Cultural transfer of opera reflected in surtitle: 
*Die Fledermaus, Parsifal and Le nozze di Figaro* in Korea

Within a few decades after the establishment of opera as a new musical genre, it was introduced to major European cities and quickly spread further throughout Europe, becoming a transnational product. In this process, language was naturally the biggest barrier.

Surtitle, first introduced in 1983, is the most recent and arguably the best solution to overcome the language barrier. Even though it has been more or less integrated into today’s opera experience, the breadth and depth of research on surtitle are significantly limited. Moreover complex negotiations involved in the process of translation as well as making surtitle have been casually overlooked. Unlike libretto translation, which involves the whole text, surtitle covers only a subset of libretto due to the limitation of space and time. Therefore translator should constantly face a trade-off in the process of translation and translator's decisions are heavily affected not only by his or her individual interpretation of the work, but also by the social and linguistic norms of the target culture, on which the translator firmly stands. In this regard, it is not an overstatement that new meanings are added to the opera through surtitle translation, consciously and unconsciously.

Research on surtitle should also deal with some basic, but often neglected, issues. First, there is the matter of how to define the source text. We can either limit the source text to libretto and music only as it has conventionally been or extend it to embrace the production as a whole. With the latter approach, then, another issue regarding methodology of doing so is raised. As the research focus in musicology and theatre studies move slowly but steadily from somewhat outdated concept of ‘the original’ libretto and score to performance itself, especially in an age of increasing power of opera directors, the search for an answer to these questions seems well-timed.

This thesis aims to study these topics in the context of the history of opera performance and reception in South Korea, focusing on those for three specific operas. Korea shared little history and culture with Europe when opera was first introduced in 1948, and therefore socio-cultural and language differences heavily affected the way Korean audience understood and enjoyed opera. By analysing and comparing different Korean surtitles as well as productions of *Die Fledermaus, Parsifal* and *Le nozze di Figaro*, produced between 1978 and 2014 in Korea, this study will present how cultural transfer took place in this process and how this transfer has been reflected in surtitle.