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## Creating a Role in Opera: The Topology of Becoming

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### Abstract

This paper examines how movement through different theatre spaces during role preparation influences the performer's developing interpretation.

The analysis is based on a structuralist approach and uses the opposition between continuity and discontinuity to examine different stages of role preparation. Drawing on post-Greimassian semiotics, especially Eric Landowski's understanding of identity as a dynamic process, the paper treats role construction as a trajectory of becoming. Theatre spaces do not function only as fixed locations that separate stages of role preparation. The transitions between them structure the learning process.

The paper is based on the author's experience of preparing operatic roles at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre. In dressing rooms for individual preparation, learning is relatively continuous: it is gradual, self-directed, and stable. Work with acting and vocal coaches introduces partial discontinuities, as external feedback can either support or challenge the performer's choices. In collective rehearsal spaces, the process becomes fragmented and discontinuous, shaped by constant corrections, interruptions, and interaction with others. Finally, on stage, these fragmented elements are brought together into a coherent performance. As the performer moves closer to the stage, external demands and pressures become increasingly pronounced.

This model of opera production also reflects an economic logic: it distributes time, resources, responsibility, and psychophysical load in an efficient way. Departures from this model tend to shift risk elsewhere, increasing performer stress, creating a more chaotic working process, or requiring greater time investment.

**Keywords:** Structuralist Semiotics, Theatre Space, Performer Identity

