



University
of Glasgow

Brown, Amy Jane (2016) How Valuable is Web 2.0 to Music Criticism?
An investigation into the role of Web 2.0 and social media in the
reception of Benjamin Britten's operas. MMus(R) thesis

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/7332/>

Copyright and moral rights for this thesis are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or
study, without prior permission or charge

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first
obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any
format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the
author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

How Valuable is Web 2.0 to Music Criticism?

An investigation into the role of Web 2.0 and
social media in the reception of Benjamin Britten's
operas.

Amy Jane Brown

BMus (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Music (Research)

School of Culture and Creative Arts

College of Arts

Abstract

The internet is deeply integrated with many people's day to day lives, including that of musicians and musicologists. In this thesis, the impact of the internet on classical music criticism in the Web 2.0 age is examined. Using the examples of Britten's operas, *Gloriana* and *Peter Grimes*, an overview of their critical reception is examined, using printed reviews found in *The Times* since their premières, internet based reviews of two specific performances, and the reactions to these performances on Twitter. Theories of media behaviour including de Mul's view of the 'ludic self' are used in order to explain the content found in reviews in conjunction with citizen journalism, of which blogging is an extension. While there are some consistencies between the print reviews and those online, there are stylistic differences, and wider repercussions for the world of criticism in the wake of the democratisation of culture, as critics find their previously regarded authority obsolete to some. Music criticism is no longer the reserve of the musicologists.

Contents

Abstract	Page 3
Acknowledgements	Page 6
Declaration	Page 7
Introduction	Page 8
Methodology	Page 10
Citizen Journalism and Media Behaviour	Page 13
What Actually is the <i>Point</i> of Music Criticism?	Page 23
<i>Grimes</i> and <i>Gloriana</i> in the Press	Page 27
Reviews from the Internet	Page 35
Twitter Campaigns	Page 39
Conclusion	Page 43
Bibliography	Page 47

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not be possible without the help of a number of people. For various reasons I will limit it to the key people.

The first and biggest thanks go to my supervisor David Code. Thank you for always providing that gentle nudge of encouragement when things really needed to get done, and for not getting angry when they were not. Given you have seen every single Britten related dissertation I have done (three and counting), you are a saint for not telling me to stop it and find something else to do.

Thank you also to my fellow MMus student Mhari for always confirming that I was not the only person who had no idea what was going on, but it would all be fine in the end.

Finally, to Craig for putting up with my temper tantrums, breakdowns and procrastination marathons, and for not letting me nap too much. Thank you also for attempting to proofread a thesis in a subject you know next to nothing about.

Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature _____

Printed name _____

Introduction

Although it is relatively young, the internet is ingrained into many people's day to day lives. Whether it be a teenager's benign Facebook addiction, the businessman's Google calendar which had been synced to his phone by a secretary on the other side of the planet, or the person who buys everything for a bargain online rather than brave the end of season sales, the web factors in to our daily activities. For music and musicological based activities, we have websites like Bandcamp and SoundCloud, where "anyone can create sounds and share them everywhere"¹, Score Exchange for users of the Sibelius music notation software to publish their sheet music online, and Academia.edu, where academics can "share their research, monitor deep analytics around the impact of their research, and track the research of academics they follow"². While music has previously relied heavily on the use of printed or latterly recorded material, the internet has created a new space for musical activity.

These examples show that the internet is constantly being added to, and that the information is not static; we are now in the Web 2.0 age. While the main marker of the 2.0 age is when web pages were changed to focus on interactivity, a usual definition which comes to mind is "open communication with an emphasis on Web-based communities of users, and more open sharing of information"³. As a result, websites specifically designed to allow people to communicate have becoming increasingly popular. Twitter, for example, is reported to have 232 million monthly active users⁴ at the end of 2013. Ultimately, some of these users are bound to be musicians, musicologists, or music fans. As a relatively young music student and working musician, I have seen how companies are increasingly using social media to grab people's attention and gauge responses from the public, not limited to but including music based activities, with opera houses just being one example of this. Perhaps it is in an attempt to try and get a younger audience involved, or make a stuffy and dead art form seem accessible. As a Twitter user, I have communicated with opera singers that I know from the 'real world' and those I do not know at all, participated in hashtag tweet-alongs for productions I have gone to, and promoted productions I have been in by re-tweeting things

1 "About SoundCloud," *SoundCloud*, last modified December 01, 2013, accessed September 27, 2014, <https://soundcloud.com/pages/contact>

2 "About Academia.edu," *Academia.edu*, January 15, 2014, accessed September 27, 2014, <http://www.academia.edu/about>

3 Vangie Beal, "Web 2.0," *Webopedia*, last modified 24 August 2014, accessed September 27, 2014, http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/W/Web_2_point_0.html

4 Jim Edwards, "Twitter is Surprisingly Small Compared to A Bunch of Other Apps And Online Companies," *Business Insider*, November 5, 2013, accessed September 27, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/twitter-user-base-compared-to-other-apps-and-online-companies-2013-11>

the company have already said or making my own tweets. In any case, the internet plays an important role as a musician to me.

As a result, I have decided to embark on the thesis “How valuable is Web 2.0 to music criticism?: an investigation into the role of Web 2.0 and social media in the reception of Benjamin Britten's Operas.” Having been an evangelical fan of Britten for a number of years, it felt only natural to combine two things which are so ingrained in my daily life. As funding to the arts being a highly contentious issue, opera companies are having to find new ways to get people in seats to retain funding. English National Opera, , for example, a company which prides itself on doing productions in English and encouraging accessibility, had its funding cut in 2014 by 29 percent⁵. This thesis will be done by looking at two operas by Britten with contrasting success stories; *Gloriana* and *Peter Grimes*.

5 “English National Opera cut in Arts Council England funding shake-up,” *BBC News*, July 1, 2014, accessed September 27, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-28104684>.

Methodology

My thesis is based on the assumption that the nature of music criticism has changed over time. As a result, I will compare traditional and long established newspaper based music criticism with the type of criticism found on blogs and Twitter. In order to compare and contrast, I have decided to use two operas with very different levels of popularity and success, *Gloriana* and *Peter Grimes*. Part of my rationale for using these operas is that I can use my experience as an audience member for two very specific productions in very different settings. While a position of objectivity may be difficult to achieve, I believe that if one were to come at this subject from a view of disassociation, there would be almost no point in pursuing the subject in the first place. If one purpose of music criticism is to give opinion and provoke debate, a lack of interest or opinion on the cultural entity being surveyed defeats the purpose. While I may or may not agree with the reaction of the author of a review who has 50 years reviewing experience for a broadsheet publication, or someone with a Tumblr account who simply likes classical music, their writing has caused a reaction; be it a negative or positive one.

The history of these two operas is also quite different. *Grimes* premièred barely a month after the end of World War 2⁶, and had a tumultuous production period to say the least. While the critics were positive, the composer felt differently, and was soon pulled from the repertory before being relaunched a year later in Covent Garden. The opera itself is roughly based on one of a set of poems by George Crabbe called *The Borough*, although the dreamer of Montagu Slater's libretto is a far cry from Crabbe's villain. The production I will be focusing on for the response in Web 2.0 is Prom 55 on August 24, 2012 at the Albert Hall, which was a concert production. Conversely, *Gloriana* was seen as a flop, and was poorly received for a number of reasons. Lord Harewood, both Britten's friend and Queen Elizabeth II's first cousin is renowned for calling the première “one of the great disasters of operatic history”⁷. *Gloriana* depicts Queen Elizabeth I and her relationship with the Earl of Essex, and was written for the coronation celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II. William Plomer's libretto is based off of information in *Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History* by Lytton Strachey. I will be using the cinema viewing of Royal Opera's production, broadcast on June 24th 2013.

6 “Peter Grimes: a short guide,” Royal Opera House. Last modified June 23 2011, Accessed June 22, 2014 <http://www.roh.org.uk/news/peter-grimes-a-short-guide>.

7 George Henry Hubert Lascelles Harewood, *The Tongs And The Bones*, 1st ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981), 183.

While I have never seen a production of *Grimes* which I have not liked, except recordings of Jon Vickers in the title role, I was not entirely happy with some of the character choices in *Gloriana*. I feel that my participation in the event in question allows me to interpret other people's reactions with more knowledge of the context which they come from. The different settings of these performances also allow for greater contrast. While concert performances are nothing uncommon to classical music performance (as in the production of *Grimes*), cinema screenings, as in the case of the *Gloriana* case study, are relatively new. While English National Opera revived their production for the Proms in 2012, and brought it to the screen in February 2014⁸, Royal Opera have been broadcasting into cinemas since 2011⁹. Whether or not the silver screen is an appropriate setting for an opera could take up a whole Ph.D. in its own right, the use of this medium will presumably have had some effect on the response of the opera going public and critics.

I have chosen to use *The Times* as my resource for traditional media for a few reasons. Firstly, their reputation. While the Murdoch owned News Corp empire, to which *The Times* belongs, has received a significant amount of criticism in the last few years, particularly through the recent Leveson Inquiry, the publication itself has been in circulation since 1788¹⁰. Some may feel that the recent negative sentiment towards News Corp has damaged the reputation of *The Times* due to its association with *The News of The World* phone hacking scandal, its consistent and regular reporting on the arts has been a feature from the première of the two operas in question, till the present day. The availability of the online archive for *The Times* has also been an attractive feature. The Britten archiving facilities at the Red House do not hold a large amount of material like reviews, although a few reviews can be found reproduced in Mervyn Cooke's series- *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten*.

Before delving into these two case studies however, I will look at two very important areas in relation to the subject of Social Media; citizen journalism and media behaviour. I will also look briefly at what a music critic is actually supposed to do. While citizen journalism is nothing new to media, recent advances in technology have allowed people to share content and current events with a massive audience in a very short time span, such as the recent

8 "Peter Grimes," English National Opera, last modified June 26, 2014, accessed August 10, 2014, <http://www.eno.org/grimes>.

9 "Royal Opera House Unveils Expanded Cinema Programme," *BBC News*. September 23, 2011, accessed August 10, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-15033820>.

10 "The Times (British Newspaper)," Encyclopedia Britannica Online, last modified December 2, 2013, accessed May 10, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/596228/The-Times>.

'occupy' movements and events in Syria. Blogging is a clear example of this instant widespread sharing, and within my case studies I will be using blog based reviews as well as reviews from online versions of broadsheets. It is also important to observe if citizen journalism is affected by the theories people have on media behaviour. Part of the limitation we find here however is the lack of substantial academic research into Twitter. This is most likely due to the relative adolescence of Twitter when compared with other social media outlets, such as MySpace which was created in 2003¹¹, and Facebook which opened to the general public in 2006¹². I will however briefly examine research into generalized user behaviour on social media and the holiday review website TripAdvisor.

Through the case studies of *Gloriana* and *Grimes*, I am aiming to see if there is a continuing shift in the content and style of reviews which can be found online and in more traditional formats, although broadsheet newspapers have made a change to include content on their websites. When I had originally thought of this topic, I had the intention of seeing if human rights activism, for example, could be linked to any of the opinions expressed within critical reception. This was as a result of my interest in Britten crossing into Queer Theory and LGBTQ studies. These changes however would be too nuanced and disconnected to be obviously observable, without delving into a completely different topic on LGBTQ specific critical reception, if such a thing exists. What I do hope is observable, is a change in the style of the content between the broadsheet reviews and online reviews, in a similar vein to what has been referred to as hiding behind the keyboard of keyboard courage. Both these terms are difficult to define as they are terms which have been created by the online community. As a result, they are in common usage within certain social circles, but do not have an entry in anything other than a dictionary of colloquial terms. Generally the term refers to users using the anonymity of being literally behind a keyboard, to be unusually scathing, hurtful, or offensive. Although the website Urban Dictionary contains user generated content and is not as perhaps authoritative as the Oxford English Dictionary, it does provide a few of the possible definitions for the term in its colloquial usage, such as “An attitude demonstrated by someone when they realize that actions taken by them or words written by them across a computer connection will have little, if any, personal repercussions.”¹³

11 Digital Trends Staff, "The History of Social Networking," Digital Trends, last modified August 5, 2014, accessed August 17, 2014, <http://www.digitaltrends.com/features/the-history-of-social-networking/>.

12 Ibid.

13 D. Wolf, "Keyboard Courage," *Urban Dictionary*, last modified July 30, 2006, accessed August 17, 2014, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=keyboard%20courage>.

While one possible avenue of investigation with this thesis could be to see if the hashtag campaigns of Royal Opera have increased the audience figures of performances, I have opted for the qualitative approach of the content as opposed to the quantitative. With houses across the world are trying to inject some youthful energy into their audiences, the Twitter based campaigns could have provided a new group of interest in the technologically savvy under 26 bracket. A quantitative survey within these case studies is nigh impossible to achieve for a number of reasons. For one, a quantitative survey of whether or not Twitter content influenced opera going numbers would need to be monitored over several seasons, with website viewing figures, audience numbers, and demographics needing to be surveyed, as well as in depth viewer questions. The availability of both archived newspaper reviews in addition to the easily accessible blog reviews, and the slightly harder to find Twitter content have allowed for a more comprehensive survey within the time scale. In either the qualitative or the quantitative survey, we may find that the purpose of music criticism has changed. As we try to attract a more diverse and youthful audience to live classical music, or indeed cinema broadcast classical music, perhaps music criticism on social media platforms has its purpose grounded more in the fiscal and advertising benefits as opposed to a more bohemian objective in commenting on the cultural object which has been presented.

Citizen Journalism and Media Behaviour

Before investigating these two case studies, it is important to look at citizen journalism. While we are perhaps familiar with the style and probable content of more traditional media, as in the broadsheet publications which will be looked at later, online reviews and blogs belong to and are an extension of the citizen journalism phenomenon. It is important to note however that citizen journalism is nothing new, but has gathered much more power in its use of technology in the 20th Century, with some tracing it back to “17th and 18th Century pamphleteering”¹⁴ There are other names which this phenomenon goes by, including guerrilla journalism, grass-roots journalism, unfiltered journalism and crowd-powered media¹⁵. These titles clearly show the intention of the media form, that is to stand as an alternative to traditional news outlets, with a contributors being ‘real people’ instead of conventionally trained journalists employed by an organisation. These titles also imply a level of dissatisfaction with what is being reported.

Of course there are both positive and negative aspects to citizen journalism. On a positive note, this method of information sharing does not require the person actively disseminating to training to have a professional qualification in journalism; anyone with access to a smart phone and the internet can share content with a worldwide audience as fast as their connection will allow.¹⁶ An incident which might have taken a few days to be investigated by a journalist can be reported within minutes. In the recent cases of human rights abuses in countries such as Syria, where public protests against President Assad’s regime and the exclusion of all international news media has created the result that “hundreds, if not thousands of Syrian activists [have] picked up smart phones to visually document events and report in 140 characters or less about the conflict.”¹⁷ These citizens are showing the world what traditional news companies cannot.

There is however much criticism of citizen journalism, especially in the field of ethics. While ethics may not immediately apply to music criticism, the ideas of purpose and objectivity are

14 Nadine Jurrat, “Mapping Digital Media: Citizen Journalism and the Internet,” 1st ed, (Cambridge: Open Society Foundations, 2011), 9

15 Anthony Curtis, "Citizen Journalism," Resources for Courses, University of Carolina, last modified December 29, 2013, accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www2.uncp.edu/home/acurtis/Courses/ResourcesForCourses/Journalism/CitizenJournalism.html>.

16 Ibid.

17 Chloe Lowe, “Syria: A War Reported By Citizen-Journalists, Social Media,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, last modified January 11, 2014, accessed August 23, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/syria-war-reported-by-citizen-journalists-social-media/24630841.html>.

applicable. While almost anyone can pick up a phone or turn on their laptop to report in the citizen journalism oeuvre, the journalists who work for larger news corporations have received training in their field, whereas it is seen as difficult for citizen journalists “to observe systematically the fundamental rules of ethics, objectivity, equality, fairness impartiality and honesty in their job.”¹⁸ While this quotation from Armoogum might seem very scathing, it is important to put it into the global perspective of why citizen journalists do what they do. In a brief essay on the blog run by Encyclopaedia Britannica, one contributor points out that “this journalism explains the world, uncovers injustice and is essential for a self-governing people.”¹⁹ The necessity of the genre is not disputed, but the content is. Contributors will be joined by a group desire to expose what they perceive (rightly or wrongly) as injustice. While exposing totalitarianism is a positive outcome and intent, it is still possible, with a quick edit of, say, the length of a video or the angle at which the film was taken, to vilify one party and victimize the other. One could feasibly cut out the first 10 seconds of a video to make it seem that one party instigated an assault, when they were the ones who were the victim in the first instance. We, as observers on the receiving end of this footage, would not know either way.

Bloggers and people sharing information will have an agenda, for better or worse, and this will alter the perspective of the information which they put out. This is of course true of traditional media as well, with *The Guardian* and *The Independent* cornering the market of a left-wing readership, with *The Independent on Sunday* going so far as to call themselves a “proudly liberal newspaper.”²⁰ Linking this to music criticism, a blogger advocating the arts are perhaps more likely to put a positive spin on a performance, especially in times of subsidisation and campaigns to rejuvenate an ageing audience. A blogger campaigning for cuts in arts funding might focus more on the monetary implications or political implications of funding a pursuit of the middle-class and bourgeoisie.

In response to this confusion as to how to report accurately and fairly, there have been a few ‘codes of ethics’ specifically for bloggers and those wishing to participate in citizen journalism with the same professionalism as their contemporary counterparts. In her 2002 book, *The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog*,

18 Seenevasen Armoogum, “Can Citizen Journalists produce Professional Journalism?” Center for International Ethics, last modified October 30, 2013, accessed June 20, 2014, http://www.cimethics.org/home/newsletter/jun2013/Nanda%20Armoogum_EDITED.pdf.

19 John Talton, “When I hear the term ‘Citizen Journalist,’ I Reach For My Pistol!” Britannica Blog, last modified April 9, 2008, accessed August 23, 2014, http://images.keysnews.com/files/Talton_essay.pdf.

20 “Editorial: A liberal gamble too far.” *The Independent*, last modified March 13, 2014, accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/editorials/editorial-a-liberal-gamble-too-far-8468336.html>.

Rebecca Blood was one of the first authors to highlight the need for a code of ethics for bloggers, especially if they are trying to legitimize themselves as equal to their professional counterparts. Blood outlines six points in varying depth, but includes among them, “1. Publish as fact only that which you believe to be true”²¹, “2. If material exists online, link to it when you reference it”²², and “5. Disclose any conflict of interest”²³. Johnathan Dube created his code of ethics, which has been adapted from that which the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) use themselves.²⁴ Dube, like the SPJ, splits the code into categories, although the two slightly differ²⁵. Dube’s three broad categories, which smaller points within, are “Be Honest and Fair”, “Minimise Harm”, and “Be Accountable.”²⁶ Martin Kuhn has also published a code of ethics, which again splits into general categories with sub-points in 2007, combining some of the elements of both Blood and Dube²⁷. Interestingly, Kuhn modified this code based on interaction from the online community after surveying what others thought should be included and prioritized in citizen journalism, with the intention that his code would supersede previous versions which “did not promote values unique to the blog form but instead focused narrowly on one function of blogging, journalism.”²⁸ As hinted at by the time difference between the first two codes (2002/3) and the more recent contribution (2007), technological advances have allowed many more possibilities for citizen journalism and contributions to it. If we bear in mind that citizen journalism has existed since the 17th century, but the tools for modern citizen journalism, i.e. the World Wide Web, smart phones etc., are only inventions of the last 25 years, the phenomenon has experienced a very quick change in possibilities, which are still constantly changing as quickly as each new iPhone comes out.

While social media is still somewhat of a novelty in academia, there have been a number of attempts to try and rationalize users’ behaviour on various platforms and in general, such as the already mentioned ‘keyboard courage’. These theories are influenced by previous interest

21 Rebecca Blood, “The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog,” 1st ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Pub., 2002), 117

22 Ibid

23 Ibid, 120.

24 Carolynne Burkholder, “Citizen Journalism. Blogging.” *University of Wisconsin-Madison*, last modified July 1, 2014, accessed July 5, 2014, http://www.journalismethics.info/citizen_journalism/blogging.htm.

25 A copy of the code which the Society of Professional Journalists use can be found at <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>.

26 Johnathan Dube, “A Bloggers’ Code of Ethics,” *CyberJournalist*, last modified June 28, 2014, accessed July 5, 2014, <http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php>.

27 Martin Kuhn, “Interactivity and Prioritizing the Human: A Code of Blogging Ethics,” *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*. 22:1 (2007), 33, DOI: 10.1080/08900520701315244

28 Ibid, 34.

in how people have historically used and responded to mass media in its more traditional forms, but as Crary points out, “the ways in which we intently listen to, look at, or concentrate on anything have a deeply historical character.”²⁹ Here, Crary highlights that theories of interaction with media are placed within a very specific chronological time frame, and thus bound to the social history of any given time. This therefore means that any theories on media behaviour in relation to internet based social media is also strictly bound to time or history as well as the social environment it is created. While we can draw on what has come before, we live in a vastly different socio-historical climate, and theories are being created with this notion of being bound by environment at their core.

It is possible that social media has taken on some of the roles and attributes which mass media used to play within society. If we take one of the basic premises of mass media to be a “means of conveying messages (in the widest sense of the word) from a source to a theoretically unlimited number of people”³⁰, we can see one of the roles which social media has taken, as a platform of information. Many websites, including those of newspapers, include a feature whereby the reader can share the content on Facebook or Twitter by clicking a button, and some social media platforms have the ability to automatically embed an article into a status update in a visually and easily accessible manner for the reader, if the user posting the content simply enters the website address. Social media therefore has the ability, like traditional forms of mass media, to share information.

Another similarity shared between mass and social media, is the democratisation of culture. Josiović points out that mass media “democratize[s] culture by making accessible to the masses, and...meets the needs of the widest public.”³¹ While Josiović uses the need to find with widest readership possible in a negative sense i.e. the dumbing down of culture, social media has morphed this into the positive. While traditional media such as newspapers of course can have an agenda, e.g. liberal or socialist, this works to the advantage of social media and the internet in general. Content from a wide variety of sources can be shared with a vast array of different people, and can meet the needs of many. If Josiović is using culture as a synonym for music, then they find mass media to causing music to perhaps losing its artistic integrity or less institutionalised in the hope of a wider audience and being more

29 Jonathan Crary, “Suspensions of perception attention, spectacle, and modern culture,” 1st Ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999,) 1.

30 Ivo Josiović, “The Mass Media and Musical Culture,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 15:1 (1984), 39.

31 *Ibid*, 41.

accessible or appealing. Some may very well argue that this is the case, with being a self-taught musician having watched YouTube teach yourself the piano videos being almost a badge of honour, as the musician has not been part of the ivory tower of institutionalised classical music. On the other hand, in becoming involved in social media platforms, classical music companies are able to retain their usual audience while both branching out to a perhaps younger and technologically savvy new audience, as well as making the younger audience who already use platforms to share and integrate their use of social media with their cultural preferences. Instead of becoming mediocre to suit the consumer, the effect is one of education.

One of the theories to try and rationalize human interaction within the context of social media comes from Crawford's re-imagining of how to define participants in social media who are frequently referred to as 'lurkers'. A lurker is "a common pejorative term for those who are present in public online spaces but do not prominently speak up."³² A possible reason for the term being used in the pejorative is perhaps due to the ability to use the internet as a way to find ones voice, or speak up against injustices. If a 'lurker' does not use the platform for this purpose, they are seen as part of the problem, as they are not engaging with the content in a way other users want or expect by, in the case of forums, adding to discussions, or commenting on articles. Crawford wants to rename the lurker to being a listener, as "it captures some of the characteristics of the on-going process of receptivity that mark much online engagement."³³ While someone may lurk on any social media platform, just because they are not actively engaged in a debate on Reddit or frequent updater of their Twitter feed, this does not mean they are not observing other user generated content. Listening, as a metaphor for online engagement, highlights both this idea of absorbing information, and also of the focusing in to something which is always there and changing, but can also be at the peripheries of our attention if we chose to make it that way.

In relation to the case studies for this thesis, while there might not be much in terms of Twitter comments for a performance, the available comments or reviews are still being viewed and considered. For example, a Twitter user who posts a link to a review of a performance on their blog may include with their post a 'hashtag' which other users are using for their comments and to track the comments of others, like the #ROHGloriana tag. Even if

32 Kate Crawford, "Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media," *Continuum* 23: 3 (2009), 526.

33 Ibid, 525.

as a result of this post, the blog post has nobody responding in a comments section which they have included, it may still have had hits or visits, and is being engaged with on some level. As a result rather than being uninvolved, “lurkers are actively logging in a tracking the contributions of others; they contribute a mode of receptiveness that encourages others to make public contributions.”³⁴ It is as a result of this subterranean yet active participation that Crawford wants to rename the lurker. The ‘listener’ term is very useful when looking at Twitter in particular. While some may object to the term as it may be seen as to loaded term in relation to what a listener is allowed to do, Crawford describes some of the lurker’s activity as ‘background listening, as “many messages will simply be scanned quickly, not focused on, something closer to being tuned out rather than tuned in.”³⁵ Content is something which can be phased in or out of the forefront of thought quite easily, and the lurker/listener can tune in or out of content like the background noise of a radio in a shop. Similarly, a Twitter user might read a few posts tagged with #ROHGloriana, but phase out of attentiveness as they find another interesting hashtag accompanying a post, like what the next opera being performed by the company will be. Their attention has been diverted elsewhere and they are listening to different content.

Another avenue of thought in relation to social media is the creation of identity, and how one represents oneself in an online space, where almost anything is possible. A user can completely reinvent themselves and represent themselves in a manner which is vastly different than that of the real world. As a result, some find the internet and social media as a place where they can be much more frivolous in their expression, a light hearted version of keyboard courage, if you will. As shown in the earlier discussion on citizen journalism, the internet and social media can have serious content, designed to highlight injustice and invoke serious discussion and action. However,

“many interactions appear to follow the broad conversational maxim of ‘keep it light/fun’, and as such these media have become a vehicle for what the philosopher Jos de Mul (2005) has called ‘ludic self-construction’, that is, they provide a space in which we relate to ourselves and others in a playful manner.”³⁶

Therefore, there are some people who use the internet and social media in a much more light

34 Ibid, 527.

35 Ibid, 528.

36 Ana Deumert, “The performance of a ludic self on social network(ing) sites,” in *The Language of Social Media: Identity and Community on the Internet*, ed. Philip Seargeant et al., (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 23.

hearted manner. In the example of Facebook, we have the obvious involvement of games which are accessible through that website, such as Farmville, where players share their progress and depend on the involvement of other users in their in-game success. This allows users to share an act, based in virtual reality, and cultivate a friendship in a way that is not particularly serious, as “Gaming – light, breezy and fun interactions with friends near and far – keeps ties without being burdensome.”³⁷ Not everyone who goes on Twitter to comment on a performance is doing so with the notion of educating others on the shortfalls of a production, which given the textual limitations of the platform is no surprise; after all, how much profound philosophical insight can one have in 140 characters or less. As a result, comments may be much more flippant or more of a gut reaction to a subject. De Mul writes from the background of computer game engagement, and his concept of the ludic self draws on the idea of playfulness when engaging with a social platform, and the idea of gratification or end result in some way.

While both de Mul's and Crawford's writing relates to a general overview of behaviour on social networking sites, Vásquez looks at the popular review website TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor does allow companies to respond to user generated reviews of their hotels, attractions etc., and also has a forum section where users can communicate with one another. This genre of 'electronic word of mouth' features not only on websites like this one, but also to blogs, and also links to citizen journalism. Previously, either a level of professional status was required to give an authoritative decision on the quality of an establishment, or the recommendation of family or friends. As a result of websites engineered specifically for this purpose, we now find that

“anyone with internet access can provide their opinions about any of their consumer experiences. In addition to the broadened scope and sheer amount of consumer information available, this also means that now – more than ever before – we are relying on vast quantities of information provided by complete strangers to guide our decision-making.”³⁸

Again, we find the democratisation of the dissemination of information, in the same way as earlier shown in citizen journalism. All that is needed to share an opinion is an internet

37 Anne McClard and Ken Anderson, “Focus on Facebook: Who Are We Anyway?” *Anthropology News*, 49:3 (2008), 12.

38 Camilla Vásquez, “‘Usually not one to complain but...’: constructing identities in user-generated online reviews,” in *The Language of Social Media: Identity and Community on the Internet*, ed. Philip Seargeant et al., (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 65-6

connection. Much academic interest in the internet comes in the forming of identities and groups.

While citizen journalism is a prime outlet for groups who feel marginalized from mainstream traditional media, Vásquez looks at how users try to legitimize their opinions on TripAdvisor. The earlier cited blogging codes are suggested as outlines for how to keep a professional view and produce appropriate content, in an idiom where the lack of professional training is seen as a benefit. However, the idea of professionalism, or being qualified to provide an authoritative response must still hold some appeal to people, as Vásquez concentrates this study on how people try to legitimize their opinion on TripAdvisor through their representation of their identity online. These attempts at legitimization stem from the language which the reviewers use, as “it is through the use of language that people construct their identities,”³⁹ and are based purely on reviews, not on any content which may have been found on the user’s profiles.

One example of identity formation comes in the personal qualities which the user lists in their review, in an attempt to make themselves more relatable. In doing so, the review is trying to show that “she is a ‘real’ person, with economic constraints as well as legitimate consumer expectations,”⁴⁰ and thus her idea is one that is not of someone out of touch with the needs and desires of normal people. While the example of relatability may seem counter-intuitive in the context of wanting to seem professional, the second type of reviewer which Vásquez observes is more closely linked to credibility in the professional sense. Some reviewers chose to quantify their experience as travellers, with explicit reference to the distances which they have travelled, the amount of time they have spent in this role, as well as the geographical extent of their movements, often in combination with one another. By doing so, “they restrict their scope of expertise, assert the limits of their qualifications, and thereby provide readers with information about their trustworthiness.”⁴¹ In a link to the ludic playfulness of de Mul, one of the other categories highlighted by Vásquez is the use of popular culture and humour references, where “references to particular forms of popular culture and mass media, when shared, can contribute to a sense of affinity or co-

39 Ibid, 68.

40 Ibid, 73.

41 Ibid, 75.

membership.’⁴²

For the purposes of this thesis, it is possible to draw a few key points from Vásquez, Crawford, and de Mul, and link these points to citizen journalism. Firstly, identity plays a considerable part in online participation. While this may seem an obvious point, it is however possible to see that online participants form their identity online using both quantitative (e.g. miles travelled) and qualitative aspects of discussion. This desire to form an identity and relate to other people can be seen in citizen journalism as well as social media websites, as people assume roles such as someone who uncovers social injustices, or the traveller who doesn't want other people to be disappointed in the same way they were. Secondly, in this process of identity forming we can observe two distinct groups of an authoritative perspective as well as a much more light hearted and ludic response to a situation. This position of authority can come from a desire to be considered an equal to professional journalists or critics, but it can also come from a desire to democratize the process. The act of being a 'real' person can be seen as a qualification to the same degree as an MSc in Investigative Journalism. This is not to say however that the ludic user who uses humour cannot have some level of authority. Thirdly, it is also possible for someone to be observing online content without responding to it in a direct manner. By changing the name of a non-vocal observer from lurker to listener, we can take into account the ability of the user to phase information in and out of immediate consciousness. Content generated in both the citizen journalism genre as well as on social networks might not get a response from other users, but they might be taking it into account in their approach to an event or activity. For example, someone might create a blog post reviewing a performance of an opera, where they substantiate their authority by the number of productions they have seen, but uses humorous content within the body of text. This review might not get a large amount of active response from the online public, but as a result, the listener/lurker might have their opinion on the production altered.

42 Ibid, 81.

What Actually is the *Point* of Music Criticism?

While the notion of being critical of something is nothing alien to us, it is perhaps prudent at this point before looking at actual reviews of the operas to look at the *function* of music criticism. We could take a basic, dictionary based review of the subject that music criticism is “the intellectual activity of formulating judgements on the value and degree of excellence of individual works of music, or whole groups or genres”⁴³, or at least this is what it is according to *Grove*. This immediately implies a level of being learned in a subject. Without prior and specialised knowledge and understanding of a subject, is it possible for it to be 'intellectual'? As a result of this prior knowledge and intellectual abilities, it is not appropriate to have a gut reaction to music. A critic should therefore, according to the dictionary definition at least, combine their wealth of knowledge with the performance which they are observing (or recording they are listening to as the case may be) to create a considered, and informative response. While I would say that this is not too fanciful an idea for employed music critics or even bloggers and citizen journalists if they follow the rules, can we really say that snap reactions and micro-reviews on Twitter are anything but snap reactions?

We can of course find more philosophical ideas about the point in music criticism. One such example comes from a former critic for the *New York Sun*:

“That function is to *hold up a mirror* to what has been composed or performance and to the performance. The mirror is an intensifying one. It reflects the essentials, eliminates the unessentials. Its purpose is to present a clear picture of what the music is, with its good points and bad, or what the performance was, with its salient characteristics, meritorious or otherwise”⁴⁴.

Thompson's opinion on what a review should contain is very much based on the critic having a descriptive role. It does however bring up one of the major issues we can see in any response to music, let alone in *Gloriana* or *Grimes*, and that is the idea of good or bad. Given the subjective nature of music, can we truly be objective about a work?

There is no 'tick sheet' that critics can follow so they can decide if the work is right or wrong. A performance of Xenakis's *Metastaseis* might be technically good with all the directions on

43 Bojan Bujic, "criticism of music," *The Oxford Companion to Music*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed September 27, 2014
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e1716>.

44 Oscar Thompson, *Practical Music Criticism*, 1st Ed, (New York: Da Capo 1934), quoted in Robert Schick, *Classical music criticism : with a chapter on reviewing ethnic music*, 1st Ed, (New York: Garland 1996): 21-22.

the score followed, but opinion on it is of course varied. If there were no people who liked the work at all, there would not be recordings to buy with positive reviews on Amazon. Just because there are some good reviews of *Metastaseis* does not mean that to some, it probably sounds god-awful. As a result of the works inaccessibility, its critical reception may not be limited to comments on whether or not it was technically proficient, or if the dutifully followed the score, but whether or not the work sounded 'good', and not just for those with an intimate stylistic knowledge or appreciation. If a critic is expected to be “informative and unbiased in their reporting, in order to provide an accurate depiction of the material they are reviewing”⁴⁵, is the critic allowed to express a personal opinion of taste? For example, if a critic just does not like the music of Mendelssohn as a whole for an artistic reason, say for arguments sake they adhere to the popular view that his work lacks an emotional depth, can they express this in an article and allow their personal taste to colour their response? Subjective notions of 'good' or 'bad' are also counter-intuitive when we approach the idea of objectivity and music. Ultimately, the public want to know whether or not the work or product the critic is reviewing has an inherent worth. However, if the critic is expected to be descriptive, or objective in the journalistic sense, this raises the issue of whether or not interpretation is allowed in a review. Given that the line between description and interpretation can be many different shades of grey, it is dubious to say that reviews all remain purely descriptive.

If this thesis works on the assumption that music criticism has changed over time, it is important to look at a perspective specific to online content. Writing specifically on the phenomenon on Twitter battles between musician and critic, one author had the following to say on the role of the critic:

“Music criticism, whether written by a musician or a blogger or a skilled teacher who reads sheet music and plays four instruments, is not about what’s good or bad. It’s not about categorizing the creative experience into a letter grade. The role of the critic is to contextualize, to generate an understanding of how our world is being reflected in popular culture and how that reflection compares to what came before. The critic helps the listener understand what they’re listening to and how it fits into music’s big picture.”⁴⁶

45 Kathryn Sano, “The Purpose of Music Criticism In Society,” *Kathryn Sano*, last modified August 28, 2011, accessed August 26, 2014, <http://kathrynsano.com/2011/08/28/the-purpose-of-music-criticism-in-society/>.

46 Emily Zemler, “Are Music Critics Pointless?” *Hollywood Reporter*, March 29, 2013, accessed September 01, 2014, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/earshot/are-music-critics-pointless-opinion-431879>.

In the article from which this quotation comes, Zemler has been looking at the interaction between the musicians who have been reviewed, and those who reviewed them, as there have been a few occasions where musicians have taken offence at what was written and responded in a public and somewhat aggressive manner to negative press. Again, she has referenced the idea about good or bad, but in a different context, and one which differs from Thomson's view of the subject. While Zemler is talking about the reaction of popular and rock musicians reactions to 'bad press', she believes that good or bad as qualities are not to be seen as the two options for musicians. Instead, she thinks that the role of the critic is to place the music in context for the public, and how they can relate this to other music and extra-musical life.

If we are to take this idea of contextualisation from Zemler's view of popular music criticism and apply it to classical music, we should perhaps bear in mind the age of classical repertoire. While the music which Zemler's view specifically relates to is much more new and current, the majority of what immediately springs to mind when we talk about 'standard repertoire' from the broad category of classical music has a rich and substantial performance and critical history. When talking in reference to a good or bad performance, we are being affected by what we are conditioned by musical training or musical appreciation to believe is a 'good' performance, even if this is as simple as all the right notes in the right places at the right volume. The quality of being a good performance is based on a catalogue of past experiences, by both the performers (and conductor, on in the case of opera, we should involve all of the production team for their input) and listeners. As music is so subjective, we cannot seriously believe that everyone in this dialogue between performers and listeners has the same idea about what specific qualities make a performance good or not.

If we do take this contextualisation to classical music, Zemler's view does somewhat clash with Thomson's. I would say that contextualisation and interpretation are incredibly similar, given that it is through interpretation of the material, we can place it within the larger world order. It is difficult, especially given the wealth of history which classical music is bound by, to not interpret the material and put it within the context of other works. It is equally difficult, when faced with new works, as in the case of *Grimes* and *Gloriana* at the time of their premières, to not contextualise. It is natural to try and relate works with unusual sounds or practices to others which we are more familiar with, even if it is as basic as likening large choral scenes to that of the Russian opera tradition. This makes it more accessible to the reader.

As the internet has undermined the role of the professional music critic as the authority, we do find some people lamenting its demise, though some are less than sympathetic. In a review/response to film critic Mark Kermode's book *Hatchet Job*, Will Self notes that the author has a level of “anxiety that in the age of the internet and the worldwide web the role of the serious critic may be becoming otiose”⁴⁷, an idea which is not too far from the truth. In the Web 2.0 age, it is not necessary to be an authority to have an opinion, and the critics are feeling the squeeze. In what was seen as a cost cutting venture, *The Independent on Sunday* saw the complete reconfiguration of its arts section, led by a choice to “rename its arts section in a move away from comprehensive music, film and book reviews”⁴⁸ and the loss of several of the review staff on a permanent basis, instead becoming freelance. Although Self spends the majority of his review commenting on Kermode's lack of willingness to embrace the age of change, it does highlight the importance of the rise of the citizen critic.

47 Will Self, “Hatchet Job by Mark Kermode- review,” *The Guardian*, October 9, 2013, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/09/hatchet-job-mark-kermode-review>.

48 Josh Halliday, “Independent titles to cut back on arts coverage,” *The Guardian*, July 29, 2013, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/jul/29/independent-titles-cut-back-arts-coverage>.

Grimes and *Gloriana* in the Press

It is perhaps worth considering at this point before we begin the overview of the critical reception content, the authority of the music critic. The title of 'music critic for x' (in our case, *the Times*) carries with it an implicit level of being qualified to make comments on content. This is perhaps reflected in the phenomenon where there appears to be no need to mention who the named author of a review actually is, despite the possibility of it being more than one person. For example, in the sample group of the reviews of *Gloriana*, it is not until Joan Chissell's review in February 1967 where we see a named author⁴⁹; everything else has been either 'from our music critic' or there has been no attributed author. This makes it almost impossible to attribute the reviews from the time of première and for a few decades into the performance history to a specific author. Thus, it may have been the main critic at the time, but it may also have been one of the assistants. The public are asked to put their trust in the author, without a name, and to take their opinion as the definitive.

If we look at one of the potential authors of the first review of *Gloriana*, we can find an academic background in musicology, and perhaps an understanding of what gave them the authority in the eyes of the public to do so. The most likely candidate for authorship of the first review of the opera in *The Times* was most likely Frank Howes, who was chief music critic for the paper from 1943-1960.⁵⁰ As a graduate of St John's College and the Royal College of Music, as well as a pupil of his predecessor Henry Coles, Howes appears to have at least the academic as well as vocational experience to be able to provide a musicological opinion as well as one which follows the ethical rules of journalism.

That being said, criticism could be seen as one of the areas of journalism where a distance from the subject matter is undesirable. While journalists adhere to a code of conduct when writing, with a view to objective impartiality, criticism relies on opinion to function. The public as well as the musical community would have no need to read and engage with reviews if they were opinion less and bland. People would not be encouraged to go to performances (or warned off as the case may be), and artists, composer and performer alike, could find no fame or constructive criticism. In employing the classically trained critic who has training in both the subject area and the method of journalism, the expectation is to find

49 Joan Chissell, "New voices in *Gloriana*," *The Times*, February 8, 1967: 6.

50 Martin Cooper, "Frank Howes," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13438>.

not necessarily a balanced view, but an honest one.

Another interesting area to consider before the reviews themselves is the issue of the letters to the editor section. Here, we find what people with perhaps not the training nor the experience think of the work. When searching for content in *The Times* archive, there was no mention of *Peter Grimes* in the letters to the editor section. We do however find a few choice opinions brought forth by the wider public as well as some more well-known names. While the title of music critic already has its own gravitas, the authors of these responses have to find their own voice, and make their opinion valid in comparison to the critics. As seen earlier in the investigation into TripAdvisor by Vásquez, people feel the need to create their opinion as legitimate by revealing information about themselves, and though these printed opinions were written half a century earlier, we still find this phenomenon.

From the perspective of the active musician, we find Sir Anthony Lewis, who at the time was a lecturer at the University of Birmingham. He establishes his view as coming from an “independent musician”⁵¹, and that the commissioning of the work was “a source of deep satisfaction to the musical profession as a whole”⁵². Lewis has therefore asserted that he also has the vocational authority to make an informed opinion on *Gloriana*, and though his opinion is more positive than that of Howes, and uses positive yet still formal language, it is nonetheless one of another member of the musical community. Vaughan Williams however feels no need to establish his abilities or authority, as his reputation carries it for him, offering no musical opinion but simply the need to “realize what such a gesture means to the prestige of our own music”⁵³. We also find a member of the “opera-loving general public”⁵⁴ who comments on the importance of the occasion and a brief mention of the musical detail of scoring, but does not use emphatic language to do so. This last author is establishing group of support for those who are not trained in the academic sense, but they are putting forward what they feel is an opinion which is under-represented in the responses found in the letters to the editor section as well as the critics review.

Woodrow Wyatt offers his opinion as a politician, and his choice of language shows us his opinion. Wyatt's letter makes the effort to weigh in on the fiscal objections which have been hinted at by other contributors, and put them in a political context. Of course by publishing

51 Anthony Lewis, “Gloriana,” *The Times*, June 16, 1953: 7

52 Ibid.

53 Ralph Vaughan Williams, “Gloriana,” *The Times*, June 18, 1953: 9.

54 Elizabeth Sellers, “Gloriana,” *The Times*, June 19, 1953: 9

his name, this immediately places this response in the context of being knowledgeable about their perspective. As an MP at the time of publication and in exceptional circumstances, Wyatt's, this opinion comes across as very considered. For example, Wyatt's opening line "Now that taxation has almost eliminated the private patron it is the duty of the State to stimulate the arts by its support,"⁵⁵ instantly puts forward his view. As opposed to either thanking the editor for publishing other opinions or pointing out the youth of the work and paying their respects, Wyatt instantly opens with his agenda. The use of 'duty' specifically, perhaps highlights the British pre-occupation with manners, but mainly creates an instant picture of what the author feels is the role of the state in the artistic context. Interestingly, while every other mention of Elizabeth I (on whom the opera is based) or Elizabeth II has been high praise indeed, but finds her portrayal in the opera offensive, Wyatt's mention of Elizabeth I has been very matter of fact, but also expresses the human nature of the monarch, citing "an effective representation of a remarkable Queen in her varying aspect of dignity, greatness, generosity, tragedy, and human frailty"⁵⁶. This perhaps also betrays Wyatt's political identity, as there is a difference between other authors' veneration of the monarchy and his detached realism on the subject.

We also find 'true' general public opinions from some contributors. One writer expresses that the opera has "missed [the] opportunity of creating something to inspire other than purely musical people"⁵⁷. Here, it is implied that the work is not for the general public, and has been designed to cater to the tastes of musicians and those who are musically trained. This contributor also objects to the "belittling of a heroic reign"⁵⁸, which comes across as very strong language for something as relatively innocuous as an opera. It almost gives the sense of being offended on someone else's behalf, and that anything less than a superhuman portrayal of a monarch is just short of treason.

While a few letters have been omitted from this brief survey of the letters to the editor section, we can see that these authors have either implicitly or explicitly formed their identities through what they choose to divulge about themselves, and the points they bring up in their opinions. While these articles were written fifty years ago, we still find people other than journalists trying to make their opinion valid in the same way that the employed critics

55 Woodrow Wyatt, "Gloriana," *The Times*, June 20, 1953: 7

56 Ibid.

57 J Irvine, "Gloriana," *The Times*, June 22, 1953: 7

58 Ibid.

are.

One of the main points that can be observed in the actual reviews of *Gloriana* is the time it took for the critics (in *The Times* in any case) to start making in depth comments on the musical content. This may be attributed to the very sparse performance history in the opera's youth, but it is not until Stanley Sadie writing in 1972 that we find much musical detail being investigated. For example, the first review, presumably by Howes, talks almost exclusively about plot and cast, with the only specifically musical mention being the “curious reluctance to wed the sound of the violins with that of voices”⁵⁹, and the second unattributed article is a purely historical survey of musical details of Elizabeth I's life.⁶⁰ The remaining articles from 1953-1972 continue in the same vein, mentioning the disparity between the voices and what is expected of the string section and the cast, with little to no comment on the music. In his first review of *Gloriana*, Sadie talks of the “Tudor or Pseudo-Tudor ... harmony and counterpoint”, “twisted muted sounds”, and “pizzicato strings”.⁶¹ The use of these terms may seem exclusionist, but Sadie is writing for a specific audience who presumably have some musical knowledge or proficiency. Sadie again returns to his 1975, where he refers to “ostinato techniques, the ceremonial clang of brass chords (often in open harmony, without thirds), the use of oboes, cors and bassoons, the predominant minor tonalities. And it is not mere pastiche, but a reworking of these echoes of a specific past into a consistent language”⁶². Perhaps it is the case that Sadie did not feel the need to highlight the flaws of the string writing which appears to have irked previous writers, as it was a point which has been made numerous times. Perhaps he also felt that the public were capable of handling more technical language than they were being given credit for.

It is in Sadie's successors that we find more scope for interpretations of the opera. By this I am referring to the critics looking for more than just the story which is presented at face value. The interpretation of Britten's works for extra-musical meaning and biographical content is now well established in musicology. At the time where these reviews are being written, when Sadie's residency as main critic ended and the next major house gave a production of *Gloriana*, Britten had been deceased for around 10 years, and it was becoming acceptable to interpret works in this manner. For example, Philip Brett was the pioneer of the

59 “Royal Opera House,” *The Times*, June 09, 1953: 2

60 “Gloriana and Oriana,” *The Times*, June 26, 1953: 10

61 Stanley Sadie, “Gloriana,” *The Times*, August 10, 1972: 11

62 Stanley Sadie. “Gloriana,” *The Times*, March 1, 1975: 9

LGBTQ interpretation of Britten's works, where he made the significant point of being “the first to utter the word "gay" in a musicological venue when he read a paper on Peter Grimes at a national meeting of the American Musicological Society”⁶³. Paul Griffith, writing in 1984, tries to almost troubleshoot what went wrong with *Gloriana*, commenting that it possible due to the:

“mixture of state pageant with intimate character play, but then Aida is not so bad a piece. Or one might suppose that Tudor history has been too much vulgarized to be made into opera but then there is the example of *Taverner* to show that the period can still be seen with an intensely personal vision. Perhaps the real problem is that Britten was irked by what he felt would be people's expectations of a celebratory Elizabethan opera.”

This is the first time in the canon of the critical reception within *The Times* that any potential explanation for Britten's compositional choices has been made, rather than objections to them. In a similar route of explanation over objection, we have Rodney Milnes offering that the objection to the plot is not to the sully of Elizabeth I's memory, but the social issue of appropriate relationships. Milnes thinks that the objection is one to a relationship between an “old woman and a young man. If the genders are reversed, nobody turns a hair- it is the very stuff of boulevard comedy- but even today the opposite is near taboo”.⁶⁴

The criticism of *Peter Grimes* is somewhat different to that of *Gloriana*, but there are some points which are easy to compare. One of these significant differences is the speed in which interpretation of the opera and its meaning. In regards to *Gloriana*, it took almost 40 years for a writer to discuss the issues which were being raised by the work, with Rodney Milnes writing in 1993 on Opera North's production, where he offered the explanation that the relative lack of performance history could be due to some unspoken objection to the age difference between Elizabeth I and Essex⁶⁵. This this view may be down to Milnes' reaction to specific performances where the age difference between these two characters is made very clear or even exaggerated, it is significant that it took this amount of time for such a theory to be put forward in the critical reception. In the reception of *Grimes* however, we have interpretation being offered from the first review of the première. The critic writes that “In *Peter Grimes* the chief character is public opinion and the protagonist who plays it is the

63 Byron Adams, “Philip Brett,” *The Guardian*, October 31, 2002, accessed August 31, 2014
<http://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/oct/31/guardianobituaries.obituaries>

64 Rodney Milnes, “Barstow Reigns Supreme,” *The Times*, December 20, 1993: 29

65 Ibid.

chorus”⁶⁶. While this might seem like a relatively minor point, to highlight a double meaning of a character beyond the obvious, this shows a significant difference between the treatment of the two operas. Perhaps this has been due to the content, and an unwillingness to confront the characterisation and social issues raised in *Gloriana* due to the semi-biographical nature of *Gloriana* and the monarch it depicts.

The raising of interpretive content is a feature throughout the reviews of *Grimes*, where the function of both the title role and that of the chorus can be seen. One review goes so far as to use the question of “Who is the protagonist in *Peter Grimes*?”⁶⁷ almost as a thesis statement. Other writers go for a more involved approach to looking at the title role. For example one writer notes the complexity of the personality put forward, commenting that

“there is no hint of remorse; it is only the internal unbalance of the man that is elaborate. Mr Edgar Evans, taking over the name part last night, portrayed a manic-depressive type rather than a split personality. He began in depression, and the big arias, not always in tune, were but intensification of melancholia; the rough side of him, very well conveyed indeed, was manic.”⁶⁸

Whether or not *Grimes* is or is not the hero of “Britten’s opera as opposed to Crabbe’s poem”⁶⁹ due to some form of psychosis is a subject which is well versed, with even medical interpretations according to behavioural criteria, including a diagnosis “according to DSM-IV, to a diagnosis of a “brief psychotic disorder (298.8) with marked stressors” (“acute and transient psychotic disorder with associated acute stress” (F23.81), according to ICD-10).”⁷⁰ An in depth medical diagnosis is not perhaps what the music critics of *The Times* is setting out to achieve, we can see that the interpretation of the title character is much more extensive in the critical reception for *Grimes* than *Gloriana*.

One point which the two operas share in their criticism is the inclusion of performance history. This practice appears to be common, and is perhaps more relevant to contemporary operas, where works from the Baroque through to the romantic are already well established in the canon of classical repertoire. As the two operas have experienced differing levels of success in the eyes of the critics, the style of recounting their history differs slightly. With

66 “Sadler’s Wells Opera,” *The Times*, June 08, 1945: 6

67 “Sadler’s Wells Opera,” *The Times*, February 08, 1946: 6

68 “Royal Opera House,” *The Times*, November 21, 1953: 2

69 Rodney Milnes, “Fishing vainly for English oddities,” *The Times*, February 17, 1999: 35

70 Durà-Vilà, Glòria, and David Bentley, “Opera and madness: Britten’s *Peter Grimes*—a case study,” *Journal of Medical Ethics: Medical Humanities*, 35, 2009: 108, accessed 23, 2014, DOI: 10.1136/jmh.2009.002030

Grimes, we see the first historical look at the performance history in 1953, when we see a somewhat nostalgic look at the première, less than 10 years prior: “Few people resent at the reopening of Sadler’s Wells on June 7, 1945, will forget the excitement engendered that night by the first performance of *Peter Grimes*. The impact of the opera was no less powerful on Saturday night when it returned to the Covent Garden repertory after several seasons’ absence.”⁷¹ Though not starry-eyed in response to the original, it is interesting that the author has decided that there is a need to explain the importance of the première (for the reopening of the house), perhaps a hint towards the post-war environment. Examples of a more evocative historical view can be found “Eighteen years ago on a balmy June evening at the end of the war, Sadler’s Wells Opera returned to its own theatre and baptized a new opera, the first by an up-and-coming composer named Benjamin Britten, who was 31 years old”

Admittedly, the difficulty in establishing *Grimes* within the repertory is another contribution to the early examples of the historical approach, as shown by the review that followed the next production which was in 1961: “After some early insecurity- a production here and a production there- *Peter Grimes* has now found the measure of recognition it so richly deserves, and most happily a firm place in the affections in the opera going public.”⁷² The trend for nostalgia continues through the 1960s, proclaiming the première as “a red-letter day in the history of British music”⁷³, and references to the continuity of the opera in the repertory of specific houses can be found⁷⁴. There does however come a point where *Grimes* is so established in the canon, and performed with a small enough gap in between productions that reviews can refer to other productions, and not just the première, such as Rodney Milnes citing a revival of a production only 3 years prior.⁷⁵

The historical aspect of the reviews of *Gloriana* focuses on trying to almost find a place for it within the canon, and labours the point of its failings somewhat. We know that *Gloriana* was not well received, as evidenced in the letters to the editor, but there have been a number of revivals. In her reviews, she made reference to such points as “Rescuing *Gloriana*”⁷⁶ and how

71 “Royal Opera House,” *The Times*, November 16, 1953: 11

72 “Good Production of Peter Grimes,” *The Times*, April 25, 1961: 20

73 “What Opera Would Have Owed to an Initial Success by Peter Grimes,” *The Times*, June 11, 1965: 18

74 William Mann, “Brutish yet Tender,” *The Times*, May 22, 1969: 16

75 Rodney Milnes, “Too Close for Comfort Nowadays,” *The Times*, May 24, 1994: 38

76 Joan Chissell, “Splendour Retained on a Small Stage,” *The Times*, September 06, 1967: 7

“posterity may treat or maltreat *Gloriana* as a whole”⁷⁷, which gives us some insight into what the author feels is a monumental task given the past problems. It also indicates that they think this is a noble cause, as hinted at by the use of maltreat. In doing so, Chissell hints that this is a kind of injustice, and does indeed need rescued from unfair criticism. Sadie also hints at this injustice, when he comments on the inclusion of the performance history in a programme, pointing out that “One almost takes for granted that the opera does not speak entirely for itself, and that some sort of apologia is needed.”⁷⁸

As shown in these examples, the nature of the content and presentation of the reviews of both *Gloriana* and *Peter Grimes* has changed over time. While they might be very small changes, such as naming or not naming the author of a review, they do show a change in what it is seen as appropriate to put in a review, or how it is appropriate to phrase these matters. Identities are not expressly formed in these reviews, as the position which the writers inhabit does this for them, and it is unnecessary to go out of the way to state their knowledge on the subject-matter. Within the letters to the editor, a phenomenon which was unique to *Gloriana*, authors did make some attempt to place their knowledge in a context to legitimize their reaction. The language which is used in the reviews does not change dramatically over time, apart from the inclusion of musical details, but there is no significant move to informal language.

77 Chissell, “New Voices” : 6

78 Stanley Sadie, “Gloriana,” *The Times*, September 03, 1973: 10

Reviews from the Internet

As previously discussed, the internet has given rise to reviews from contributors who are not specifically employed in the role of music critic for a broadsheet publication or a journal. That is not to say that the music critics are no longer employed and writing, but there are more contributors from different backgrounds engaging with the subject in the public eye. As shown in the change in authorship from the 'music critic' to named authors within *The Times*, the title no longer bestows some almost mythical level of authority on the subject. It is not necessary to be employed as a critic to be able to express ones opinion. Similarly, the method of information dissemination does not rely on the place of publication in the same way as it once did. As respected as *The Times* is/was as a publication, websites such as Bachtrack have become valuable sources for reviews. For the purpose of context, Bachtrack is perhaps comparable to a more upmarket, musical version of TripAdvisor. Founded in 2008⁷⁹, the website acts as a source of reviews, articles and as a place to list upcoming arts events.

The reviews of the performances in question of *Grimes* and *Gloriana* which have been sourced from the internet have some marked differences and similarities with the reviews found within *The Times*. One of the most significant is the difference in language, with a change to a much more informal and conversational tone. Interestingly, the reviews with the most significant difference have come from newspapers, albeit published online, and a more left-wing or liberal position than *The Times*. For example, in Andrew Clement's review of *Gloriana* for *The Guardian*, online of course, has a mix of neutral tone when referring to the history of the work and the performance of the singers, and occasionally uses informal terms to make a point. As the work has quite a significant amount of instrumental dance music, he highlights that “there's some suitably naff dancing”⁸⁰, using both a contraction that the likes of William Mann or Joan Chissell would disapprove of, and also the blatant colloquialism 'naff'. While this might not seem like a major difference, this more relaxed and informal tone is not found in *The Times* reviews. There is a similarly flippantly informal nature to his description of the overall performance as “Musically, it's good enough.”⁸¹ Another author, this time for another review website, Classical Source, on the performance of *Grimes* launches into a tirade against the “special moment ... ruined by an asinine outburst of

79 "About Us," *Bachtrack*, Last modified April 11, 2013, accessed September 23, 2014, <http://bachtrack.com/about-us>

80 Andrew Clements, “Gloriana- review” *The Guardian*, Friday 21 June, 2013, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/jun/21/gloriana-royal-opera-house-review>.

81 Ibid.

clapping”⁸². While the majority of his article was written in a formal style apart from the occasional contraction, this concluding outrage is a type of content which has not been included in the already surveyed reviews. Admittedly, Valencia uses quite florid language in the rest of his rant. Another informal review comes from *The Express*, a tabloid which is most definitely not left wing. In terms of length, it is perhaps slightly closer to the length of many of *The Times* reviews of the past at a total of 516 words, with many of the online reviews being significantly longer, Dent's review of *Grimes* for example hitting 994 words. This due in part to the two points of historical context, and the performance history of the title role. In regards to content, Hartson's review for *The Express* includes a quoted conversation between himself and a member of the public⁸³, a tactic which has not been employed before.

One point of the *Gloriana* reviews which is consistent between the past and the present is the use of historical context. As mentioned earlier, this is probably most likely down to the unique and troubled history of the work. Various described as “being given a rare outing”⁸⁴, “one of opera's mysteries”⁸⁵ and having “a relatively quiet 60 years”⁸⁶, we are aware that the opera has not had a good relationship with the press, but this almost obsession with recounting the past is not something which we see to the same extent in either the newspaper reviews or the internet based reviews of *Grimes*. It is unusual to see a performance or critical history focused on so much, as failed operas have mainly fallen into obscurity, and are rarely if ever performed. There have been attempts to, in the words of Milnes, “rehabilitate”⁸⁷ *Gloriana*, and therefore while it remains somewhat of a musical oddity, it has not been allowed to fall into the same obscurity as Holst's *Savitri*, Janáček's *Výkety Páně Broučky* (*The Excursions of Mr. Brouček*) and Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (*The Woman without a Shadow*). It is therefore unsurprising that as it has not suffered the same fate as other peculiarities, this history is recounted or at least hinted to in the internet reviews.

82 Mark Valencia, “Prom 55: English National Opera's Peter Grimes,” *Classical Source*, August 24, 2012, accessed September 09, 2014, http://www.classicalsource.com/db_control/db_prom_review.php?id=10405.

83 William Hartson, “Opera review: *Gloriana*, Royal Opera House,” *The Express*, June 26, 2013, accessed June 26, 2014, <http://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/theatre/410471/Opera-review-Gloriana-Royal-Opera-House>

84 David Karlin, “Elizabethana I and II: Britten's *Gloriana* at Covent Garden,” *Bachtrack*, July 4, 2013, accessed June 26, 2014, <http://bachtrack.com/review-roh-gloriana-richard-jones>.

85 Clive Paget, “Live Review: *Gloriana* (Royal Opera House, London),” *Limelight*, July 6, 2014, accessed June 26, 2014, <http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/349188,live-review-i-gloriana/i-royal-opera-house-london.aspx>

86 Claire Seymour, “Britten's *Gloriana*, Covent Garden,” *Opera Today*, June 22, 2013, accessed June 26, 2014, <http://www.operatoday.com/content/00328print.html>

87 Milnes, “Barstow Reigns” 29

Within the reviews of the performance of *Peter Grimes*, we find a trend of discussing the history of the title role. The role was originally written for Peter Pears, as with many of the lead or significant male roles in Britten's works (Essex in *Gloriana*, Captain Vere in *Billy Budd*, Quint in *Turn of the Screw*), and the music written for these roles is suited to Pears's distinct vocal style as the quintessential English Tenor. As the role has been sung by different tenors over the years, there have been several singers who have been the 'authority' on the role. These singers include, Pears, Jon Vickers, Philip Langridge, Ben Heppner and in this performance which the reviews are based on, Stuart Skelton. As their vocal styles have differed, as have interpretations of the role. One writer for example states "Peter Pears and Jon Vickers, took full advantage of Grimes's ambiguous poise between dreamer and brute,"⁸⁸ with Vickers being "the epitome of naked existential anguish"⁸⁹. Another author writes that "Skelton is arguably the most complete Peter Grimes of them all, with a range of colours and a depth of acting that few of his predecessors have matched."⁹⁰ This phenomenon of listing the different interpretations of the role is perhaps due to the relative youth of the work, where it is possible for us to see all of these significant productions and their singers in a relatively short time period. As *Grimes* is also significantly more successful than *Gloriana*, the tenors singing the title role have been able to make their mark as singers specialising in the role, with Skelton singing Grimes with Opera de Oviedo, Tokyo's New National Theatre, the London Philharmonic, Opera Australia, and a future engagement with Icelandic Opera⁹¹ to name a few.

On the whole, the major difference between the print newspaper reviews and those online is the tone, while the rest of the content is similar. That is not to say all reviews are informal, but as shown, there is evidence of a trend towards the inclusion of contractions and conversational language. It is interesting that writers are portraying quite serious content in this way as neither topic of the emotional manipulation and death of Elizabeth I, or child abuse by a possibly schizophrenic fisherman are suitable candidates for a comedy, excepting the blackest of comedies. Perhaps these writers are portraying de Mul's ludic self, and want to interact in a more light hearted manner. Those employed as the music critic for newspapers are expected to fulfil a certain remit and position. Although they are free to express their

88 Huntley Dent, "Peter Grimes, Prom 55, London 2012," *The Berkshire Review for the Arts*, August 30, 2012, accessed June 26, 2014, <http://berkshirereview.net/britten-peter-grimes-london-2012/#.VCKKjvldXmg>.

89 Ibid.

90 Valencia, "Prom 55."

91 Stuart Skelton, "Biography," *Stuart Skelton- Tenor*, last modified August 14, 2014, accessed September 24, 2014, <http://www.stuartskelton.com/biography/>.

opinions on a performance or a work, they are expected to follow the principals of fairness and objectivity. This move to a more informal style is not limited to only review websites like *Bachtrack* or *The Berkshire Review*; with writers from *The Guardian* and *The Independent* also moving to a lighter style. Therefore, online reviews for both newspapers and independent sources are adhering to the basic principals of appropriate journalism, but are doing so in a more ludic way. This makes the content of the reviews or the operas themselves more easily relatable to, or more accessible for the contemporary reader.

Twitter Campaigns

As the two performances of *Gloriana* and *Grimes* in question were from two different companies and houses, their presence on Twitter significantly differs. *Gloriana* was a Royal Opera Covent Garden production, and there was a dedicated 'hashtag' for the production, #ROHGloriana which the house encouraged people to use both in house and during the cinema broadcasts. *Grimes* however was a production of English National Opera, who at the time did not have a comparable social media campaign, and no 'hashtag' for their production. The company have started to use hashtags to increase engagement with the work and company, such as this season's #ENOXerxes and #ENOSweeny. As a result, it is not possible to make a direct comparison between #ROHGloriana, and what would have been its counterpart if it had existed, #ENOGrimes. However, using the rather limited search function, it has been possible to find reactions to that production. Given the limitations of the platform, i.e. the 140 character per tweet maximum, it cannot be expected that people's reactions on Twitter or tweets in the run up to the work will be massively insightful.

Within the #ROHGloriana results, we can see one trend continuing from the internet based reviews of the previous chapter, that is to say that topics which had not featured in the reviews can be found. Obviously as this is an online platform where anyone can voice their opinion, this is to be expected. They can however be quite profound points. For example, one writer notes the "Nice subtle touch for black girl to hand QE 2 bouquet & Essex to be hand in hand with ASM at end #rohgloriana. We've come far since 50's"⁹². Johnston evidently writes from the position of human rights, where both racial discrimination and LGBTQ treatment is mentioned. While we might take the inclusion of non-white participants or the depiction of homoerotic content as normal nowadays, they have only had a very brief mention in newspaper reviews since the 80's. These are topics which are much more acceptable to talk about in the present, and topics which are freely discussed online.

As with the newspaper reviews, there is quite a large amount of unflattering responses. Due to the flippant, if not almost aggressive nature of some of these responses, they are perhaps more comparable to the letters to the editor. Although factually inaccurate, we find one tweeter commenting that "I'm not surprised that QEII didn't like *Gloriana* when she saw it in

92 John Johnston, Twitter Post, July 6, 2013, 11:38pm, <https://twitter.com/JohnVecchio>.

1953. It's an ambiguous and unflattering portrayal of QEI #ROHgloriana"⁹³. Again, we see slightly informal abbreviations to fit the platform requirements, but on the whole the language is quite formal, and contains content which we were able to find as a recurring theme in the newspaper reviews. One response however is much more flippant, noting that "I can't believe this was presented for our Queen's coronation. She should of declared it treason & had the whole lot beheaded #ROHGloriana"⁹⁴. This view could either come from a perspective of being needlessly confrontational, or it could be poorly executed sarcasm. In this view, it could either be a case of keyboard courage, or an almost dark version of the ludic self. A further example of this sarcastic playfulness can be seen in another writers response that the "Only explanation of the dire #ROHGloriana is that it is a parody like "Springtime for Hitler" in "The Producers". Better Forgotten".⁹⁵ Of course these responses which appear to be unnecessarily negative are not the only responses which can be found, but they do have a stark contrast to the positive posts, due to their hostile appearance.

As mentioned, there is not a specific 'hashtag' for the production of *Grimes*, and therefore a comparison between the two is difficult. Many of the tweets are links to some of the earlier cited reviews, or simply a post with the link to the listing on the proms website through the BBC. One are worth mentioning is that the singers involved in productions have started to take part in the discussions of the performance. Skelton, for example, during the rehearsals was tweeting what was going on including one particular mention that "We're up to the "Ha ha ha ha ha hahahaha ha ha" bit of Act 3. @E_N_O @bbcproms #grimesprom #awesomosity"⁹⁶. While not showing any real insight into the content, it does show a more accessible aspect of the arts. Twitter acts as a place where not only the audience can respond to the opera, but the singers can perform their ludic self. While not as humorous as Skelton, Toby Spence, who sang Essex in the *Gloriana* broadcast, posted about both the rehearsal period and his response to reviews, tweeting "Rehearsing Gloriana with orchestra for the first time. Beautiful music beautifully played by the ROH orchestra."⁹⁷ and "I dared look at what peeps are saying about #ROHGloriana this morning. Moved to tears by kind tweets about my return to the stage. Thank you"⁹⁸. These examples from Skelton and Spence show that singers are no longer only objects for review by others for their ability to sing a role to the reviewers

93 Thomas Corrie, Twitter Post, June 21, 2013, 12:38am, <http://www.twitter.com/didymuscoombe>.

94 Vampire Soup, Twitter Post, June 20, 2013, 9:22pm, <http://www.twitter.com/vampiresoup>.

95 Paddy Briggs, Twitter Post, June 24, 2013, 10:26pm, <http://www.twitter.com/PaddyBriggs>.

96 Stuart Skelton, Twitter Post, August 22, 2012, 9:56pm, <http://www.twitter.com/StuartSkelton>

97 Toby Spence, Twitter Post, June 5, 2013, 6:57pm, <http://www.twitter.com/tobyspence>

98 Toby Spence, Twitter Post, July 1, 2013, 8:07am, <http://www.twitter.com/tobyspence>

specifications, but are approachable, real people, who themselves have a reaction to the medium they are working with. Singers, in this context, can also be performing a ludic self. In the case of Skelton, he has created an online identity through the sharing of activities during the rehearsal period in a comical way. Skelton's alter ego, 'Pigmund the Rock Pig', is a further example of this. Skelton occasionally posts from the @Pigmund_bin_ich Twitter account using a stuffed pig in place of himself in an equally amusing manner, with his *Grimes* based involvement consisting of a photo of 'Pigmund' in the bullring.⁹⁹ Anecdotally, when I mentioned in a Twitter post that I was referencing some of his posts in a thesis, Skelton responded that he would like to read said thesis.¹⁰⁰ Spence also talks about real life events relating to the opera, but does so in a more outwardly professional way.

Unfortunately, many of the Twitter posts relating to both of the operas are background chatter. A lot of the posts are between opera fans highlighting the fact that they are either going or regret that they can't go. We do also find a few positive reactions. These interactions between users are light hearted. A few examples of this include "If you spot a 5' 2" female with blonde hair wearing these orange trousers & matching top at #grimesprom do say hello"¹⁰¹ and "@StuartSkelton @E_N_O So pissed off I have to miss it! Toi toi toi to all! #grimesprom"¹⁰². The language of these interactions rarely use formal language, as they are evidently conversations in an online setting. While not directly relating to the content of the work, it shows some evidence of a positive reaction to the work itself, albeit in an in depth way. These users have previously engaged with the work on some level, whether it be from listening to other versions of the work itself, or 'listening', in Crawford's re-imagining of the lurker. As a result, they are now choosing to ludically engage with the subject. Users have chosen to respond to each other and interact in a light hearted manner, as fits the platform, even when discussing an opera which ultimately is a tragedy.

While focusing on the ludic performances of singers and anthropomorphic stuffed toys of the *Grimes* Twitter posts, that is not to say that there are not to say that there are no reactions to the performance after the fact. Excepting those linking to reviews in outside sources, we find reactions such as "Every now and again something in life knocks you sideways. Our Prom

99 Pigmund the Rock Pig, Twitter Post, August 27, 2012, 5:25pm, http://www.twitter.com/Pigmund_bin_ich.

100 Stuart Skelton, Twitter Post, September 24, 2014, 5:13pm, <http://www.twitter.com/stuartskelton>.

101 Rosemary Lucas, Twitter Post, August 24, 2012, 11:51am, <http://www.twitter.com/LucasRosemary>.

102 Sebastian Petit, Twitter Post, August 20, 2012, 4:11pm, <http://www.twitter.com/curzonproduct>.

last night of Peter Grimes was one of those things. AWESOME!! #ENOGrimess”¹⁰³ and “Oh geeze, this duet thing makes me shiver!!!! SO beautiful!! #grimesprom and then the orchestra with that amazing theme!! ARRGGGGHHHHHHH!!!!”¹⁰⁴. These two responses are the two extremes of the formal/informal spectrum, with the first tweeter falling into informal language only at the very end of the tweet, whereas the second tweet is obviously much more informal, with an extensive use of exclamation marks, capitalisation and interjection, 'argh'.

The main problem I have experienced when trying to investigate this subject is the lack of source material. I had massively overestimated the engagement with Twitter and the amount of source material. Within the #ROHGloriana hashtag, there are 189 tweets, each in 140 characters or under, with 67 of these being directly posted by the @RoyalOperaHouse account¹⁰⁵. Another three tweets were links to the BBC iPlayer for either the broadcast of the opera or a programme talking to the singers. Within the search terms Grimes AND Proms for the year 2012 and actually related to the opera (some erroneous results relating to people with the surname Grimes talking about proms), 38 of these are links to reviews of the performance on other websites,¹⁰⁶ and in the unofficial #grimesprom hashtag there were only 24 tweets, all conversational between users¹⁰⁷. This is much fewer active responses than previously anticipated. While it has been possible to pull some information from the tweets, it is a very small sample indeed. It is possible to see identity formation within these posts however, and the performing of the ludic self. Twitter has provided a platform for content which is something other than an academic and highly considered response to a work. People are allowed to engage with the work and respond to it without being bound by the limitations which journalists, even those who work independently for review websites, are bound to follow. If they have a severe dislike for a production, performance or performer, they can say this publicly, where other users can see it, and not feel the need to be diplomatic about it. This could at some point end up as anarchy if unregulated, but as Twitter is moderated, if content is deemed unsuitable or offensive, it can be removed and measures taken to ensure it does not happen again.

103 Deborah Davidson, Twitter Post, August 25, 2012, 1:19pm, <http://www.twitter.com/debbiemezzo>.

104 Ivis Bohlen, Twitter Post, August 24, 2012, 8:14pm, <http://www.twitter.com/ivisbohlen>.

105 “Twitter / Search - #ROHGloriana,” last modified November 6, 2014, accessed September 24, 2014, <https://twitter.com/hashtag/ROHgloriana?src=hash>.

106 “Grimes prom since: 2012-01-01 until: 2012-12-31,” Twitter Search, last modified and accessed September 24, 2014, <https://twitter.com/search?f=realtime&q=Grimes%20prom%20since%3A2012-01-01%20until%3A2012-12-31&src=typd>

107 “Twitter / Search - #grimesprom,” last modified August 23, 2013, accessed September 24, 2014, <http://twitter.com/hashtag/grimesprom?src=hash>.

Conclusion

As websites which are dedicated to reviews develop, we can see new platforms for those who are not trained as journalists to express their views, especially in the field of music criticism. These review websites can be seen as an extension of citizen journalism, where the author is not required to have any professional qualifications to express an opinion. While professional journalists are bound by codes of conduct, theoretically, citizen journalists have no real obligation to adhere to the same principles. There have however been attempts to create codes of ethics specifically for bloggers, which are modified versions of the code of ethics employed by regular journalists. Culture, ultimately, has become democratized. It is no longer imperative to be a classically trained musician or critic to have an opinion.

There have been attempts to explain online interactions and engagement, and the authors have drawn their theories from the world of music. One of the most significant is Crawford's re-imagining of the 'lurker' into the listener... In this way, we can see that it is possible for someone to be observing a piece or writing or a work in the same manner as we listen to music and the world around us, that is to say dipping in and out of our immediate consciousness. Reviews or Tweets might not have any direct responses, but that is not to say they are being ignored. Our attention to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter is not constant, and in our daily lives we make the decision to focus on them when we want. We can observe and 'listen' without direct engagement.

Those interactions which are visible do not always have to be serious and formal, as shown in de Mul's work. Online participants frequently lean towards a light-hearted or playful manner of interaction, and are performing this carefree element of their personalities when going online. This is what de Mul calls the ludic self. As mentioned in this essay, I had a brief conversation with Stuart Skelton, who most definitely keeps his interactions professional but humorous. Other singers on Twitter chose to keep their engagement with content and on the platform much more professional, as in the case of Toby Spence. As shown in the investigation of TripAdvisor, non-professionals using social media sites to express their views use different strategies to make their opinions seem legitimate and worth of the same consideration as their employed counterparts. Much of this revolves around forming a picture of their identity as a way of proving the value of their opinion.

As we can see, there are definite trends within all three of the mediums looked at in this

thesis; newspapers, online reviews, and Twitter reactions. One of the most significant trends for our purposes is the change in authorship of *The Times*. The change from the anonymous 'Music Critic' to a named author highlights the value which was previously placed on this role as an employed critic, and that respect and authority was tacit. When we see named authors appearing, there is a hint here that this authority is not necessarily being undermined, but there is perhaps more accountability required of the role.

Realistically, a survey of content in *The Times* is much easier to achieve than one of online reviews or Twitter reactions. Although the internet is maturing and content constantly developing, Twitter is not the most extensive resource when looking at classical music reactions. This might be as a result of the compositions which are being investigated as well as the specific Twitter campaigns. *Gloriana*, without doubt, is a troubled work. Over the years has disappeared and reappeared from the regular repertoire of houses, and has a very sporadic performance history, and not a happy history at that. Any look at the history of the critical reception, in whatever medium, will be governed by this negativity. If we were to look at the other operas in the same season, like *Der Ring des Nieblungen*, *Nabucco*, or *Die Zauberflöte*, it is not too fanciful to expect that these operas, who have more extensive and less controversial performance histories would have much more of a response than *Gloriana*. While *Grimes* has a much more extensive and positive history, there was no dedicated campaign run by the house for the production. This made it impossible to make a direct comparison between the two in terms of #ROHGloriana and the non-existent '#ENOGrimes'. This hashtag for *Grimes* can be found in reference to the 2014 production. Although English National Opera is a slightly later adopter of Twitter campaigns than Royal Opera, the two companies now use a specific hashtag campaign with each of their productions. While I stand by the choice of using performances which I attended, it would have perhaps have provided more results if I had used the more recent production which used #ENOGrimes in the 2013-14 season.

However, as we can see, there are topics which run through all three of the mediums, such as the performance history failures of *Gloriana*. As Crary pointed out, many of our interactions come from a place of history, whether it be our own experience or from that which has been passed down to us. If it gives the writer and the reader something to relate to, then why not include it. This musical oddity has such a special place in musical history, it is worth mentioning in any case. Given how the opera drops in and out of fashion for various reasons

(the most recent being the Britten centenary year), it cannot really be helped.

There has also been a marked change in the language used within these mediums. As expected, the *Times* reviews are undeniably formal, as the language used is appropriate for the method of information dissemination to a specific audience. When we move over to the internet based reviews on the operas in question, the language which the authors use is sometimes less formal. This change is not dramatic, but it does contrast the older reviews. Due to the lack of constant performance history of *Gloriana* and *Grimes*, it is difficult to create a continuum of the critical reception of these two operas, and observe if there is a specific moment when reviews become stylistically less formal. If we were to choose one opera, say *Grimes* as the most consistently performed and to put it bluntly, popular, and look at its entire critical reception based on one geographical location (i.e. performances in London), it may be possible to observe a change in formality.

As the age of the newspaper critic appears to be coming to an end, as lamented by Kermode, the citizen critic appears to be taking over. Perhaps not the Twitter critic however. The reviews that have been used for the purposes of this thesis have not been the subject of a wave of backlash, as the world of classical music is perhaps less volatile than popular and rock musics excepting perhaps the recent fat shaming debate around Tara Erraught¹⁰⁸. But that is not to say that the transition we are seeing between the two is anything but smooth. One article by Amol Rajan on the reggae scene in London for *The Evening Standard* is openly mocked, even in the comment section of the review itself, with reactions like “the understanding of Rastafari and it's root relation with reggae is dismal, the mockery of patwa smacks of supremacist ideologies that manifest here in contempt. and the idea that there is no alternative to this low vibration McDs guzzling society is moronic to say the least”¹⁰⁹. Given that Rajan is the editor of *The Independent*, one would expect him to uphold the basic principles of journalistic integrity. If a journalist is expected to be accountable and transparent, this includes acting in an ethical manner. By intentionally misunderstanding or misrepresenting ideas about the religion which reggae comes out of, Rajan has acted in an unethical manner.

108 David Ng, “Too fat to sing? Opera critics under fire for weight remarks,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 2014, accessed September 5, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-tara-errought-opera-20140522-story.html>.

109 Djsnuffone, comment on “Amol Rajan: It's high time London got its reggae mojo back,” *The Evening Standard*, comment poster October 9, 2013, article posted October 8, 2013, accessed September 27, 2014, <http://www.standard.co.uk/comment/amol-rajan-its-high-time-london-got-its-reggae-mojo-back-8866456.html>.

Whatever the future of classical music criticism may be, as the newspapers let their critics go and the blogs take over, it is worth considering that art of any form is intended to connect with us on a deep and emotional level. While not agreeing with everything said in the article from which this final nugget of truth comes, I would agree with the sentiment from Price (although not with the same fervour) that “Any response to art is personal by definition, and anyone who claims to write with a detached, oracular, objective, all-seeing all-knowing authority is a pompous, arrogant ass”¹¹⁰. The value of internet based reviews is perhaps not in what it contains, but in what it replaces where costs have to be cut.

110 Simon Price, “A Parasitic But Necessary Art: Simon Price On The Role Of The Critic,” *The Quietus*, October 28, 2013, accessed September 27, 2014, <http://thequietus.com/articles/13597-simon-price-critic-will-self>.

Bibliography

- “About Us.” *Bachtrack*. Last modified April 11, 2013. Accessed September 23, 2014. <http://bachtrack.com/about-us>.
- “About SoundCloud.” *SoundCloud*. Last modified December 01, 2013. Accessed September 27, 2014. <https://soundcloud.com/pages/contact>.
- “About Academia.edu.” *Academia.edu*. January 15, 2014. Accessed September 27, 2014. <http://www.academia.edu/about>.
- Adams, Byron. “Philip Brett.” *The Guardian*. October 31, 2002. Accessed August 31, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/oct/31/guardianobituaries.obituaries>.
- “Amol Rajan: It's high time London got its reggae mojo back.” *The Evening Standard*. October 8, 2013. Accessed September 27, 2014. <http://www.standard.co.uk/comment/amol-rajan-its-high-time-london-got-its-reggae-mojo-back-8866456.html>.
- Armoogum, Seenevasen. “Can Citizen Journalists produce Professional Journalism?” Center for International Ethics. Last modified October 30, 2013. Accessed June 20, 2014. http://www.cimethics.org/home/newsletter/jun2013/Nanda%20Armoogum_EDITED.pdf.
- BBC News. “Royal Opera House Unveils Expanded Cinema Programme.” September 23, 2011. Accessed August 10, 2014. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-15033820>.
- BBC News. “English National Opera cut in Arts Council England funding shake-up.” July 1, 2014. Accessed September 27, 2014. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-28104684>.
- Beal, Vangie. “Web 2.0.” *Webopedia*. Last modified 24 August 2014. Accessed September 27, 2014. http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/W/Web_2_point_0.html.
- Blood, Rebecca. “The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog.” 1st ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Pub. 2002.

Bohlen, Ivis, Twitter Post. August 24, 2012, 8:14pm. <http://www.twitter.com/ivisbohlen>.

Bujić, Bojan. "criticism of music." *The Oxford Companion to Music. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press. Accessed September 27,2014.
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e1716>.

Briggs, Paddy. Twitter Post. June 24, 2013, 10:26pm. <http://www.twitter.com/PaddyBriggs>.

Burkholder, Carolynne. "Citizen Journalism. Blogging." University of Wisconsin-Madison. Last modified July 1, 2014. Accessed July 5, 2014.
http://www.journalismethics.info/citizen_journalism/blogging.htm.

Chissell, Joan. "New voices in *Gloriana*." *The Times*. February 8, 1967: 6.

Chissell, Joan. "Splendour Retained on a Small Stage." *The Times*. September 06, 1967: 7.

Clements, Andrew. "Gloriana- review." *The Guardian*. Friday 21 June, 2013. Accessed June 2, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/jun/21/gloriana-royal-opera-house-review>.

Cooper, Martin. "Frank Howes." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed September 1, 2014.
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13438>.

Corrie, Thomas. Twitter Post. June 21, 2013 12:38am.
<http://www.twitter.com/didymuscoombe>.

Crary, Jonathan . "Suspensions of perception attention, spectacle, and modern culture." 1st ed. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999.

Crawford, Kate. "Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media." *Continuum* 23: 3 (2009): 525–535.

Curtis, Anthony. "Citizen Journalism." Resources for Courses. University of Carolina. Last modified December 29, 2013. Accessed July 28, 2014. <http://www2.uncp.edu/home/acurtis/Courses/ResourcesForCourses/Journalism/CitizenJournalism.html>.

Davidson, Deborah. Twitter Post. August 25, 2012, 1:19pm. <http://www.twitter.com/debbiemezzo>.

Dent, Huntley. "Peter Grimes, Prom 55, London 2012." *The Berkshire Review for the Arts*. August 30, 2012. Accessed June 26, 2014. <http://berkshirereview.net/britten-peter-grimes-london-2012/#.VCKKjvldXmg>.

Dube, Jonathan. "A Bloggers' Code of Ethics." *CyberJournalist*. Last modified June 28, 2014. Accessed July 5, 2014. <http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php>.

Durà-Vilà, Glòria, and David Bentley. "Opera and madness: Britten's Peter Grimes—a case study." *Journal of Medical Ethics: Medical Humanities*, 35, 2009: 106–109, accessed August 23, 2014. DOI: 10.1136/jmh.2009.002030.

Dumert, Ana. "The performance of a ludic self on social network(ing) sites." in *The Language of Social Media: Identity and Community on the Internet*, ed. Philip Seargeant et al. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014: 23-45.

Digital Trends Staff. "The History of Social Networking." Digital Trends. Last modified August 5, 2014. Accessed August 17, 2014. <http://www.digitaltrends.com/features/the-history-of-social-networking/>.

"Editorial: A liberal gamble too far." The Independent. Last modified March 13, 2014. Accessed July 28, 2014. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/editorials/editorial-a-liberal-gamble-too-far-8468336.html>.

Edwards, Jim. "Twitter is Surprisingly Small Compared to A Bunch of Other Apps And Online Companies." *Business Outsider*. November 5, 2013. Accessed September 27, 2014.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/twitter-user-base-compared-to-other-apps-and-online-companies-2013-11>.

Encyclopedia Britannica Online . "The Times (British Newspaper)." Last modified December 2, 2013. Accessed May 10, 2014. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/596228/The-Times>.

English National Opera "Peter Grimes." Last modified June 26, 2014. Accessed August 10, 2014. <http://www.eno.org/grimes>.

"Gloriana and Oriana." *The Times*. June 26, 1953: 10.

"Good Production of Peter Grimes." *The Times*. April 25, 1961: 20.

"Grimes prom since: 2012-01-01 until: 2012-12-31." Twitter Search. Last modified and accessed September 24, 2014.

<https://twitter.com/search?f=realtime&q=Grimes%20prom%20since%3A2012-01-01%20until%3A2012-12-31&src=typd>.

Halliday, Josh. "Independent titles to cut back on arts coverage." *The Guardian*. July 29, 2013. Accessed September 1, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/jul/29/independent-titles-cut-back-arts-coverage>.

Harewood, George Henry Hubert Lascelles. *The Tongs And The Bones*. 1st ed. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981.

Hartson, William. "Opera review: Gloriana, Royal Opera House." *The Express*. June 26, 2013. Accessed June 26, 2014. <http://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/theatre/410471/Opera-review-Gloriana-Royal-Opera-House>.

Irvine, J. "Gloriana." *The Times*. June 22, 1953: 7.

Johnston, John. Twitter Post. July 6, 2013. 11:38pm. <https://www.twitter.com/JohnVecchio>.

Josiović, Ivo. "The Mass Media and Musical Culture." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*. 15:1 (1984): 39-51.

Jurrat, Nadine. "Mapping Digital Media: Citizen Journalism and the Internet." 1st ed. Cambridge: Open Society Foundations 2011.

Karlin, David. "Elizabethana I and II: Britten's *Gloriana* at Covent Garden." July 4, 2013. Accessed June 26, 2014. <http://bachtrack.com/review-roh-gloriana-richard-jones>.

Kuhn, Martin. "Interactivity and Prioritizing the Human: A Code of Blogging Ethics." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*. 22:1, (2007): 33-34. DOI: 10.1080/08900520701315244.

Lewis, Anthony. "Gloriana." *The Times*. June 16, 1953: 7.

Lowe, Chloe. "Syria: A War Reported By Citizen-Journalists, Social Media." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Last modified January 11, 2014. Accessed August 23, 2014. <http://www.rferl.org/content/syria-war-reported-by-citizen-journalists-social-media/24630841.html>.

Lucas, Rosemary. Twitter Post. August 24, 2012, 11:51am. <http://www.twitter.com/LucasRosemary>.

Mann, William. "Brutish yet Tender." *The Times*. May 22, 1969: 16.

Milnes, Rodney. "Barstow Reigns Supreme." *The Times*. December 20, 1993: 29.

Milnes "Too Close for Comfort Nowadays." *The Times*. May 24, 1994: 38.

Milnes, Rodney. "Fishing vainly for English oddities." *The Times*. February 17, 1999: 35.

McClard, Anne and Anderson, Ken. "Focus on Facebook: Who Are We Anyway?" *Anthropology News*. 49:3 (2008): 10-12.

Ng, David. "Too fat to sing? Opera critics under fire for weight remarks." *Los Angeles Times*. May 22, 2014. Accessed September 5, 2014.
<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-tara-errought-opera-20140522-story.html>.

Paget, Clive. "Live Review: *Gloriana* (Royal Opera House, London)." *Limelight*. July 6, 2014. Accessed June 26, 2014. <http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/349188,live-review-i-gloriana/i-royal-opera-house-london.aspx>.

Petit, Sebastian. Twitter Post. August 20, 2012, 4:11pm.
<http://www.twitter.com/curzonproduct>.

Pigmund the Rock Pig. Twitter Post. August 27, 2012, 5:25pm.
http://www.twitter.com/Pigmund_bin_ich.

Price, Simon. "A Parasitic But Necessary Art: Simon Price On The Role Of The Critic" *The Quietus*. October 28, 2013. Accessed September 27, 2014.
<http://thequietus.com/articles/13597-simon-price-critic-will-self>.

Royal Opera House. "Peter Grimes: a short guide." Last modified June 23 2011. Accessed June 22, 2014. <http://www.roh.org.uk/news/peter-grimes-a-short-guide>.

"Royal Opera House." *The Times*. November 16, 1953: 11.

"Royal Opera House." *The Times*. June 09, 1953: 2.

"Royal Opera House." *The Times*. November 21, 1953: 2.

Talton, John. "When I hear the term 'Citizen Journalist,' I Reach For My Pistol!" *Britannica Blog*. Last modified April 9, 2008. Accessed August 23, 2014.

http://images.keysnews.com/files/Talton_essay.pdf.

Thompson, Oscar. *Practical Music Criticism*. 1st Ed. New York: Da Capo 1934. Quoted in Robert Schick. *Classical music criticism: with a chapter on reviewing ethnic music*. 1st Ed. New York: Garland 1996.

“Twitter / Search - #ROHGloriana.” Last modified November 6, 2014. Accessed September 24, 2014. <https://twitter.com/hashtag/ROHGloriana?src=hash>.

“Twitter / Search - #grimesprom.” last modified August 23, 2013. Accessed September 24, 2014.

<http://twitter.com/hashtag/grimesprom?src=hash>.

Sadie, Stanley. “Gloriana” *The Times*. August 10, 1972: 11.

Sadie, Stanley. “Gloriana.” *The Times*. September 03, 1973: 10.

Sadie, Stanley. “Gloriana.” *The Times*, March 1, 1975: 9.

“Sadler’s Wells Opera.” *The Times*. June 08, 1945: 6.

“Sadler’s Wells Opera.” *The Times*. February 08, 1946: 6.

Sano, Kathryn “The Purpose of Music Criticism In Society.” *Kathryn Sano*. Last modified August 28, 2011. Accessed August 26, 2014. <http://kathrynsano.com/2011/08/28/the-purpose-of-music-criticism-in-society/>.

Self, Will. “Hatchet Job by Mark Kermode- review.” *The Guardian*. October 9, 2013. Accessed September 1, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/09/hatchet-job-mark-kermode-review>.

Sellers, Elizabeth. “Gloriana.” *The Times*. June 19, 1953: 9.

Seymour, Claire. "Britten's *Gloriana*, Covent Garden." *Opera Today*. June 22, 2013. Accessed June 26, 2014. <http://www.operatoday.com/content/00328print.html>.

Skelton, Stuart. Twitter Post. August 22, 2012, 9:56pm. <http://www.twitter.com/StuartSkelton>.

Skelton, Stuart. Twitter Post. September 24, 2014, 5:13pm. <http://www.twitter.com/StuartSkelton>.

Skelton, Stuart. "Biography." *Stuart Skelton- Tenor*: last modified August 14, 2014. Accessed September 24, 2014. <http://www.stuartskelton.com/biography/>.

Soup, Vampire. Twitter Post. June 20, 2013, 9:22pm. <http://www.twitter.com/vampiresoup>.

Spence, Toby. Twitter Post. June 5, 2013, 6:57pm. <http://www.twitter.com/tobyspence>.

Spence, Toby. Twitter Post. July 1, 2013, 8:07am. <http://www.twitter.com/tobyspence>.

Valencia, Mark. "Prom 55: English National Opera's Peter Grimes." *Classical Source*. August 24, 2012. Accessed September 09, 2014. http://www.classicalsource.com/db_control/db_prom_review.php?id=10405.

Vásquez, Camilla. "'Usually not one to complain but...': constructing identities in user-generated online reviews." in *The Language of Social Media: Identity and Community on the Internet*. ed. Philip Seargeant et al. (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 65-90.

Vaughan Williams, Ralph. "Gloriana." *The Times*. June 18, 1953: 9.

"What Opera Would Have Owed to an Initial Success by Peter Grimes." *The Times*. June 11, 1965: 18.

Wolf, D. "Keyboard Courage." *Urban Dictionary*. Last modified July 30, 2006. Accessed

August 17, 2014. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=keyboard%20courage>.

Wyatt, Woodrow. "Gloriana." *The Times*. June 20, 1953: 7.

Zemler, Emily. "Are Music Critics Pointless?" *Hollywood Reporter*. March 29, 2013.

Accessed September 01, 2014. <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/earshot/are-music-critics-pointless-opinion-431879>.