One such example can be found in the activities of the Associazione Culturale Bal’Danza in Ferrara, Italy. The Association was set up in 2003 in memory of Thomas Walker, the renowned American scholar of early modern Italian music and the former Dean of the Faculty of Education at Ferrara University. According to the president Valeria Conte Borasio (2015), the prime aim of the Bal’ Danza group is to promote music, dance, poetry, and theatre from the Renaissance and Baroque periods connected directly with Ferrara’s history and traditions, and to improve local awareness of them, focusing particularly upon the glorious reign of the House of Este (ended in 1597). A series of annual subscription concerts occur in Ferrara’s historic sites; for example, in March 2015, Bal’Danza held a concert consisting of repertoire associated with Ferrara’s legendary virtuosic singer, Anna Guarini (1563–1598)³¹ at the Casa dei Romei.

Many cultural institutions in the city (such as Ferrara University, the Conservatoire G. Frescobaldi, Superintendence of Culture, the City and Province of Ferrara) have supported the Association, allowing them access to historical sites free of charge. Over the years, the group has built a close connection with the local community and in 2014 they were given by the Chamber of Commerce, Ferrara, the ‘Riconoscimento Alberto V d’Este al Merito per la Cultura’ award for their cultural contribution to the area. Up to 2011 before the recent recession took a heavy toll, they were given monetary support only from the local governments (the city and the province). However, the central government has made no attempt to support such local cultural activities in any viable manner – another case of the ‘Italian’ problem discussed by Maggi (2014).

The musical performances of the Bal’ Danza Association under the direction of Romano Valentini are a result of collaboration between musicians alert to historical performance practices and scholars (notably Elio Durante and Anna Martellotti, experts in Ferrarese madrigals). These explorations of early performance practices have unsettled homogenized views of the past made more narrow and uniform through the prism of more recent, simplified approaches. For example, nowadays people may talk about ‘classical singing’ and not infrequently consider it as subject to caricature (Cfr: Wilson 2007). However, the existence of such a ‘universal’ singing style within western art music is a fallacy; a different language and a different type of repertoire naturally require a different singing style. Moreover, each style has ‘evolved’ during its long history. What we call ‘operatic singing’ did not become established until the nineteenth century, if not later (Potter 1998: 47), and may have become more uniform, not less, with the advent of recording. At its formative and developmental stages, opera was connected more clearly to smaller and locally-integrated ‘popular’ genres and their styles of performance, as we have seen. Thus, at a given point

(say, the mid seventeenth century), there was no difference at all between the musical style associated with opera and its prototypes (such as *torneo* and *giostra*) and that found at local celebratory events (such as the Palio di Siena).

The increasing number of performances of the early modern repertoire in recent years has established certain methodologies including ‘archaeological’ methodologies of performance practice – and there are quite a few groups (including Bal' Danza) which are committed to them. The methods have been formed in tandem with scholarly work in the areas of performance practice, where the tangible survival of documents (such as scores, libretti, treatises, descriptions of performances and other relevant literature) and iconographical material plays an essential role. In the actual act of performance, however, the intangible also becomes important. The intangible here is not only about ‘empirical memory’ which consists of elements transmitted from a predecessor ‘by means of a particular terminology’ at ‘the moment of passing experience’ on to the following generation (Barba and Savarese 2011: 164) but also includes what we may call ‘physiological extrapolation’. For example, early modern Italian repertoire often requires the singer to manage very long and fast melismatic passages. Those phrases are executable only by a ‘lightning-quick kind of glottal articulation which was performed on the soft palate’ (Sherman 1997: 231), in other words, ‘a rapid spasm of the muscles controlling the larynx, causing the glottis to open and close in a rapid oscillation’ (Rogers 1998: 354), not by diaphragmic control, the latter being a new method developed in the eighteenth century. Due to the relative paucity (if not the complete lack) of contemporary literature on methodological vocal execution, over recent years, singers of early modern music have ‘experimented’ with their own physiologies in order to reproduce all the effects that the literature richly describes. This ‘physiological extrapolation’ is beyond the usual realm of archaeology. It may not reconstruct the genuinely ‘authentic’ sound of early music, but its results, in the most intangible of arenas, deserve to find a place within conceptions of intangible cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The ingredients that found their way into opera reveal a striking overlap with cultural forms that have been inscribed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage. Those components not only enriched opera as a multi-faceted genre but also highlight that even opera – one of the most elite yet mainstream Western art-forms – was generated out of products of local communities of various kinds and experiences, before becoming associated with the centres and institutions of political and cultural power embedded in the Absolutism of the eighteenth century.³² An anthropological approach is clearly possible at each stage of opera’s development and it enables us to glimpse now-

lost intangible artifacts of the past. This, in turn, makes us aware of several problems – practical as well as conceptual – concerning the preservation of ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’.

The first is concerned with the justifications for preserving a musico-cultural form in relation to its community. Opera is no longer based in a particular community or region and is often considered as if it were somewhat ‘global’. Moreover, the genre has the potential to alienate audiences: old repertoire might no longer reflect contemporary society while modern opera targets only a small number of connoisseurs. Such alienation is not a problem unique to opera but is ubiquitous. The problem worsens because the notion of ‘local community’ is itself becoming unstable due to the changing social demography in any given region. We must be aware that there is always a danger that a cultural form will be preserved simply for the sake of an ‘imaginary’ community – imaginary in the sense that its existence may have been taken for granted in the past but is no longer incontrovertible. The term may be reminiscent of what Anderson defines as the nation: ‘an imagined political community’ where ‘the members ... will never know most of their fellow-members ... yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (2006: 6). However, the problem concerning the ‘imaginary’ community may be more serious. This is because deliberate fabrication of a cultural community would be not only meaningless and unhealthy but, in the first place, totally against the principles of cultural protection.

A second issue concerns the effects of ‘protection’. In practical terms, this leads to considering the problematic nature of public support for arts and culture. Opera houses often receive large monetary support from governments. Bereson has defended this, indicating that opera is ‘an institution with roots that are inextricably linked with the very concept of the state, which provides its ceremonial core’ (2002: 185). By contrast, the designation ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ is solely honorary in nature and those inscribed items are not subject to monetary gain. Although justifying or criticizing the priorities of governmental funding is not within the scope of this paper, it should be noted that what must be subject to ‘protection’ is not so much the opera house as an institution nor the puppet, as a tangible object, of the theatre, rather the human skill behind the practice of each art form – precisely, the ‘intangible’, which UNESCO attempts to address. However, all the persons working for *L'opera dei pupi* I interviewed unanimously claimed that they saw no improvement in their situations after the UNESCO recognition and they conveyed to me their concerns about the lack of a training system for future generations. The high-level execution of any artform requires long-term dedication and training. Without investing in training systems, no artform will survive. Furthermore, it is rather questionable whether giving a cultural phenomenon the appellation of Intangible Cultural Heritage will give rise to practically effective solutions for transmission and sustainability. In fact, in 2012 when Cremona's violin making was registered as Intangible Cultural Heritage, the city was praised as an exemplary model not in terms of culture but

economics – as a model which shows how a low-cost set of public-private joint actions enhances the status of a city and potentially boosts its economy (Magnani 2014: 162–163). Cremona violin craftsmanship is so far the only item in the Intangible Cultural Heritage list directly connected to western art music. But the registration does not seem to have encouraged a productive exchange between the two forms of the intangible – the skills of instrument making and those of music making – but rather has transmogrified into the values of commerce rather than community.

Finally, from what are we protecting artforms? From the influence of industrialized entertainment genres? From the ‘negative’ effects of globalization and commercialization? The entertainment industry seems unstoppable due not only to its ‘global’ accessibility but also its monetary power. As opera demonstrates, a cultural form that commences as a local phenomenon might eventually develop to acquire ‘global’ recognition, and this should not be considered simplistically as an objective indication of a failure but rather as a complex (and perhaps detrimental) diffusion and transformation of its original identity. Opera has survived precisely because it ‘evolved’. Culture is by nature fluid and in constant change particularly through encounters with, and influence from, other cultures. Discussing ‘globalization’ only in negative terms may be naïve if not counterproductive. What we should bear in mind here is that it may be more productive to archive webs of culture and their attendant experiences rather than isolated activities and practices. In that way, we can respect the right of a heritage to grow and evolve, and the question of elitism will become merely one of its temporary use, and not of its origin or its ultimate destination.

¹ My special thanks to: Amanda and Gaetano Grasso (La compagnia Turi Grasso, Acireale); Fiorenzo Napoli (La compagnia Fratelli Napoli, Catania); Miho Kamiya and Valeria Conte Borasio (L'associazione culturale Bal' Danza, Ferrara).

² Dolls used for *l'opera dei pupi* are in fact 'marionettes' since they are large and not to be operated by hands. However, it is customary that the English term 'puppet' is used in this context perhaps in order to mimic the phonetics of the Sicilian term 'Pupi' and I follow that practice in this article.

³ For the history of *l'opera dei pupi*, see: (McCormick and Pratasik. 1998: 200–204); (Morse 2007: 20–52) and (Croce 2014: esp. 11–22).

⁴ For the rather troublesome processes of establishing the 'masterpiece' programme and the subsequent shift to the 'IHC' project, see: (Aikawa-Faure 2008: 13–44).

⁵ <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/?pg=00103#definition-and-criteria> (accessed 30 September 2016).

⁶ http://www.unesco.org/bpi/intangible_heritage/italy.htm (accessed 30 September 2016).

⁷ Note that Barba's use of the term 'empirical' does not conform to that of Deleuze who understands the notion as opposed to the 'transcendental'. One writer describes Deleuze's concepts thus: 'the empirical – lived, intuited or sensed experience – and the transcendental – the formal condition of experience, experience gone beyond' (Pearson 2002: 170).

⁸ See, for a comprehensive list of *Orlando furioso* operas: (Carter 1992: I, 192). For a list of 18th-century *Orlando* operas, see: (Buch 2009: 376–377).

⁹ Early 'Magic opera' examples include: Luigi Rossi's opera, *Il palazzo incantato* (on a libretto by G. Rospigliosi, in Rome, in 1642); F. Sacrati's *L'isola di Alcina* (F. Testi, Bologna, 1648); S. Martinelli's *Alcina* (? , Trent, 1649); and Cavalli's *Bradamante* (P. P. Bissari, Venice, 1650). Buch discusses Ariosto's work and its subsequent operatic adaptations as one of the precedents and the sources of 18th-century magic opera (2009: esp. 4–7). *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, however, defines the term 'magic opera' only relation to German operas from the late 1780s to the 19th century. See: (Bauman 1992).

¹⁰ 'Gernando, che furiosamente strascinando un seggio vi si pose a sedere in atto di pensoso' (David 1696: 36).

¹¹ In Catania, however, Orlando is more of a hero as typical 'l'uomo senza macchia e senza paura' (Grasso 2015) and his madness is not usually featured in the puppet theatre.

¹² For the function of opera's Prologo, see: Carter 2015, 23–24.

¹³ The officially published account of the 1608 wedding celebrations includes another version of the libretto which refers to '*Sposa real*' (royal bride; i.e. Margherita of Savoy) instead of Carlo (Follino 1608: 32). Naturally, the account must have been issued after the premiere, while the Mantuan libretto (Rinuccini 1608) seems to have preceded it. The direct address to the bride may have indicated that the original performance was considered as some kind of 'rite of passage' for her (See: MacNeil 1999: esp. 413). The subsequent editions of the libretto (Florence and Venice in 1608; Venice in 1622; Venice in 1639) all address to Carlo, who was absent from the wedding. Thus, with him as a representative, the libretto speaks to those who did not attend the original performance.

¹⁴ 'Listen, immortal Carlo, how sighs/ a betrayed lover on the solitary bank; Perhaps it will happen that of the Argive scene/ the ancient honour you may admire in new songs'.

¹⁵ All the three editions of the libretto printed in Venice as well as the version related to the Parisian production (Torelli 1645) contain the *Novissimi* theatre reference. It is those published in Piacenza (1644) and in Milan (n.d.) that omit the reference.

¹⁶ For the details of this opera, see: (Woyke 2008: 109–119).

¹⁷ For the detailed practice of theatre goers' 'masking' in early modern Venice, see: (Selfridge-Field 2007: esp. 108-111).

¹⁸ The direct reasons why the Palermo production had to alter the opera may have been financial ones as the director Pietro Rodino implies in his apologia in the libretto (Aureli 1669). See: (Tedesco 2011: 356). All of the following four surviving manuscript scores include masking references: I-Vnm: It. IV 450 (9974) [which seems to have been associated with the 1667 Forlì production]; I-MOe: F.1301 [with the 1674 Reggio production]; I-Nc: 33.6.6. [with the 1657 Venetian premiere]; and I-IB: Borromeo MU 387 [with the 1660 Milan performance].

¹⁹ *NG*, *MGG*, and *Enciclopedia di spettacolo* all refer to him only in relation to theatre-history in Ferrara (See: Lockwood & Steib 2001: 708; Roccatagliati & Raspe 1995: 406; Pirrotta 1962: col. 183). Recently, the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* has included an entry for him (Badolato 2013).

²⁰ The libretto of *Ermiona* was published as (Bartolini 1638). Also see: (Petrobelli 1965).

²¹ [Mi portai sino l'anno 1664 ad osservare il bellissimo luogo del Marchese Pio Enea Obizzi alla Battaglia, dove in alcune stanze terrene vi erano inquadriati diversi disegni di Machine Teatrali con Cavalieri à Cavallo, e chiedendo al Marchese la loro notizia, cortesemente mi rispose: L'anno 1636 nacque generoso desiderio in alcuni miei amici, e compagni in Padova, di ordinar un Torneo; onde io per nobilitarlo maggiormente, presi per mano la Favola di Cadmo, e ne composi l'introduzione, che fu poi posta in Musica nella forma, che comparve stampata in publica vista....come si vede in questi disegni, si perfezionò un pomposo spettacolo. Di qui venne, che l'anno addietro con la protezione di più Nobili, s' venirono diversi Virtuosi peoffessori della Musica, mediante i quali comparve l'anno 1637 nel Teatro di S. Cassiano l'Andromeda di Benedetto Ferrari....'. Ed ecco i favori di questo gran Cavaliere, e letterato, che si degnò d'onorarmi della sudetta notizia vagliono d'autorizzare l'origine e'l tempo che ha avuta l'introduzione de' Drami in Venezia].

²² Also see: (Matsumoto 2011).

²³ Malvasia was an active contributor to Bolognese history of theatre in general (Bianconi & Walker 1975: 426).

²⁴ (I-Moe: Ms alpha. J. 6.22 = It. 170).

²⁵ All the MS libretti of *I furori di Venere* bear a date, 'Di giugno 1639' [June 1639] which seems to indicate the premiere date. Malvasia's correspondence here seems to suggest that a series of open-air tournament battles occurred between 18 April and 8 May prior to the production of *I furori* which occurred, as a kind of grand finale, in early June.

²⁶ [Ser.^{mo} Prencipe Mio Sign.^{re} Stano questi cavaglieri rissoluti di rapresentar il torneo il lunedì suseguente alla domenica Ablis e però io vengo humilmente a supplicar V. A. di volerne honorare di ma[n]darne i cavalli, che l'altra volta pure per farne gratia restò servita concederne. Resterò io con tutti questi altri cavaglieri, alla benignità del V.A. Sommam.^{te} tenuti mentre vivimente m'inchio . Di Bologna, li 14 aprile di 1639, Humiliss.^{mo}, devotiss.^{mo}, et obligaliss.^{mo} Cornelio Malvasia]. The original spellings retained.

²⁷ See (Parsons 2004: 20).

²⁸ Note that the two companies are both Sicilian despite the slightly confusing family name of 'Napoli' for one of them.

²⁹ The doll in Catania is around 140cm and that in Acireale around 120cm. Hence, the Grasso company considers that there are three schools in *l'opera dei pupi*: Parlemitan (Palermo and its surrounding area), Catanese (Catania) and Acese (Acireale) (Grasso 2015). The distinction between the last two, however, are solely a matter of size.

³⁰ McCormick and Pratasik have noted the homogenous nature of the audience of European puppet theatre: 'with all or most of its members belonging to the same socio-economic groups, geographical and linguistic background and, in some cases, age and sex' (1998: 78),

³¹ She was a daughter of the famous poet Giovanni Battista Guarini, the author of *Il pastor fido* and became one of the members of the famous singing group, the *Concerto delle donne*. For the *Concerto*, see: (Newcomb: 1980; and Durante and Martelotti, 1979).

³² For the eventual relationship between opera and absolutism, see: (Feldman 2007).