

## Introduction

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*OMA: Ausländer und Staatenlose* (Grandmother: Foreigners and Stateless Persons) began in 1995 as a project based MA that was to research the use of online media for the creation and production of an experimental opera. It also endeavored to explore the Internet both as site for performance and as a means of accessing and engaging an audience.

Specifically, *OMA: Ausländer und Staatenlose* was to address the following questions:

- How can we use the Internet's World Wide Web for live performance works?
- How can opera be created and produced with new media technologies?
- How do we design/compose an online multimedia performance?
- What specific technical and creative issues have to be addressed when composing online multimedia performance?
- How can we create interactions that engage audiences via online media?

The final project was to be delivered as three individual components: a live performance, a live performance networked via the Web, an archive of the performance and the components of its creation accessible via the Web.

During the course of the project, a number of significant influences changed its outcome. This paper discusses the changes, what brought them about and how the research has resolved to deliver a tangible project and record of its development.

Several diverse projects and overseas commissions that wove influences and new directions throughout the course of the project punctuated the entire period of research, from 1995 to the present.

Given the context of the project as research, numerous technologies were experimented with, papers written, presented and published (see App. 1). The entire program involved overseas research, performances and installations experimenting with different technologies and techniques, including the exploration of the more potent themes in the opera.

The project became a personal odyssey, a metaphor for the opera itself. At times, it felt as though I was living the opera, particularly during the period spent writing the libretto and designing the final project, the virtual representation of this work, *Ausländer Micro*. This informal report documents the influences, background, research trips and productions that have contributed to this project.

## Why an opera?

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Opera originated as public theatre in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century. It was defined as *combining the visual, aural and performing arts into one elaborate unity*<sup>1</sup>. I wanted to create a public theatre for the Internet, or rather; an Internet based project based on the principles of public theatre combining the multidisciplinary skills of the multimedia savvy production team of today.

An opera can be described as, *a dramatic composition or performance of which music is an essential part*<sup>2</sup>. Historically, operas drew together various art disciplines to create a *theatre by the people, for the people*. Two-way interaction with an audience occurs via the web browser, much like a stage.

*Ausländer Micro* demonstrates the non-narrative, visual and aural forms that are emerging with the broad availability of new technologies, making it possible to participate in an electronic theatre. Hence the description of it as a *virtual opera*.

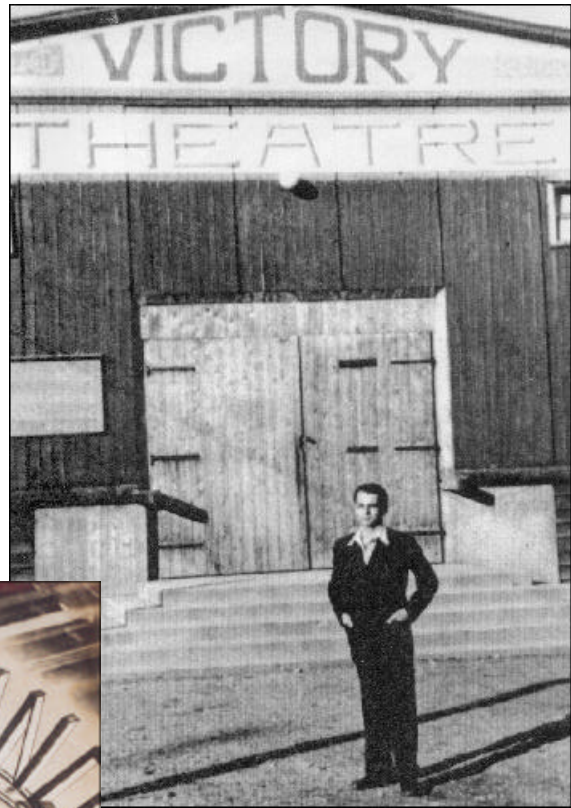
The themes of displacement and political marginalisation running throughout this virtual opera are not a specific comment on Australia. Rather, the opera's influences are international in scope and aimed to reflect the global nature of the information sources and technologies that influence our lives daily. It is

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<sup>1</sup> Morehead, P 1992 Bloomsbury Dictionary of Music

<sup>2</sup> Morehead, P 1992 Bloomsbury Dictionary of Music

a non-linear journey through the mechanisms of ideology that play a dominant role in the colonisation and denigration of unique societies and cultures.



TOP Alex Garton standing in front of the Victory Theatre, Spittal an der Drau, Austria, 1946.

LEFT Andre Garton, Alex's father, played trumpet in this WWII touring group, Santo Band.

TOP LEFT Andrew Garton performing Carnival of Disembodies Souls, Black Harlequin, Sydney, Australia, 1991. Photo. M Ney.