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NEWS

The professional association of opera houses and festivals in Europe



SURVIVAL & NEXT STAGE

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Anna El-Khashem, 1st prize-winner NEUE STIMMEN 2019

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OPERA EUROPA, AT YOUR SERVICE

Opera Europa's strength lies in its members. Over almost two decades, the European association of opera companies and festivals has grown to be more representative of the sector, deepening its action points within its membership, and building enriching relationships with complementary organisations to develop partnerships and grow the social impact of our actions.

Over the past year, our members have met more online than in person. That has encouraged participation by a wider constitution, giving opportunity for wonderfully rich exchanges and sharing of experience. Opera Europa also conducted surveys to map out the situation and impact of theatre closures and opening paths for reflexion on what lies ahead.

PRIORITIES FOR 2021

During the final afternoon of our autumn conference, over 100 members contributed to discussions on what issues, topics and action points were a priority for Opera Europa in the coming year. We have organised them into the following themes.

Programming

There is a demand to reflect on the repertoire, inherited and new. Audience remains at the centre of the questions, which will include the role of programming in reaching a diverse audience, balancing old and new works, the various paths to commissioning and the diversification and intercultural inspirations of new work, with opportunities for members to pitch current projects, explore good practices and innovations.

Social impact (see page 10)

Beyond creating jobs and maintaining a local economy, what impact does opera have in a community?

Opera producers want to believe that their work contributes to the wellbeing of their audience. Building on Opera Europa's autumn research into the parameters for public subsidy, there is a need to discuss the perceived dividend to public and private stakeholders and to create tools to measure value and return on investment, beyond quantitative data.

Artists

More than ever, the opera sector has come together to realise that all actors – artists, managers, publishers and opera companies – are part of one fragile ecosystem. The role and place of the artist may need reinventing. How to support and sustain talent? What skills might the artist of today, and tomorrow, need?

NEXT STAGE (see pages 8 and 9 for fuller details)

This joint initiative responds to the acknowledgement of a changing world, and the need for opera companies to consider how to evolve and adapt. FEDORA and Opera Europa are working hand in hand to accompany opera and dance companies through this process, by raising funds and capitalising on coordinated efforts in the fields of sustainability, equality and digital transformation.

Working sessions are planned for companies interested in committing to the project, on 21 January for Sustainability, on 25 January for Equality and on 28 January for Digital Transformation. Please contact us to join the session of your choice.

CONTENTS

3 - 4

Opera Europa, at your service

5 - 7

Survival of the fittest

8 - 9

Next Stage

10

Social impact of subsidy

11

World Opera Day Report

12

Spotlight on our members

13

75 years at NOVAT

15

3 years of OperaVision

16

Dates for your diary

OPERABOOK & FUTURE NEW PRODUCTIONS

As a response to our members' request, Opera Europa invested in the development of an online tool referencing productions, artists and roles for over 300 opera companies worldwide.

Operabook is a powerful database with an efficient search engine which allows members to find the casts of productions, the list of singers familiar with a role, and repertoire of individual singers, with agent contact data supplied by ClassicalMusicArtists.com by IAMA/AEAA.

Full access is included in Opera Europa membership, and allows companies to input, correct and update their own data. The access to Opera Europa's Future New Productions database is managed through Operabook, allowing sharing advance planning to encourage collaboration. This database becomes the basis for our live Co-production marketplaces and the pitch sessions in February. Would you like to present a project? Please contact susanna@opera-europa.org

New developments

Building on your feedback, to enrich our data, better represent your work, and ease your searches, for both your use of historic data and Future New Productions, you will notice:

- a direct access to Operabook and simplified 'guest' experience
- a 'keep me logged in' option
- a new filter for New Work
- a new filter for Young Artists performances, young audiences/community projects, audio-visual projects & recordings, other alternative projects (outdoor performances, alternative venues...)
- a reworked mobile version

The Operabook team will happily relay your season and input corrections if you notify them on casting@opera-europa.org.



ADVOCACY

As a member of Pearle and Culture Action Europe, Opera Europa represents the interests of our members to the European institutions, thanks to the work of specialists and with the support of colleagues from the sector.

Opera Europa also believes actions speak louder than words. To serve Opera, two main initiatives spearhead our efforts.

OperaVision (see pages 14 and 15 for more information)

The success of OperaVision lies not only in the impressive viewing numbers gathered over the past 3 years, but also in the diversity of content brought from over 20% of the membership, whether an officially signed-up partner with the European Union's Creative Europe programme or a one-time contributor.

In order to fulfil the goals of the project, the current initiative has been prolonged until the end of 2021. During the coming months, Opera Europa will be preparing its grant application to develop OperaVision, with new features, different approaches and considering new models. Does your opera company want to commit? Please contact luke@opera-europa.org

World Opera Day (see page 11 for more information)

A joint initiative with Opera America, Opera in Canada and Ópera Latinoamérica, World Opera Day builds on the experience and success of the European Opera Days, instituted in 2007.

Celebrated on 25 October since 2019, this advocacy campaign for the arts in general, and for opera in particular, is steadily growing, with new ambitions for 2021. Would you like to join our brainstorming session on 4 March? Contact celia@opera-europa.org

Audrey Jungers



Kirsten Flagstad Jubilee Concert | Den Norske Opera

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

'Covid's had winners and losers and in the arts the people that reinvent themselves, in a sort of Charles Darwin mindset, will be the winners'.

That recent assessment by banker and philanthropist John Studzinski was expressed even more starkly last August by businessman Ed Warner: 'Whatever the future holds, it's the businesses that gave it a crack while the competition dithered that will be rewarded by their customers and clients – the pub that opened on 4 July while others stayed dark, the adviser who kept in touch regularly through lockdown, the sports that found their way back on to your screen while others wrote off the summer. Reputations are being made and others irreparably broken'.

The performing arts were especially vulnerable to the ban on public gatherings last spring, but most were resilient enough, with goodwill and support from stakeholders, to weather closures of limited duration. For those which worked so hard to re-open with reconfigured programmes for the new season, the second lockdown has been doubly dispiriting. Still more so for the artists deprived of their livelihoods. As Simon Rattle said, 'The most important thing is not just to support the freelancers, but to actually give them real work'.

Opera companies have been inventive in devising programmes to maintain contact with audiences. Constantly changing conditions have forced them to be adaptable, and that consumes both money and time. Yet it remains necessary to look beyond immediate obstacles and plan for a future in which the world will have changed. Some may argue that the discovery of vaccines and the herd immunity they may eventually engender will enable former habits to resume. In some places that may happen, but for many the shock of 2020 will act as a rude awakening or fast-forward to the realities which will prevail during the second quarter of the 21st century.

Opera has to justify its legitimate place in modern society. The broadly social-democratic consensus which has ruled Europe during the peace which followed World War Two has fractured. Democratically elected Governments, struggling to repay debt amassed during the onslaught of the pandemic, will question the proportions and parameters of public subsidy and respond to shifts in the social perception and purpose of opera. Instead of defending its right to survive, opera must demonstrate the value it brings to society.

How **sustainable** is opera? The question may be applied to its fragile economic model, now weakened by the erosion of ticket sales. But it also has environmental implications. An industry dependent on international co-productions, the touring of large ensembles and globe-trotting artists is hardly contributing to the green agenda. Large theatres should be actively seeking to transition to the post-carbon economy before being compelled by law to do so. How many materials are discarded rather than recycled, adding to the waste which is despoiling the planet? Opera should shift its weight to the front foot by anticipating developments instead of reacting to them.

Paradoxically, the solution lies in simultaneously becoming more local and more global. On the one hand, we need to nurture and recycle home-grown resources; on the other, to use technology to share the results with the world.



Among the discoveries of World Opera Day 2020 were the richness of young talent and the appreciation of opera across six continents. Yet, looking at the composition of most orchestras and at those who work on or behind the stage, let alone in management or the board room, we must recognise that opera has a way to go before it achieves a balance on **equality**. The irony is that the only worthwhile currencies for an artist are talent and hard work, regardless of gender, ethnicity or socio-economic background. Recent years have seen notable growth in appointments of female conductors and directors and managers, but opportunities to enter the profession are far too scarce for large sections of society. While a true balance cannot be created overnight, the process towards it must be intensified. Examples of positive discrimination such as Birmingham Opera Company and the orchestra Chineke! show that it can be done.

The relationship between live performance and digital recording has changed. How may it be exploited for the benefit of both artists and audiences? **Digital transformation** involves more than streaming performances to those unable to visit them live in a theatre. OperaVision and other platforms have provided a lifeline during lockdown, but they neither replicate the live experience nor generate significant revenue. The Netflix subscription model is tempting but cannot simply be transplanted to opera; though producers will continue to explore options to monetise streaming, both for their own commercial purposes and as a potential payback for the secondary rights of authors and performers. Such an incremental system is unlikely to yield worthwhile rewards, in an environment dominated by YouTube and other sites sustained by advertising revenue. Better to acknowledge that we live in a pluralistic world, in which a performance is not a one-off, but an event which may be repackaged in myriad ways during and after its specific time-slot. The artists of tomorrow will be obliged, alongside musical and technical training, to become more tech-savvy, which will contribute to educational and promotional purposes. It is the debt they owe to a society which helps to underwrite their training and employment.

Opera Europa, alongside the philanthropic association FEDORA, is working on an ambitious initiative to attract investment towards kick-starting opera companies across Europe to effect change during the next five years in these areas: sustainability; equality; and digital transformation.

The producers of opera may commit to reforming themselves, but what about the consumers? No amount of repositioning or rebranding will be worth it, if the appetite is lacking. What if the impact of the pandemic has caused artists to abandon their careers and audiences to shrink from attending performances? How much may we extrapolate from what is happening now; and how reliable are predictions for the future?

Human beings will spend more and more time on leisure rather than at work. That was predicted by John Maynard Keynes in 1930 in his *Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren*, 15 years before he helped to found the Arts Council of Great Britain. The reduction of statutory working hours; shorter working weeks; the shift towards the gig economy and job-shares; the development of Artificial Intelligence; all are factors in the growth of the amount of discretionary time which Keynes's grandchildren will have. But there will be strong competition for a share of that time. How does opera position itself in the marketplace?

Let us try to imagine what will be the tastes of future generations, less accustomed to spending three hours in a darkened theatre. Why should those with the time, money and inclination choose opera from the cultural menu? It may look like a formidable proposition to those brought up with the attention spans of social media. Does that mean that they will want to absorb opera in bite-sized chunks before risking total immersion? The trend in spoken drama and modern dance has already moved towards shorter programmes lasting 70 to 90 minutes. Recent Corona-proof opera performances without a break for refreshment have offered one-act operas or abridged versions.

At what stage will opera embrace Virtual Reality? The technical possibilities are being rapidly developed and at some point



are likely to find a mass market. When will be the optimum time for opera companies to invest: early, or after waiting for others to make mistakes first? The Dutch composer and filmmaker Michel van der Aa is a European pioneer, and his next opera *Upload* is programmed for the Opera Forward Festival in Amsterdam this spring. Dutch National Opera's venture, shared with Köln, Bregenz and the Armoury in New York, is to be welcomed. The danger of sticking doggedly to traditional forms is that it leaves an opening for an entrepreneur with no opera knowledge to jump in and take advantage of a gap in the market.

While technology may supplant some jobs, it is unlikely that performers will be replaced by Artificial Intelligence. But they may need to become more versatile. Big institutions exist to bind together opera and ballet companies occupying two or more theatres in great capital cities, but can engender restrictive practices and hinder change. It may be easier to restructure smaller or medium-scale companies on more flexible lines. Bernard Foccroulle advocates the appointment of a diverse selection of Artists-in-Residence for periods of 3 years, to act as drivers of innovative ideas within the organisation.

Already a counterculture is developing of people discarding their smartphones to spend quality time with communities. This encourages a breakdown of barriers between amateur and professional. Participatory opera has the power to engage those who might never have expected to enjoy simply watching or listening to opera. It fosters both aspiration and ownership.

Opera will not survive if it pulls up the drawbridge. Without compromising standards, it must be open to partnerships with broadcasters, film producers and other digital media. If I had my time again as an opera manager, I would choose to invest in a core team of perhaps a dozen young singers, plus adaptable musicians and creative artists, to form a flexible ensemble to perform a mixture of historical and contemporary pieces anywhere within a designated geographical area. And I would pursue alliances with television, radio, cinemas and streaming services; with schools, colleges, leisure centres and local authorities; all with a joint purpose of diffusing the work to a wider and more plural constituency.

Others will have different ambitions. Some of my predictions will be proved false. In any case, better that there be multiple attempts. But I am fairly certain that opera will have to reinvent itself if the species is to survive in the digital age.

Nicholas Payne

This piece was written for the January edition of the magazine OPERA and is published here by permission of its Editor.



NEXT STAGE

PERFORMING ARTS AS DRIVER FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Cultural institutions have **made significant adjustments** to their operations this year. That involves changing how the theatres are managed and seasons are planned; how artists are engaged; how productions are created, performed and toured; how new audiences are reached and expanded; and how relations are established and nurtured with donors and partners. The process of recovery is an opportunity for the performing arts sector to **reinvent itself for tomorrow's world**.

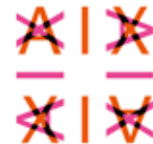
Over the summer, FEDORA and Opera Europa initiated dialogue with Creative Europe, the cultural funding programme of the European Commission, and other expert partners, to identify **three main focus areas** that need to be tackled by the cultural sector in the next few years: **innovation through sustainability; equality; and digital transformation**.

Introducing an initiative for change and recovery on, behind and beyond the stage

On 18 November, during Opera Europa's autumn online conference, attended by 200 professional opera representatives, FEDORA and Opera Europa together launched the **Next Stage initiative**. This upcoming 4-year project plan will be dedicated to these three focus areas.

Driven by opera and dance companies across Europe, Next Stage will enable these institutions to transform themselves in order to flourish amid the realities of the second quarter of the 21st century, while opening up new funding opportunities. Combined with **expert knowledge scaling, peer-learning and best-practice sharing** this 'light-house project' will trigger a positive **ripple effect on the socio-economic-environmental tissue of society to build resilience**. The purpose is that opera and dance companies proactively transform themselves, so that they become exemplary leaders in these three fields.

30 opera and dance companies in 15 countries have already committed to this initiative.



Sustainability

Focus on 3 separate fields:

- **On Stage:** Carbon footprint for sets and costumes, especially co-designed productions; usage of second hand products; material sourcing, etc.
- **Back Stage:** Facility management, energy consumption and management (e.g. new solar panels), waste management and reduction, carbon footprint for buildings, etc.
- **Beyond Stage:** Audience mobility (e.g. performance ticket as a public transportation ticket), touring (freight and travels) and guest artist travel, etc.

Agreed on setting goals towards reducing the carbon footprint in the production process (e.g. nil net carbon footprint by 2050). Main current **challenges** are lack of knowledge; time; and budget.

Conclusions

- Sustainability needs sponsorship from top management, embedded in a real policy
- Efficient and long-term implementation requires both a strategy shared at all levels of the organisation, and people empowerment
- This empowerment involves capacity building in all departments of the organisation, and shared understanding of Sustainability
- It is crucial to embed Sustainability in the production process
- Sustainability managers should become part of the organisation
- Impact assessment and report are essential and need experts
- PR and communication should contribute to awareness building

Sustainability means **collaboration** with (and partly depends on) stakeholders:

- Public bodies should initiate a 'Decision-making process' to foster Sustainability,
- Boards of directors should be concerned and ask for accounts about Sustainability,
- Collaboration between peers and actors such as solutions providers, start-ups, research centres, etc., is essential to enable innovation.

Equality

Focus on 3 separate fields:

- 1 **Back Stage**
 - Nationality, ethnicity and gender of creative teams and administrative workforce
- 2 **On Stage**
 - Diversity of artists (both artistic offer and background of artists)
 - Diversity of repertory
- 3 **Beyond Stage**
 - Diversity of audiences in age, social background, economic background, disabilities

The goal of guaranteeing equality is to ensure that opera and dance are relevant to society today.

Aims

- Lower gender gap at the leadership level
- Decrease gap in audiences' education and background
- Reflect audiences on and behind the stage
- Diversify repertory by bringing in different types of creators, audiences, critiques
- Provide opportunities for active and diverse participation
- Encourage underrepresented artists to go on the stage (important role of academies, analysing applicants objectively)

Challenges

- Scaling the reach of educational programmes (target numbers, long-term work)
- Audience expectations to manage (programming both classics and contemporary works)
- Dependence on ticket sales induces easy choices of 'star' productions and artists which threatens the emergence of new works and artists
- Funding the arts regarded as low priority
- Missing link between training and profession
- Equality is perceived as something on top of managing a company, that is done for moral and political reasons

Conclusions

1. Incorporate Equality in the visible purpose and mission of the company
2. Encourage programmes that achieve artistic vision and tackle inequality together
3. Lobbying creativity in learning (provide artistic education; inspire audiences to see work; music lessons in the curriculum)

Digital Transformation

The process of digital transformation is an ongoing phenomenon at the core of cultural organisations, now evaluated by many at around 50%. It promises multiple benefits:

- **On stage** - Opening new paths for artistic creation
- **Behind Stage** - Optimising work flow and coherence between services
- **Beyond Stage** - Reaching larger and more diverse audiences

Challenges

The pandemic emphasised the need to achieve digital transformation but also underlined present structural weaknesses slowing such an achievement.

While theatres and institutions were forced to close, digital tools became pivotal levers to reach the public through online broadcasting of artistic content and associated experiences, such as podcasts or video games. But, **lack of means, expertise, and workforce hindered organisations with smaller digital departments.** Other obstacles were **incompatibility of softwares between services, lack of time and training when using new digital tools.**

The convergence of digital and artistic raises two questions: **relevance and the monetisation.** Digitalisation of content through platforms, streamings, and between genres has developed fierce competition for the attention of spectators. The development of new funding models and revenue streams demands research, time, and agents or third parties dedicated to this mission.

Solutions

- Allocate mission of digital transformation to one internal agent focused only on this topic
- Add digital experts inside artistic teams to develop possibilities for creation and to enhance the experience and communicate with audiences
- Work with external agents to train the teams, and ease the use of new digital tools, 'evangelist profiles' bringer of expertise
- Share best practices by initiating dialogue between institutions within and outside the sector
- Involve external public or private partners who can help finance this costly process

SOCIAL IMPACT OF SUBSIDY

‘The evolution of opera’s operating model and the social parameters for public sector subsidy’ was the unwieldy title of a session at the autumn conference. More simply, it asked questions about the sources and criteria for public support, and how they might change.

Ahead of the session, we commissioned Dagmar Walz to research the background to the topic, using a sample of 26 theatres from 16 countries, for whose ready cooperation in supplying data we are grateful. The majority (70%) of respondents were heavily dependent on subsidy for 70% or more of their income. Even the 30% with lower proportions of subsidy relied on significant financial support from their state bodies. On the other hand, the reporting requirements varied widely.

Traditional **quantitative** measurements comprise number of performances, productions and commissions; audience occupancy statistics and ticket prices; financial and income targets and ratios. Two-thirds of respondents reported that employment levels were an important factor, along with contract details and salaries as a proportion of turnover. Some also cited gender parity, management pay, and even employee satisfaction.

Qualitative measurement was rarer, and in only two or three cases were comprehensive criteria applied to the assessment of artistic quality, innovation, international standards, and range and focus of the repertoire. Some placed a value on the development of talent and of the art form, and/or quality of governance and management.

Perhaps most noticeable was a growing emphasis on **social impact**. Areas of interest include audience development; learning programmes; stakeholder and community engagement; equality and diversity among both workforce and audience; ecological sustainability. As democratically elected funders are challenged to justify their support for culture, these parameters are likely to become more widely enforced.

During the ensuing debate the director Graham Vick put it bluntly: ‘We exist for **audiences**. Any criteria must begin with the audience. Who are we speaking to? Is it possible for audiences to come and see and afford our performances? How can we be part of the whole of society?’ Galyna Grygorenko, representing Ukraine’s Ministry of Culture and Education, spoke of the responsibility to provide a transparent process. Along with performance numbers, ticket yields and income ratios, she envisaged adding the social investment in building an inclusive audience. Anna Maria Meo from Teatro Regio Parma observed that there remained a big distance between what companies would like and what they are pushed to do.

The dramatic decline in productivity consequent upon the pandemic in 2020 has made quantitative measurement temporarily invalid. Some public funders are signalling a shift to other measures of success. We need to ask ourselves: **what kinds of measures are useful in assessing the contribution of opera to society?** It is in our common interest to engage with the public representatives to find answers to the question: **‘What helps us tell our own story in the most effective way?’**

Nicholas Payne

Key Parameters

Quantitative	Qualitative	Social Impact
Number of performance, revivals, premieres, commissions	Artistic quality, innovation, international standards, craftsmanship	Audience development
Audience & participant statistics (physical and other)	Range and/or focus of repertoire	Learning programmes
Geographic reach	Development of the art form	Stakeholder & community engagement
Financial and income targets and ratios	Talent development	Equality & Diversity (representation in workforce, creation & audiences)
Occupancy rates	Quality of governance, management and planning	Ecological sustainability
Actual and average ticket prices		Good practise, CSR

RECORD PARTICIPATION IN WORLD OPERA DAY

25 OCTOBER 2020

The second edition of World Opera Day took place in various forms around the world, from live events in theatres when allowed to digital campaigns fostering engagement, and with operas offered for free online.

OperaVision recorded its highest ever number of views for a single day since the launch of the platform in October 2017. OperaVision's dedicated World Opera Day programme counted **57 978** views on 25 October and **124 282** views in total for the whole week of World Opera Day celebrations on OperaVision. The digital offer was on an unprecedented scale, streamed four 45-minute concerts throughout the day, as well as three different approaches to Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

Programmed in collaboration with Opera for Peace, the **World Opera Day celebration concerts** remain available to view on OperaVision until next April. Audiences around the world – in notably large numbers in Israel, Japan, Mexico, Russia and USA – enjoyed these short concerts, in particular the chance to see and hear young talented singers such as Chuma Sijeqa (baritone) and Vuvu Mpofu (soprano) from South Africa, Siobhan Stagg (soprano) from Australia, Alan Pingarrón (tenor) from Mexico and Hera Hyesang Park (soprano) from South Korea, alongside world-renowned singers such as Sonda Radvanovsky, Luca Pisaroni, Denyce Graves, Nicole Car and Etienne Dupuis. These concerts were supported by strong statements from four ambassadors: Ai Weiwei, Bernard Foccroulle, Peter Sellars and Ernesto Ottone.

Taking Beethoven as its emblem for World Opera Day 2020, OperaVision streamed three versions of *Fidelio*: the recent, excellent and socially-distanced version from Garsington, the promenade version by Birmingham Opera Company and a brand new 15-minute adaption for animation commissioned by OperaVision from the Flemish theatre collective Walpurgis. The latter seems to have particularly caught people's imagination: 'I adored it – so poetic' (Suzanne Gervais, France Musique). 'An ideal format to introduce young people to Beethoven's opera about love and humanity' (Céline Dekock, RTBF).

These digital celebrations on OperaVision echoed events in a number of opera houses across the world. Opera North opened the World Opera Day weekend on Friday 23 October with a webinar dedicated to the creation of a community opera. On Saturday and Sunday in France, 20 theatres opened their doors to visitors, offered workshops and masterclasses with Karine Deshayes in the framework of Tous à l'opéra! The Opera House in Tirana, the Teatro Massimo di Palermo and the Temporadas Russas no Algarve in Portugal proffered special programmes celebrating this year's emblem Beethoven. The Spanish network of opera companies Ópera XXI celebrated with an Award Ceremony, a version of which remains available to view as video on demand. Teatro Regio di Parma, Macerata Festival and Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe released exclusive World Opera Day videos that are still available on social media. Polish TV streamed Magic Flute and spread messages of Opera Directors for World Opera Day. Many theatres offered exclusive free streaming like New National Theatre Tokyo and Fondazione Teatro Coccia di Novara. Opera houses proposed special online programmes: in Canada, the World Opera Day Gala livestreamed on 25 October from Opera de Québec; also Welsh National Opera and Northern Ireland Opera Studio premiered on YouTube on that day.

In difficult times for the cultural and creative industries, the opera sector joined forces for a powerful statement and achievement on global scale. Join our first meeting on World Opera Day 2021 on 4 March.

Celia Grau



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR MEMBERS

FEDORA PRIZES & OTHER AWARDS



Der Schmied von Gent Schreker | Opera Ballet Vlaanderen | Annemie Augustijns

2020 has undoubtedly been a challenging year, and it is greatly encouraging to see opera companies celebrating milestones and gaining recognition for their work.

On 30 November, Oper! Magazine held the second edition of the **Oper! Awards**. Staatsoper Hannover won Best Opera House. La Monnaie's *Macbeth Underworld* won Best World Premiere, and Opéra national de Paris' *Les Indes Galantes* Best Performance. Opera Vlaanderen's *Der Schmied von Gent* won Best Set and Best Costume Designs.

Opernwelt named both Oper Frankfurt and Grand Théâtre de Genève Opernhaus des Jahres, and rewarded Wiener Staatsoper, Bayerische Staatsoper and Royal Danish Theatre for their commissions with Uraufführung des Jahres.

The Orchestra of the Bayerische Staatsoper won Orchester des Jahres.

Bergen National Opera's *This Evening's Performance is Not Cancelled*, directed by Zoe Irvine, brought together performances by Opera Ballet Vlaanderen/Muziektheater Transparant, The Airport Society, Teatro Real, Dutch National Opera/Holland Festival, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Staatsoper Hannover, Wuppertaler Bühnen and Garsington Opera. The project won the Creativity Prize at the **2020 Creative Edinburgh Awards**.

Opéra Comique's DVD of *Hamlet*, conducted by Louis Langrée, staged by Cyril Teste and featuring Stéphane Degout and Sabine Devielhe, won the **Diapason d'Or** for the year 2020.

The second edition of the **Carmen Mateu Young Artist European Award** has just been launched by Festival Castell de Peralada. This year's selection is for opera composers. The prize will be a total of 30.000€ for the commissioning of a composition to be premiered at the Festival Castell Peralada. The call is open until 28 February 2021.

FEDORA prizes - Congratulations to the 4 winners!

Gent-based LOD Muziektheater won the FEDORA-GENERALI Prize for Opera for their project *Woman at Point Zero* by composer Bushra El-Turk, librettist Stacy Hardy, to be staged by Laila Soliman with video by Aida Elkashef. Co-producers include Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Royal Opera House Covent Garden.

The FEDORA-VAN CLEEF & ARPELS Prize for Ballet was awarded to *LIGHT Bach dances (working title)* by Hofesh Shechter Company in co-production with Royal Danish Opera. Hofesh Shechter and John Fulljames will co-direct the production.

The first FEDORA Education Prize goes to Birmingham Opera Company's *Going for Gold*, backed by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation. Graham Vick will work with newly appointed music director Alpesh Chauhan, and Reisz Amos as artistic associate.

Finnish National Opera & Ballet's *Laila – Immersive Installation* is a project carried by Ekho Collective with Esa-Pekka Salonen and dramaturge Paula Vesala, and won the first FEDORA Digital Prize with the support of Kearney. The application for the next FEDORA Prizes closed on 4 December.

Audrey Jungers

WE OPEN UP THE SUBLIME

NOVAT OPERA & BALLET

The Novosibirsk State Opera and Ballet Theatre is the largest musical theatre in Russia. It has always been in the vanguard of cultural life in Russia, ranking among the best musical companies in the country.

The theatre building is the main architectural symbol of Novosibirsk, the capital of Siberia.

Its construction was an era-defining challenge. These days, it seems hard to believe that such transcendent facility of tremendous complexity was built in the centre of single-storey Novosibirsk without any professional construction equipment. The layout of the Novosibirsk theatre was exhibited in the Soviet Pavilion and won the Grand Prix at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937. This unique architectural wonder was almost completed in 1940. The theatre was preparing for its grand opening that was scheduled for August 1941, which was delayed due to the outbreak of World War II when it became a major safety vault for the rescued cultural goods. The theatre premises housed the paintings from the State Tretyakov Gallery, the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum, the State museums in Peterhof and Tsarskoe Selo, and other museums from the European portion of the USSR. In 1944 the theatre building was finished, and thus began the process of hiring artistic staff and figuring out the repertoire.

The Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre opened on 12 May 1945 with Glinka's opera *Ivan Susanin*. During its first season, the theatre presented eight premieres: seven operas and its first ballet *Le Corsaire* by Adolphe Adam.

Throughout the 75-year history of the theatre, the company released 430 original ballets and operas. Many of them made it to the list of the most treasured works of Russian and international repertoire. Over 20.000 performances attended by almost 30 million spectators have been staged at the theatre. The theatre company has toured over 30 countries all over the world and 30 Russian cities, many of which were visited multiple times. Numerous outstanding theatre workers received honorary titles and state prizes; the Novosibirsk artists won countless prestigious national and international awards.

In 2015 the theatre received a new name – NOVAT. Over the past few years the theatre has undergone major renovations, and now it has two comfortable multi-purpose venues supplied with the most advanced lighting and sound equipment: the Grand Stage Hall is designed to host up to 1,449 spectators, while the Small Stage Hall holds 321 seats.

In 2020 the theatre celebrated its 75th anniversary. That occasion was marked with the premieres of Balanchine's *Jewels* and Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*. Several concerts featuring world opera and ballet stars had also been scheduled for the anniversary year, but they had to be postponed until 2021 due to the pandemic outbreak. As part of the festive programme, the theatre hosted special exhibitions at various Novosibirsk venues and produced anniversary-themed publications.

While preserving and developing the traditions of academic art, NOVAT constantly searches for new ways to reach its audience and introduces fresh artistic solutions aimed at grooming the next generation of theatre-goers. This call is answered by the theatre projects Open NOVAT designed for teenagers and NOVAT for kids specially developed for the youngest members of the audience.



NOVAT | Alexey Tsiler

One of the key aspects of NOVAT's work these days is maintaining a live conversation with Russian and global cultural communities. The theatre studies the work of major musical companies engaging best opera and ballet artists, tutors and musicians from Russia and Europe. In order to develop professional international relationships and to facilitate artistic experience exchange, NOVAT joined the international association Opera Europa in 2017.



NOVAT | Alexey Tsiler



OPERA VISION
OPERA. FREE LIVE AND ON DEMAND

Coming & Soon

December

4 *Don Giovanni*
Gran Teatre del Liceu

13 *Werther*
Teatro Sociale di Como | AsLiCo

18 *La Soupe Pop*
Opéra Orchestra National de
Montpellier

20 *Cendrillon*
Komische Oper Berlin

26 *Nutcracker*
Ballet of the National Opera of
Ukraine

27 *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*
Komische Oper Berlin



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

Les Contes d'Hoffmann Offenbach | Komische Oper Berlin | Monika Rittershaus

OPERAVISION 3 YEAR REPORT

OperaVision celebrated its third birthday in October. Each year since our launch in October 2017, the number of views accumulated across OperaVision channels has doubled and currently totals over 13 million. OperaVision continues to benefit from its current phase of funding from the European Commission until December 2021. What lessons can we draw from recent experience?

7,702,507 VIEWS

2019-20

Diversity, in several senses, has been key to OperaVision's success. The 160 opera productions streamed to date have come, in the largest part, from the 28 core contributing opera companies, supplemented with additional titles (30% of them) from other Opera Europa members. Diversity was the hallmark of the recent World Opera Day weekend. We streamed four concerts in as many time zones; a celebration concert with young artists from Australia to America, from Saudi Arabia to South Africa. The *Olyrix* review concluded: *'a perfect reminder that music is a universal pleasure playing with all our differences but speaking in one and the same language'*. Birmingham Opera Company's *Fidelio* streamed the same weekend was a fine example of compelling drama made with and for a diverse local community.

3,979,089 VIEWS

2018-19

The pandemic has shown the **relevance** of our venture in a number of ways. In spite of the crisis, we managed at times to stay live. The recent stream of *Carmen* from Hannover brought viewers around the world right into the here and now of an empty Staatsoper for a vibrant adapted staging, closed to all but the cameras. Finnish National Opera's delightful and funny *Covid fan tutte* could not be more 'of the moment', a viral success that has won fans worldwide. *'The Finns in their Covid fan tutte have set the Mozartean standard of turning laughter into earned tear'* enthused *Los Angeles Times* reviewing OperaVision's stream. Our new commission with Walpurgis of animated version of *Fidelio* shows how opera can reach beyond the stage when creative imagined in digital form. *'An ideal format to introduce young people to Beethoven's opera about love and humanity'* commented Belgium's RTBF.

1,385,780 VIEWS

2017-18

OperaVision has made efforts to extend its **reach** through partnership. Recently, we collaborated with the Spanish Network Ópera XXI, which celebrated World Opera Day with an award ceremony on OperaVision. Opera Europa's sister networks, Opera America and Ópera Latinoamérica, relayed the World Opera Day celebration concerts throughout the Americas. We shared the concerts with three other platforms - Medici.tv, MyOperaPlayer, NCPA Beijing - which each played a part in establishing World Opera Day and finding new audience for OperaVision content.

But we should not spend too long admiring the burning candles! It is already time to shape the next phase of OperaVision and there is a meeting on Monday 18 January for Opera Europa members interested in shaping it with us.

Contact luke@opera-europa.org for more details.

Luke O'Shaughnessy



SAVE THE DATES

14 January 2021 16:00 CET

Presentation of Operabook and OperaVision to ÓperaXXI members

15 January 2021 11:00 CET

Presentation of Operabook to Réunion des Opéras de France members

18 January 2021 16:00 CET

OperaVision Partners meeting

Register with luke@opera-europa.org

21 January 2021 14:00 CET

Next Stage: Sustainability projects

Register with celia@opera-europa.org

25 January 2021 14:00 CET

Next Stage: Equality projects

Register with susanna@opera-europa.org

28 January 2021 14:00 CET

Next Stage: Digital transformation projects

Register with audrey@opera-europa.org

4 February 2021 11:00 CET

Marketing & Communications forum

Register with audrey@opera-europa.org

4 February 2021 14:00 CET

Pitch session: New works in small and alternative formats

Suggest a project and register with susanna@opera-europa.org

15 February 2021 14:00 CET

First sharing session of OSCaR project on sets eco-design and eco-production

Register with celia@opera-europa.org

18 February 2021 14:00 CET

Pitch session: Community and intercultural projects

Suggest a project and register with susanna@opera-europa.org

4 March 2021 16:00 CET

World Opera Day 2021 brainstorming session

Register with celia@opera-europa.org

This issue is sponsored by NEUE STIMMEN

Cover photo: *Nutcracker* Tchaikovsky | National Opera of Ukraine | Sasha Zlunitsyna

Editor: Nicholas Payne - nicholas.payne@opera-europa.org

Designer: Rogelio Flores - roger@opera-europa.org

Opera Europa - rue Léopold, 23 - B-1000 Brussels – www.opera-europa.org