

# 'I'm glad there is Someone looking out for us Gentiles'

– A study of Classical Music Culture on YouTube

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# THE BIG QUESTIONS

- a more informed understanding of what "active users" do
- focus on particular "subculture"
- situated understanding of social media practices



Some studies of pop music  
(as in popular contemporary  
music)

Baym 2007, Beer 2008, Morrow 2009



No? studies of classical music  
"fans" or "users" etc in a social  
media context

...”musical taste.. [is] a rich and inventive practice that simultaneously recomposes music and its practitioners in situ, according to the needs and with the various mediums, resources, devices and ceremonials available” (Hennion, 2001, p. 3).

Specific culture of performance  
of knowledge and appraisal

- What type of classical music users exist can be found in a SNS?
- How do they perform themselves as music fans in the specific context of YouTube?:
  - How much do they talk?
  - What do they talk about?
  - How do they talk about it
  - A sense of community?
- What does social media do to the performance of classical music culture and vice versa?



Search

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Search

 [Search options](#)

**”pop music”: 880,000**

**”classical music”: 496.000**

**Britney Spears: 774,000**

**Beethoven: 202,000**

## Types of classical music on YouTube

- **Videos with popular pro artists (tv-concerts, pro-videos etc)**
- Bootleg videos (illegal footage from pro concerts)
- Videos, that present rare professional recordings of classical music with amateur visuals
- Videos, that present amateur recordings of pro-am musicians singing/playing
- Videos, that present amateur recordings of amateur musicians singing/playing
- Child-prodigy recordings (concerts, home, tv footage) etc

**Sound matters, not visuals**

# THE STUDY: CONTENT

## Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir - 'Lux Aurumque'

ERIC WHITACRE'S VIRTUAL CHOIR

8 videos

Subscribe



EricWhitacresVrtlChr | 21 March 2010

COMPOSED AND CONDUCTED BY: Eric Whitacre PRODUCED BY: Scott Haines TEXT BY:...

1,378,351

views



## User-categories:

pro performer (not present?)

pro- am performer

am performer

**hardcore-listener ( maestro/ fan)**

**casual-listener (classical music interest)**

**“newbie” (no prior knowledge of classical music)**

## Activity:

uploaders

on-site commenters > 1. written comments 2. likes/dislikes

video responses

silent viewers

“while learning about opera is **an eminently social activity**, what is learned is a romantic understanding of operatic consumption, which teaches how to be one with the music, in a **highly personalized and individualized way**”  
(Benzecry, 2009, p. 134)

- opera talk (“back catalogue”, reverence of past)
- maestro classes
- collective conneisseurship

## The “who is the greatest opera soprano” discussion

- Well-known aria: *Casta Diva* (from Bellini’s opera *Norma*)
- Most viewed videos (when several exist)
- Analysis of comment activity and comment content
  - > user types (identifiable?)
  - > discussion (“opera talk”)  
rational intellectual or subjective emotional?
  - > collective conneisseurship
  - > the presence of maestros?

Philip67 on [Angela Gheorghiu's Norma-video](#)  
(5 mths ago)

*Oh, I do wish she would sing Norma on stage! Could anyone else remotely do justice to the role today? Gruberova is wrong and now too old for it, Anderson was mediocre, Fleming, Dessay, Mattila et al don't stand a chance. Netrebko and Bartoli do not even enter the discussion, although Bartoli would be an excellent Adalgisa. Callas remains the definitive Norma, but Caballe sings it more beautifully, her 1974 Orange "Casta Diva" the best ever recorded.*

# THE STUDY III

October 2010:  
644.029 views  
YT comment count: 2141  
Crawler count: 2059  
1454 likes | 79 don't's  
Responses:0

casta diva

flyfra89

3 videos

Subscribe



flyfra89 | 17 February 2007  
maria callas



647,069  
views



🎵 Maria Callas - Casta Diva

# THE STUDY III

## Anna Netrebko - Casta Diva

ccobain94

6 videos

Subscribe



October 2010:  
Views:674,398  
YT Comments: 3,846  
Crawler comments: 3,706  
Responses:7  
1414 likes |422 don'ts

1:51 / 9:22 360p

ccobain94 | 16 August 2007  
Einzigartig. Sensationell. Wunderbar. Die Musikbranche neigt nicht zu Übertre...  
681,352 views

Crawler no of comments: 2059

Unique no of posters: 673 (0,1% of viewers!)

161 posters made more than 1 comment

- 82 made just two, many of these simple “praise”:  
*La Divina!*

10 posters made 10-20 comments

16 (?12) made btw 23 – 174 comments, incl. trolls

Those posting more than two comments, often appear engaged in “local” discussion, eg short discussion at the point in time of first post

## Informed emotional Callasfan

[Chanteuredelopera](#) 3 weeks ago

*[@ferricheart](#) A Mezzo? Since when do Mezzo's sing Lucia, Norma, Violetta etc. Caballe had an amazing voice but all sopranos pale in comparison when you bring opera as a whole together as a theatrical master piece, which is what Callas was able to do.*

*No matter her vocal flaws, what she did for opera no other singer has ever done! Search for the clips on youtube where Caballe talks about Callas and hear what she has to say about her.*



## Hardcore "intellectual" Callasfan

[paulprocopolis](#), 2 years ago

*Anyone who can sing the Mad Scene from Lucia di Lammermoor as Callas does in her 1955 live recording under Karajan cannot possibly be described as "not a very good technician". The performance is as technically polished as anything I've heard (as well as dramtically thrilling).*

## Hardcore operafan

[LohengrinT](#) 1 month ago

[@orewa14](#) *I never understood why they all are so against the Voce di peto in that clip since they all used chest placement. Gencer was the most sincere of them al*

[orewa14](#) 1 month ago

[@LohengrinT](#) , *Gencer said she lost the high C in ' 59, regaining it only temporarily. Started with a high E flat. Proves Ms Bumbry's point it would seem. Gencer also had some firm views on chest voice. There is a gem of an interview with her disputing the views of Simionato and Olivero with regards to that matter. To find it on ytube, type in Divas Discuss Chest Voice ( Hint: They are Against it ).*

## The (informed) (Callas) Fan-Trolls

Mtnmanjt: 8 months ago

*I like the one posted by Florence Ashley better. This one is considered a classic, if I'm not mistaken. Klassissimus has one posted of Callas' Casta Divaiï» at La Scala, that is also considered the greatest one. Hey, the broad's the greatest soprano of all time, anything she did was incomparable!!*

(same time)

*I haven't been on Netrebko sites other than to defend myself against a personal attack against me by Seebetsea, or whatever the douche-bags name is. She has yeast infection of the vagina, and it smells very bad.*

## The (informed) (Netrebko) Fan-Trolls

### Ferrobreads

*In my opinion Mrs. Callas was "Britney" or "Madonna" of the past!*

*She was a trendsetter for italian **popera** and no more. Her technique was not bad but her voice only one of hundreds. Nobody like to hear her since 1958 and today this musical relict is rediscovered from YouTube freaks. Most comments are laughable, childish and simply incorrect. I think, she is the fag hag for american losers!*

# THE "FILAREDO" FIGHT

**Mtn....**, 1 year ago (160 comments on ANV+MCV)

For whatever it's worth, I am not a fake profile. I am 62 years old, in New England, USA, and *have no background whatsoever in opera. I only stumbled upon Callas' sites, and was enraged how she was dead, and has no one to defend her, and was dissed with vile comments by a group of Netrebniks. I will defend her, even if I am the only one in the world.*

**Ham....**, 5 months ago (232 comments on ANV+MCV)

*Wow, Annnoushka you really suck here! Your technique is lousy. You need to get the fuck out of opera!!! Take your fuck-tard and go back to Krasnodar, and stay there, beotch!!! Thank you Annoushka, from your Callas-Bashing employees/friends/relatives, the FILAREEDOS!!!*

# THE "FILAREDO" FIGHT

MrGary...., 5 months ago (64 comments on ANV)

@ham... Wow, hammourshka.... you really suck here ! Faggot Old your expressive technique is lousy . Faggot Old , you need to get the fuck out of opera, you need mount a black man !!!! Take your fuck-tard Dessayfanatic and go back to poor house, and stay there, son of bitch !!!! **Thank you Hammeourshka..., from your Netrebko-Bashing employees/friends/relatives, the tards sons of bitch !!!!**

Neanderthal....8 months ago (100 comments on MCV+ANV)

@Stri... Mister, you are no gentleman. You break the agreement again. **Fuck off from any Netrebko site and keep your pearls of wisdom to yourself. Callas fans are not welcome here. If I see a comment from you the filaredo group comes back to Callas sites.**

(+ also 54 as vandr... + 106 as belman...??)

# SENSE OF "COMMUNITY"?

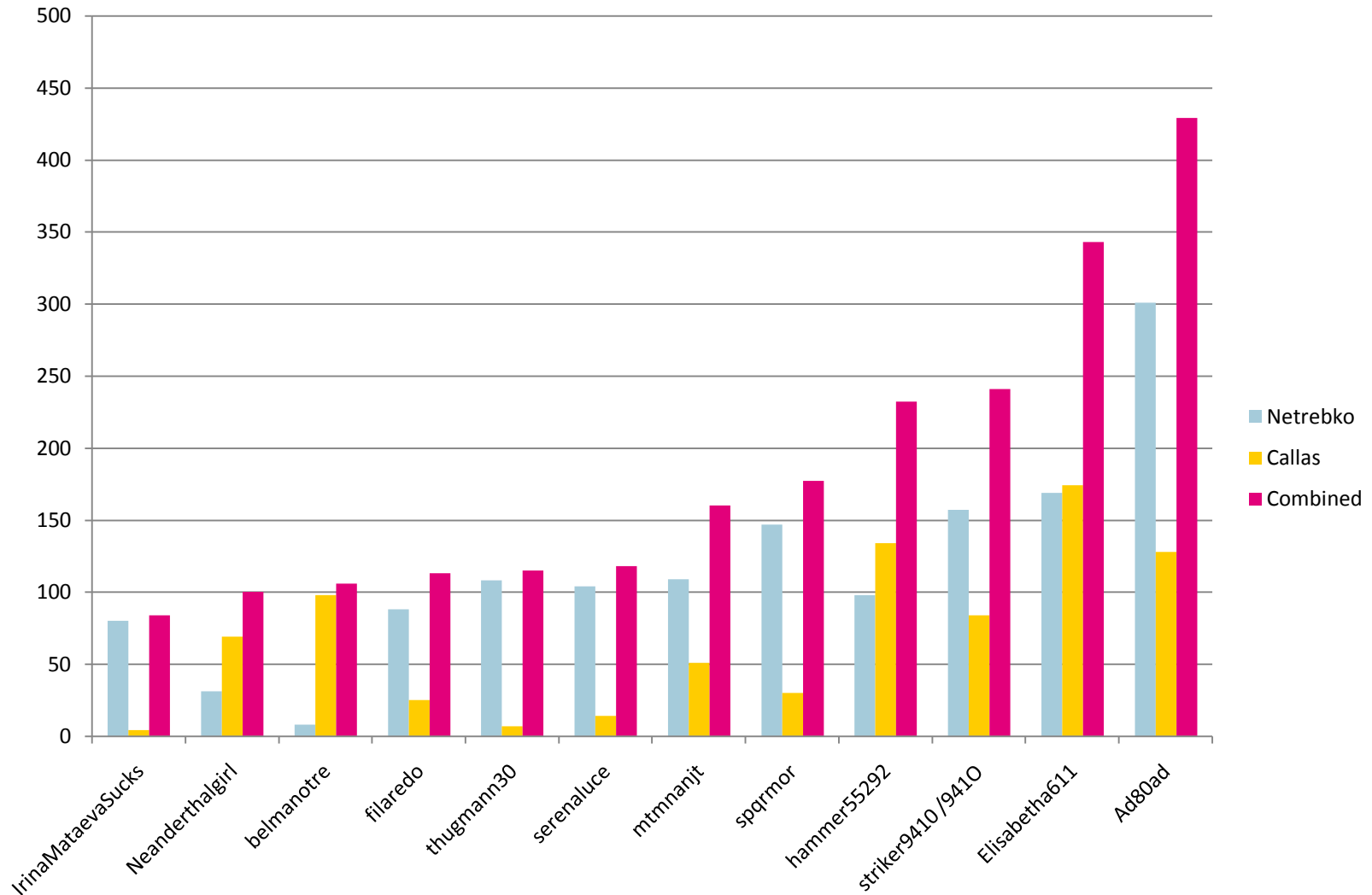
Number of comments total 5775 on ANV + MCV

People who commented on Callas *and* Netrebko vid: 84  
No of people who posted only once on Callas: 28  
(of these 12 posted btw 1-12 comments on Netrebko)

No of comments by 10 most active posters: 2034

# TROLLS OR FANS – OR BOTH?

## Most active posters on both videos





# CONCLUSION

*I have to agree with you, and I am an opera fanatic, but it is like a bull fight on any opera video posted on YT in the comments section. If you want to truly enjoy the music, don't read the comments. Works for me. (H.. on ANV)*

- fan behaviour and affective alliances (fleeting fan community)
- highly emotional engagement
- useful distinction between hot-tempered “casual” fans and cool-tempered “hardcore” maestros?
- videos are also able to pull in newbies (“revelation”)
- YT itself becomes part of reference system

Thank you!

Slides will be available for a short while  
after the conference at

[www.klastrup.dk](http://www.klastrup.dk)

[www.twitter.com/klast](http://www.twitter.com/klast)