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## OPERATIC FILMS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF *DON GIOVANNI* BY JOSEPH LOSEY AND *JUAN* BY KASPER HOLTEN

### *Óperas filmadas: estudio comparativo de Don Giovanni de Joseph Losey y Juan de Kasper Holten*

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#### ABSTRACT

From an artistic point of view, the adaptation of an opera to the cinema has traditionally been considered a complex and controversial process. *Don Giovanni*, by W. A. Mozart is one of the operas that has generated more audiovisual versions during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, although very few films have finally been taken to the cinema screen. This paper is focused on comparing the audiovisual versions *Don Giovanni*, by Joseph Losey (1979), and *Juan* by Kasper Holten (2010). Through a quantitative and qualitative methodology based on content analysis, this research reflects on the degree of intervention exercised by the language and audiovisual format used in the process of reinterpretation of the pre-existing operatic text.

**Key words:** film, opera, adaptation, audiovisual communication, music, soundtrack.

#### RESUMEN

La adaptación de una ópera al medio cinematográfico, tradicionalmente se ha considerado un proceso complejo y controvertido desde el punto de vista artístico. *Don Giovanni*, de W. A. Mozart es una de las óperas que más versiones audiovisuales ha generado durante los siglos XX y XXI, aunque son muy pocas las películas que finalmente se han llevado a la pantalla de cine. El interés de este trabajo se centra en comparar las versiones audiovisuales *Don Giovanni*, de Joseph Losey (1979), y *Juan* de Kasper Holten (2010). Mediante una metodología cuantitativa y cualitativa basada en el análisis de contenido, esta investigación reflexiona sobre el grado de intervención que ejercen el lenguaje y el formato audiovisual empleados en el proceso de reinterpretación del texto musical pre-existente.

**Palabras clave:** cine, ópera, adaptación, comunicación audiovisual, música, banda sonora.

## 1. THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC ATTRACTIVE OF W. A. MOZART'S *DON GIOVANNI*

The adaptation of a musical play to an audiovisual medium like cinema or video has been a way to expand the original show outside the stage (Citron, 2000; Villanueva, 2014). Traditionally, this process has been determined by the original show, which was played in theaters (Auslander, 2008). In the specific case of operatic films, some of the essential elements of the original play, such as the music, the mise en scène or the libretto have determined the aesthetics and the language of these adaptations (Villanueva, 2014). Apart from the basic audiovisual tools, the use of specific codes and media, such as cinema, television or video, ultimately transform opera from a semiotic perspective in each of these screens (Reason, 2004; Barker, 2012).

In the field of operatic films, it seems clear that W. A. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (KV 527) has generated extensive media attention during the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century. *The Libertine Punished* or *Don Giovanni* (with the complete title in Italian *Il dissoluto punito ossia il Don Giovanni*) is a *drama giocoso* in two acts with Italian libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte. The opera was originally based on the literary work by Antonio de Zamora called *No hay plazo que no se cumpla ni deuda que no se pague* [There is no deadline left unmet and no debt left unpaid], also known as *Convidado de piedra* [the Stone Guest]. It was premiered at the theater of Prague (currently the Estates Theater) on 29 October 1787. Mozart himself described this work as an *opera buffa*. Although sometimes classified as comic, the work actually blends comedy, melodrama and supernatural elements in its plot (Radigales, 2011; 2012, pp. 46-60). Since its première, this has been one of the most performed operas in the international theaters over the last 60 years (Goehr & Herwitz, 2006, pp. xv-xix; Campana, 2009, pp. 140-151). Together with other popular works like Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* or G. Puccini's *La Bohème*, *Don Giovanni* is one of the operas which has generated the highest number of audiovisual adaptations in cinema, television and video (DuMont, 2000, pp. 71-128; Remy, 1979)<sup>1</sup>. In fact, the work was brought to the silver screen at a very early stage, when in the year 1900 a short musical and visual adaptation was made of one of the scenes in the opera for the Universal Exposition held in Paris. The 3-minute film included the performance of the baritone Victor Maurel in black and white (Wlaschin, 2004, p. 192). 20 years after this recording, the first complete silent version of the opera was produced. The film premiered in 1922 and, according to the information published by Ken Wlaschin (2004, pp. 188-194), there are no records or copies of the film.

The oldest preserved cinema adaptation of *Don Giovanni* is the English film that the London Opera Company adapted to cinema in 1947, conducted by Alberto Erede. From that moment on, *Don Giovanni* was adapted for the big screen many times, and it was performed for television over 12 times in the decade of 1950. As an example of the high demand that existed in that period, we can mention the four versions that were produced for public television channels in Italy, Vienna and Austria in the year 1954 alone (Barnes, 2003). We must point out, however, that most of these productions were not created as independent adaptations, but as an extension of the theater work. They were versions recorded in the opera theaters to be screened in cinemas, or performances of a specific music production

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<sup>1</sup> *Don Giovanni* ranks in the 10th position of the list *Operabase*, which includes the most performed operas worldwide. Available at: [www.operabase.com](http://www.operabase.com). Last accessed on 27 October 2016. <http://operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en#opera>.

in a television set (Barnes, 2003). They were not considered films that were completely independent from the original live performance, but rather as films obtained from recording the actual opera.

In the year 1979, the first film adaptation of *Don Giovanni* was created. It was a joint production between France, Italy and Germany, directed by Joseph Losey and starring Daniel Toscan du Plantier. The project was defined as a *filmed opera* and it is currently considered one of the best referents in its category (Rushton, 1981, pp. 1,5). Although the film was not as successful as expected, it was praised by the critics and by the audience sector it was addressed to, which was a minority sector of viewers who were passionate about opera. Later on, during the decades of 1980 and 1990, over 15 productions of *Don Giovanni* were registered in Europe and America, and most of them, as in the case of the 50s, were television adaptation of stage productions in venues like the Zürich Opera House, the *Teatro Regio* in Parma or the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

After Losey's film, no other film about the myth of Don Giovanni premiered in cinemas with a completely audiovisual purpose until 2010. The production was directed by Kasper Holten, a set designer celebrated for his collaboration with the Royal Opera House of London. The producers Blenkov & Shonennmann Pictures and Eurofilm Studio premiered in 2011 this audiovisual adaptation in Denmark and the United Kingdom with the title *Juan*. The movie was only released in a few theaters and mainly through independent cinema festivals, like the Seattle International Film Festival or the Berlin International Film Festival.

The case of *Juan* is a reflection of the demand for this title in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the audiovisual and music market, because it is still one of the most popular works in the history of the opera genre (Rubio & Mancha, 2008; Will, 2011, pp. 32-34). According to the data in Operabase, for example, in 2015 there were 2559 staged productions of this opera in over 40 theaters in European and American cities.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to the advanced systems of digital recording that have gradually been installed in all the theaters in the world, most of these stage performances have been recorded in some kind of audiovisual format. This mainly leads to an alteration in the medium in which this show has traditionally been enjoyed. However, the process of adapting a preexisting operatic text to the cinematographic world transforms the audiovisual language used, apart from the medium in which it is portrayed. Our interest focuses on cases like Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni* (1979) and Kasper Holten's *Juan* (2010), movies which are considered adaptations of Mozart's work but which do not depend on the original for a reinterpretation of the story: they are independent audiovisual projects from an artistic point of view.

## 2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

This research presents a comparative analysis of the two films to determine the extent to which the different languages and methods used in the process of adapting the opera *Don Giovanni* to an audiovisual medium intervene on the original text. More specifically, the goal of this work is to analyze, in audiovisual terms, the differences between two works which use the same medium (in this case, cinema) and which are based on the same preexisting musical and scenic text that originated

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<sup>2</sup> [www.operabase.com](http://www.operabase.com). Last accessed on 28 October 2016. <http://operabase.com/oplist.cgi?id=none&lang=en&is=don+giovanni&by=&loc=&stype=abs&sd=28&sm=10&sy=2013&etype=abs&ed=&em=&ey=>

them. From a media perspective, the comparative study of the cinematographic proposal of Joseph Losey in 1979 with regard to the audiovisual adaptation by Kasper Holten in 2010 aims to identify some of the characteristics adopted by the adaptations of an opera and its stylistic conventions to the language of different media (Radigales & Cubas, 2017, pp. 136-146).

In order to carry out the analysis of the films, we have chosen a narrative fragment from the original work and a strictly musical section: 1) the end of the first act and 2) the instrumental overture. On the one hand, the end of act I represents a scene which includes dramatic actions and characters which are characteristic of the narrative development of a story in a cinematographic context: in a party at the palace of Don Giovanni, he tries to abuse the maid Zerlina, to the astonishment and indignation of his guests. Upon being surprised, Don Giovanni falsely accuses Leporello and manages to escape. This scene includes elements that favor their transformation for an audiovisual medium: agility in the succession of dramatic actions; the presentation of a narrative conflict and its resolution; and the intervention of all the main characters, among others (Will, 2011, pp. 32-59; Villanueva, 2014, pp. 320). On the other hand, and as a complement to this final fragment of the first act, the analysis focuses on the musical overture of the films. Traditionally, the overture has been an essential piece in operas, with a strictly instrumental character which was not generally accompanied by dramatic action, because it was represented on the stage of a theater. Instead, it was used to provide a taste of the tone, the narrative character and the artistic intention in musical terms (Walter, 2006, p. 429; Varon, 2012, p. 91). However, when the work is adapted to the screen, the overture needs to be accompanied by images, because it is part of the film (it normally matches the opening credits) (Tambling, 1987, p. 16). Therefore, this initial musical passage must be accompanied by a visual proposal that also reveals the aesthetics of the film and the media conception that the authors have of their audiovisual product. We considered that it would be interesting to study, within the process of a cinematographic adaptation, the way in which the directors have reinterpreted the opening sequence in audiovisual and narrative terms, based on a strictly musical material.

The comparative study of the two films uses a combined quantitative and qualitative methodology. Our research method was content analysis. The categories with which we can carry out a reading of the works from the perspective of audiovisual language are 1) the soundtrack, 2) the type of audiovisual language used, and 3) the construction of a narrative universe. According to this categorization, we started by creating, with a deductive approach, a wide list of variables based on the literature available. In a second stage, and after a first viewing of the films that was used as a pre-test, we created a shortlist and redefined the control questions to obtain a binary response, apart from a qualitative assessment for those aspects that are relevant in audiovisual reinterpretation. The work has been completed with an extensive review of the literature and the press about the audiovisual production of *Don Giovanni*, as well as with an analysis of the public documents issued by the producers of the films, such as the *Making of* documentary released by the producer Gaumont in 2006 that includes the testimony of those who participated in Joseph Losey's project in 1979.

### 3. RESULTS

In this study, conclusions were obtained in the different analysis categories that cannot be presented in this section in their entirety. Instead, we will include a short synthesis of those assessments which make it possible to understand the artistic transformation that the cinematographic look causes

on the original text of the opera, both in the final part of act I and in the overture (Radigales & Cubas, 2017, pp. 136-146).

Before discussing the main results obtained with regard to the audiovisual language, we must point out that the analysis of contents was performed on the edited DVDs of the films. Both works included extra material apart from the contents of the film itself. The information provided by this sort of complementary contents in the case of adaptations of preexisting works like novels or operas has been very revealing, because it enriches and qualifies at the same time the appreciation of a new film that is based on a known text. We may mention here, as an example, the significant value for cinema-going audiences and opera lovers of knowing the experiences lived by the main characters during the filming process in the work by Kasper Holten (2010) and by Joseph Losey (1979). In the documentary of this last work, for example, several performers from the main cast, such as the singer Edda Moser, revealed that most of the problems in the film that had to do with actor directing were due to the different views held by a film director about the story (in this case the famous director Joseph Losey) and by the singers, who had experience with theater opera and were much more familiarized with the original text. Upon knowing the *subtext* of the production, the viewer can understand not only the difficulty to approach a musical work of international fame from a different medium and with a language based on new forms of expression, but also the artistic relevance necessary to achieve characteristically audiovisual results without detracting from the beauty of the music and the conventions of this art (Esse, 2010, pp. 81-95). Thanks to the positive and educational view presented by the contents of these films, the media appreciation for this work by the current domestic viewers is enriched. Therefore, this would be an example of extra material that could be a reference for any type of audiovisual adaptation of a preexisting work, considering the necessary economic resources, apart from those of the production of the work itself, which must be allocated for the creation of these contents (Bongiovanni, 2017).

### 3.1. END OF ACT I: OPERATIC FILM VS AUDIOVISUAL ADAPTATION

According to the analysis of the first act of the work, both the version by Losey in 1979 and the one by Holten in 2010 could be classified into the category of operatic film, that is, the adaptation of an opera for the cinematographic medium based on a completely diegetic approach (Bourre, 1987; Tambling, 1994). Although there may be some exceptions, operatic films generally respect the essential elements of the original work: libretto, music and representation of dramatic action (Parker, 1998, p. xi; Batta, 2005, p. 873; Adorno, 2006, pp. 25-40; Radigales & Cubas, 2017). However, after an analysis of the two works, we have observed that these conditions are only met by Joseph Losey's version and, therefore, that only in this case we can talk about an operatic film. On the contrary, Kasper Holten reinterprets the original text and includes significant alterations of the basic elements of the opera: the film modifies and edits the libretto, and there are musical ellipses and instrumental arrangements which were not part of the score by W. A. Mozart. In addition, Kasper Holten decided to adapt the original libretto into English and introduce some grammatical updates for the text. It includes references to elements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century like synthetic drugs or mobile phones, and uses expressions and insults which belong to the contemporary idiomatic register. In addition, the author decided to translate some of the recitatives sung in the original work and include them as spoken or recited dialogues.

Therefore, we may consider that *Juan* carries out a re-reading based on the adaptation and updating of the opera *Don Giovanni*. More specifically, the element that confirms that *Juan* is not a regular operatic film but an adaptation for cinema are the *metatexts*, interpreted here as the sub-plots added by the author. Although in many of these products we can observe these sub-plots, which are part of the process of artistic rewriting, in Holten's version they become so relevant that they ultimately transform the main plot and the construction of the main characters.<sup>3</sup>

The film by Joseph Losey, however, is structured with a classical style, not only with regard to the interpretation of the original text of the libretto by Da Ponte, but also through essential elements of the discourse of both languages used (operatic and cinematographic), such as set design, conception of the audiovisual grammar and preeminence of music over any other structural element. As Nicolas Seydoux states in the documentary created by Gaumont in 2006 about the production of this work, the initial objective of the project was not to film an opera, or to create a film about an opera like other productions —such as Irgmar Bergman's *Die Zauberflöte*, created some years earlier and based on Mozart's work— but to create a real operatic film, an opera adaptation that uses a cinematographic medium and respects the hierarchical structure of the original music. Therefore, and before analyzing the specific results for each of these categories, we must establish an *a priori* difference between the classical operatic film proposed by Joseph Losey and the adaptation created by Kasper Holten in his version from 2010.

### 3.1.1. SOUNDTRACK: MUSICAL PERFECTION VS AUDIOVISUAL VERISIMILITUDE

With regard to the conception of the soundtrack, there are significant differences between both films. On the one hand, Joseph Losey decided to use a completely pre-recorded soundtrack, as he had done with some previous productions (Palmer & Riley, 1993; Gardner, 2004). The orchestral accompaniment and the voices of the main characters were recorded together, but separately from the movie, and directed by Lorin Maazel. The singers then lip-synced their own voices in the context of a sound concept that, according to Gaumont —the producing company—, prioritized the musical text over any other audiovisual need, in terms of verisimilitude. The project, therefore, aimed to recreate Mozart's musical perfection through the use of a prerecorded soundtrack performed in a study, with high quality. Although the final version of the film included a design of diegetic sound with realistic effects to make the product work in cinematographic terms, music remained on the foreground in the final cut, without considering the depth of field which derives from the set design. Particularly in some passages, such as the arias and the duets, in which the camera closed on the characters, this decision created a lack of correspondence between the movement of the mouth and the soundtrack. As the singers themselves stated in the documentary 27 years after the release of the film, the guidelines they received about their face movements wanted to achieve a degree of spontaneity and a series of audiovisual gestures which could hardly be synchronized with the preexisting musical record. Also, the fact that in the film *Don Giovanni* the entire soundtrack was dubbed had some consequences on the cine-

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<sup>3</sup> We can cite here an example: in the first act, there is a *metadiegesis* that frames the narrative structure of the entire film. The character of Juan, a well-known artist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, identifies himself with the role of *Don Giovanni* to the point that it leads him to self-destruction.

matographic language itself, because it made it necessary to use wider shots in order not to reveal that lack of verisimilitude, which was evident not so much because of the synchronization of lips while singing, but because of the corporeality required by the vocal inflection of the musical passages. That corporeality is a key element to convey the diegetic realism of a film and it creates in the viewers a narrative immersion in the work (Radigales, 2012).

On the other hand, the version by Kasper Holten followed a completely diegetic approach in which characters sang all the parts in the libretto while they acted in front of the camera in real time during the recording process. Music was not added in the post-production stage, but recorded while filming, and then edited and perfected afterwards. Although this system does not guarantee an absolute musical quality with regard to its definition, it is considered an optimal choice to achieve more narrative verisimilitude from an audiovisual perspective, and it gives the same relevance to the dramatic actions and to the patterns and structure requested by the music (Cachopo, 2014, pp. 315-329). Although this detail may seem trivial, it is very significant with regard to the traditional adaptation of opera to the screen: in *Juan*, facial expressions adopted a natural look that is difficult to obtain when singing in theater. The direction of actors, in this film, has a particularly audiovisual expression (at some points, the viewer may even forget the fact that the characters are indeed singing). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the technological advances with HD recording systems are making it possible to achieve, in music filming more than ever, an audiovisual realism which is comparable to that of other sub-genres, without compromising the sound quality required in this type of works. The adaptation directed by Kasper Holten is a good example of this.

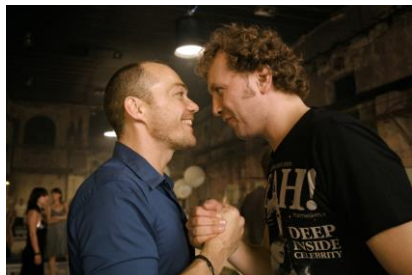
### 3.1.2 AUDIOVISUAL LANGUAGE: CLASSICAL CINEMA VS VIDEO AESTHETICS

An analysis of the end of act I also makes it possible to observe how both films use the audiovisual language with different objectives. The editing in Kasper Holten's *Juan* shows closer shots (generally mid shots and full shots, in which the looks of the characters when they react, the close-ups and the immersive camera tracking that moves closer to the face expression of the characters (including zooms) become particularly relevant. This approach makes it easier to achieve a constant metadiegetic shift towards the interior world of the character (which distorts his own reality) and which, from the point of view of the viewer, modifies the perspective from which the story is told. The language used in *Juan* also uses the resource of the hand-held camera to promote an aesthetic tone which is closer to video than to cinema: shots are not fixed, but they tilt slightly to boost the feeling of realism and of immediacy, and the improvised effect of the recording (Vieytes, 2008, pp. 61-64). At the same time, the fact that it is recorded with an HD digital system rather than with a cinematographic camera reinforced the video aesthetic, which is closer and more imperfect, in line with the contemporary scenography chosen as a setting for the film. This modern and video aesthetics are closer to the daily routine of viewers, who are more used to watching similar domestic videos on television and digital media. Clearly, this stylistic approach to the daily life of the audience may help a conventional art like opera to look updated and closer, rather than distant and elitist, for the viewers of these media (Lacasa & Villanueva, 2012, pp. 413-418).

On the other hand, the rhythm created in the editing stage, as well as the type of shots used in this film seem to follow essentially narrative criteria. This promotes not only the main plot of the libretto, but also the sub-plots added to the music, which manages to give psychological depth to the charac-

ters. To do so, the author uses 200 shots in the final cut of the end of act I. This amount, together with a coherent combination of mid shots and slight camera movements, creates a more dynamic perception of the dramatic action than in the original scene by Losey (created with 55 shots).

Figures 1 and 2: captures of the type of shots used at the end of act I in *Juan* and in *Don Giovanni*



1. *Juan*, Kasper Holten (2010)



2. *Don Giovanni*, Joseph Losey (1979)

As we can see in figures 1 and 2, the audiovisual approach used in 1979 in Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni* uses a classical language which is typical of historical cinema, in which the context of the narration gains special relevance (Gardner, 2004). Unlike Holten, Losey decided to narrate the scene with wide general shots that act as a spatial reference and which, in classical audiovisual language, have generally been accompanied by music with high harmonic density, a plurality of textures or an accelerated rhythm, as in the case of the *finale* of act I (Nieto, 2010; Citron, 2005, pp 204- 206). Based on that wide and grandiloquent approach and in line with the scenic design and the selected locations (the Italian buildings by Palladio in Venice and Veneto) the author uses group shots and mid shots to get gradually closer to the dramatic action (Gardner, 2004).

In general terms, the version from 1979 uses less camera movements in its shots. This cinema editing, with a classical style, is built through fixed shots mixed with slow tracking and panning shots which are barely noticeable (except for the accelerated movements to capture the faces of Zerlina and Don Giovanni at the beginning of the scene). However, the style is also shown in the set design chosen for this film. The camera only moves to track the choreography of the singers as a group. In addition, Joseph Losey used constant tracking shots to follow the characters, particularly in the arias and the passages in which there is an internal reflection. These minor camera movements, unlike in Holten's version, are not subject to scenic or narrative criteria, but follow the inflections of Mozart's music. In this same line and with regard to the rest of the editing, Losey seems to use an essentially musical criterion in which shot changes are determined by the development of music and singing. We can highlight the way in which the author uses the resource of introducing musical modulations with a cut between shots, in order to prepare the viewer who is listening to the story. This detail gives the scenes some sense of choreography which is directly connected with the experience of watching opera in the theater, where the entire dramatic action is strictly subject to the music (Villanueva, 2014). Losey uses 55 shots to create the musical scene. This is a significantly lower amount than what Holten uses in his video version: it creates a slower rhythm, but which is more in line with the historical atmosphere which has traditionally been used in *operatic films* (Bourre, 1987).



Finally, and with regard to the type of angles used in their films, we must mention that in both films we can observe a narrative intention with the use of non-frontal angles, including high and low angles. In Kasper Holten's version, many of these choices follow a stylistic criterion based on the mobility of the image towards the interior world of the character. For its part, in the film of Joseph Losey the angle represents an element that adds a subjective look to the story and depends on the perspective from which the dramatic action is being narrated in each scene. As an example, we can observe the moment in which Zerlina is rescued from Don Giovanni by the guests: the entire action takes place in two floors inside the palace, separated by a small staircase, where a high angle over the guests shows, apart from the perspective of the camera, the domineering position of the main character before his escape.

Figure 3: Low angle in *Don Giovanni* after the main character is discovered by the guests.



*Don Giovanni*, Joseph Losey. *Finale act I*

Losey captures the final scene with a clear narrative intention in the way angles are used, with the main character in a wide low angle, confronted to the citizens (as a group shot), who are shown from a high angle at the bottom of the stairs of the palace. These examples show that the choice of types of angles associated to narrative meanings alters the frontal depiction which is a characteristic of theaters and creates a dimension in 360 degrees through which the viewer can have a more intimate and subjective connection with the story. The use of this type of resources and associations makes it easier to carry out an audiovisual reading of works such as operatic films, which are constructed from preexisting musical material.

### 3.1.3. NARRATIVE UNIVERSE: CINEMA EXPANDS AND IMITATES THE WORLD OF OPERA

With regard to the construction of a narrative universe, the two films are also very different, although in both of them, we can observe the intention to extend the diegetic universe in which characters live and plots take place. On the one hand, the narrative universe of *Juan* is not limited to the external actions of the main characters, but continues through the psychological relationship that the main character establishes between the outside world and his inner thoughts. On the other hand, the shots used by Losey and the choice of panoramic locations symbolize the transcendence of the drama: a man is confronted with a supernatural fate which is already determined and which, as much as he

would like to prevent it from happening, is larger than his own life. Both proposals, the external and grandiloquent approach by Joseph Losey and the more intimate and psychological portrayal by Kasper Holten, extend the narrative universe of the characters beyond the music and the libretto included in the original opera.

Figures 4 and 5: examples of depth of field and expansion of the narrative universe



4. *Juan*, Kasper Holten (2010)



5. *Don Giovanni*, Joseph Losey (1979)

With regard to the set design, we can also highlight the intelligence with which both versions manage the depth of field. It is more evident in the 1979 version, where the layout of the narrative planes establishes a hierarchy of actions in the scenes which are arranged around the vanishing point of the entire picture, which in most cases is very far away. In both films, depth of field is achieved through the use of panoramic locations (the industrial unit which reproduces the artist's workshop in *Juan*, or the Palladio buildings of Venice and Veneto in Losey's version). The effect of spatial extension is also promoted by the tracking movements of the camera, which are created to maximize the three-dimensional quality of the scenic space that is shown.

We cannot end this section without comparing the presence of the world of opera and its stylistic conventions in the narrative universe of both films (Radigales, 2017). In fact, one of the ontological differences proposed by both versions is related to the allusion to the operatic show in itself. In *Juan*, the world of opera is present in a literal way: the entire plot revolves around a theater and its singers, and at the same time it includes cameos with famous opera stars from the real world (such as the appearance of the Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo). For its part, in the version by Joseph Losey, the references to the world of opera and its conventions are shown indirectly, through elements such as a theatrical set design, with movements around the scene that are choreographed with the music and the use of props and make-up which are much closer to the world of opera than of cinema itself. In fact, one of the historical interpretations about this movie is, precisely, the deliberate attempt to reconstruct an opera with a purely theatrical style, but including in the film those elements that the cinematographic medium can genuinely promote, such as the use of real locations that cannot be used in a theater, or the mobility of the camera, among others (Rushton, 1981).

### 3.2. OVERTURES: SYMBOLISM VS NARRATIVE DIMENSION

Finally, it would be interesting to mention some of the conclusions extracted from the analysis of the instrumental overtures in the films. As we observed in the comparative study of the end of act I,

in the opening sequences both the intention and the narrative approach are very different in these works. On the one hand, Joseph Losey uses the overture to present a majestic introduction of the main characters and to establish the historical period and the place (Italy) in which the film will be set. To do so he uses a complex long take which is reconstructed with a traditionalist style. Thanks to the extensive historical documentation work carried out during the production stage, both the historical period and the place match those of the original work by W. A. Mozart. Also, in this presentation, the author includes sea views and sounds (before the beginning of the overture with the opening title and before the arrival of the boat at the palace), which not only show the Venetian style with which the action will take place, but also emulate a symbolic tone, the majesty and transcendence of fate expressed in *Don Giovanni*.

On the other hand, the overture proposed by Kasper Holten is, from a narrative perspective, more complex and less symbolic: the main character, Juan, is watching the operatic version of *Don Giovanni* in a theater, but as the images go by, the viewer still listens to the overture in real time, while there is a time ellipsis for the main character (because we can see how Juan enjoys the different acts of the opera). The concept of fate is also revealed in this version, but with a narrative approach, rather than a symbolic one, because the character prophesizes his own destiny by closing his eyes at one point and imagining that he meets his lover. This creates the initial conflict of the film, in which there is an implicit introduction of the characters of Juan and Anna based on an exchange of glances. The final part of the orchestral passage takes place outside the theater, in a sequence in which we can clearly see the infidelity of the main character, which will lead him to his death. Both the idea of fate and the subjective presentation of the main character are achieved with this type of metadiegetic passages which will be a resource that is used along the entire work to show the viewers the times in which the story is narrated from an objective perspective and those in which it shows the internal psychology of Juan. The result of this recurrent change in perspective creates a play of three different and complementary diegetic planes: 1) the music performed in the theater, which becomes extradiegetic in the moment in which it no longer matches the narration; 2) the diegesis of the objective reality experienced by the main character; and 3) the metadiegetic perspective of the interior world of the character in the moments in which he partially loses control of his reality. Although complex, this approach makes it possible to understand the entire film and grants expressive freedom to the director, who no longer needs to provide a realistic version of the events narrated by the music, and is not limited by a textual structure which might be excessively slow or rigid for a video medium in some passages of the original opera.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The screen adaptation of an internationally known opera such as *Don Giovanni* requires not only a profound knowledge of the essential aspects of the original work by Mozart, but also a debate between formal decisions that determine the result from the point of view of audiovisual production: respecting its primary components or adapting them to the new language; prioritizing music or dramatic action; faithfully reproducing the story or transforming it to make its interpretation easier for the cinema audience; creating a historical set design or taking it to a new context, etc. In the specific case of operatic films, these formal decisions will determine whether the audiovisual adaptations attract new audiences without losing the viewers who are more familiar with this art and want a conven-

tional version which is faithful to the theatrical work. However, the debate between faithfulness and originality is much nuanced, as we have been able to see in this analysis. The film *Juan* wants to come closer to new audiences; whereas *Don Giovanni*, which is targeted at operagoers, emphasizes and respects Mozart's opera to the letter.

This study has focused on the observation of some elements of the audiovisual language and on the aesthetic experience offered by these two films, joined by the same text and separated by a quarter of a century. Joseph Losey's version is a work of art in the music subgenre, in which elements of the cinematographic semiotics are highlighted, particularly the majestic use of locations, shots or editing. From an audiovisual perspective, we may ask ourselves whether complete faithfulness to the musical work can partially limit the use of cinematographic resources which, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, would have created a less static and theatrical result. For its part, Kasper Holten's *Juan* is a video adaptation that uses aesthetic resources with which domestic viewers are familiar. The film presents interesting formulas with regard to the construction of a narrative universe to achieve a more dynamic, contemporary and realistic result. Through a familiar, imperfect and modern audiovisual style, *Juan* is also an example of how an operatic adaptation to the screen may be used to advance towards communicating and educating about opera (with its universal stories) among the new media audiences. However, in the film there were decisions about the original text which create a drastic separation from W. A. Mozart's opera. We cannot forget that *Don Giovanni* is one of the most relevant pieces in the history of music. Therefore, we can ask ourselves whether these decisions promote its acceptance or endanger not only the artistic outcome, but also the interpretation that music audiences can make of this new version.

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