Emile Wennekes

‘(Re)mediating Wagner: Productive Reception in Visual and Virtual Media’

All music in today’s society reveals itself, one way or the other, as mediatized. This has clearly effected both performing practice and listeneners’ practice. Wagner posthumously finds himself a factor within a dense network of mediatized formats that cover substantial segments of the history of mediatization. Wagner has not only clearly, splendidly survived a century of technically mediatized innovations, he has remained a source of great inspiration, a focus of productive reception.

In the era of the silent movie, Wagner was already a prominent figure; his character, his biography as well as his protagonists inspired film narratives from the dawn of the medium. His music frequently serviced underscoring. Serious attempts were made to cameratize his works, but his characters were used for parody as well, eventually becoming signifiers for the opera genre itself. Not only in cinema, but in television advertisements, in animated cartoons as well as computer games, Wagner retained his prominence throughout all digital developments. Opera companies offer their recorded Wagner productions on-line. Directors incorporate avatars in their productions, reducing the ontological distinction between live and mediatized components.

In this keynote lecture the mediatized formats in which Wagner is (omni)present shall be categorized and critically analyzed. Through their frequent use in widely divers media, Wagner’s tunes have become trope codifiers yet this has eroded their clean-cut meaning, and has resulted in an ambiguous network of musical associations.