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The Opera Market between Tradition, Neo-tradition and Innovation.

Nicholas Payne, president of Opera Europa, states in his 2009 article „Trends and Innovation in Opera“ (The Business of Opera, Routledge 2015) that *„the public continues to seek out the spectacular experience which grand opera can provide“*.

Obviously, the fascination with and the passion for this art form is unbroken - despite frequent voices stating that opera is „outmoded, non-cost-efficient and irrelevant to modern society“. (Payne) How can we as opera makers provide audiences with this operatic thrill and what are the components necessary? How is contemporary opera reflected in the market? And finally, what conclusions can we draw for the market's future and what are the implications for opera makers and educators? Rather than trying to predict the future, this presentation will provide food for thought and inspirational hints.

Resuming my research „Same Old - Same New“: The Opera Market between Tradition, Neo-tradition and Innovation, presented at the ISP Vilnius in 2019, I continue to explore this data.

1. ANECDOTE IS NOT DATA

Why investigate art as data?

This exploration does not claim to be absolute or seamless. Nor does it advocate one over the other. It strives to describe the current market and illustrate its tendencies. My study „Same Old, Same New“, first presented at the SP Vilnius in 2019, spotlights the operatic repertoire catalogue, repertoire variety and density, and the relationship between so-called *traditional* and *new* pieces in programming. It displays the most programmed operas and composers. Why is that relevant? To quote Karen Stone, General Manager of Oper Magdeburg, previously Dallas Opera, Oper Graz: *„A huge part of the job of General Manager is analyzing the statistics of ticket sales over the last 5 to 10 years to understand: What is your audience interested in seeing? Doesn't mean that you can't take risks - you should take risks, because your most interested audience is often the audience who wants to come to the more ‚usual‘ pieces. But at the same time you need to offer something for the wide public. So, the only way you can get that information is by looking at the actual statistics (...). Anecdote is not data. „*

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1.1. Task

The purpose of this Strategic Partnership is to create an educational cutting edge for our students. We are called to present policy recommendations and initiate adjustments to our curricula. Art is not neutral. It is not objective, we need and want it to be opinionated, passionate, subjective and individual. Describing and observing the market however, in order to recognize development, a direction, a trend, a tendency in and for opera, needs to be done from a neutral perspective. I do so by exploring the numbers.

2. WHAT IS „THE MARKET“

According to Wikipedia there is a total of 1160 opera houses worldwide. That is from large national theaters to the smallest privately initiated stage. In Europe there is a total of 570 theaters, out of which Germany alone has 83, followed by Austria with 67 and Switzerland with 43.

(https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_von_Opernh%C3%A4usern).

In the context of this market research I have created the following graph to illustrate the ranking of worldwide opera performances per year (2017/ 18):

COUNTRY	PERFORMANCES	EOA	SP
Germany	7062	x	
Russia	1790		
USA	1607		
Italy	1509	x	x
Austria	1250	x	
France	1213		
UK	952	x	
Switzerland	765		
Czech Republic	746		
Poland	635	x	
Sweden	257		
Belgium	175	x	x
NL	123	x	x
Lithuania	103	x	x
Latvia	81	x	x
Portugal	28	x	x

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<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/895228/umfrage/laender-weltweit-mit-den-meisten-auffuehrungen-von-opern/>
<https://www.operabase.com/statistics/en>

As it would by far exceed the capacities of this research to attempt a worldwide statistic analysis and prognosis, I will mainly focus on the German speaking countries as they still offer more than 190 opera houses, concert halls, festivals- thereby a large labour- and opportunity market for our alumni.

For our exploration we need to differentiate between two basic systems of operation as they both suggest different employment variations for singers:

- the repertoire system and
- the ‚stagione‘ system.

Some theaters (mainly in Germany, Austria, Switzerland) have own steady companies and therefore a stationary ensemble of singers. Often the programming reacts to the members of the ensemble- as they are paid a monthly salary with contracts over years, they are cast in as many roles/ productions as their contract allows. Only few specialized guest singers are contracted for specific repertoire (Wagner, baroque etc.) This model is referred to as „repertoire operation“. *„In the repertoire operated theaters, at a certain house, one can turn to the stock of available productions of works that has been created (over years or even decades) and thus encourages them to remain in the house.“*

Agid P., Tarondeau JC. (2010) Opera Houses: Order and Diversity. In: The Management of Opera. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230299276_2

2.1. Repertoire Operation

There are a number of arguments that strongly speak in favor of the repertoire operation. One of them being that *„...singers are for us a tool to establish customer loyalty. We attract our audience through high quality ensemble members who stay with us for three, four, five, sometimes even ten years before they decide to go freelance. We sometimes forget that singers are at the center of every performance and that without them music theater could not take place - an aspect that I sometimes miss in music reviews.“*

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This statement was made by Bernd Loebe, General Director of the Frankfurt Opera, Vice President of the German Academy of Performing Arts, Chairman of the German Opera Conference in an interview in November 2020.

(<https://themen.miz.org/musikleben-in-zahlen-opernrepertoire/interview-loebe>)

Daniel Herzog is Operndirektor in Augsburg. I spoke to him about his views on maintaining an ensemble and assuming the according responsibility. He states, that often directors and conductors do not seem to have the competences, interest and/ or the vision to select, guide and cast singers properly. „Today everyone has to sing everything,“. Herzog hereby addresses a development with serious consequences for young singers, as it combines versatility with wear and tear.

„The ability to keep a full array of singers employed through the year is due in no small part to government subsidies, another stark difference between the American and European opera houses. With local or national funding, the options present for an opera-house are considerably more varied. With this longer term casting in mind, companies must be comfortable that they choose repertoire appropriate to their talent pool. And this is where we begin to see the business benefits of the Fach system. When an opera-house contracts a singer for a two to three year engagement, they want to be certain that they are going to be able to do what they want with that singer. The Fach system categorizes opera roles from the standard literature (and now the not-so-standard literature). Richard Boldrey's „Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias“ (Caldwell Pub Co 1994) has over 3500 roles from more than 1000 operas) into specific voice types, and a singer of a specific Fach is expected to be able to learn and perform any of the roles associated with that type. This particular system provides both an assurance of reliable performances for the opera-house and a protection for the singer, become sort of 'town mascots' and the community will follow their development as they improve. who will not be expected to sing roles outside her Fach. (...) Here we need to emphasize how relevant it is to classify the singer correctly and to adequately assess which Fach he or she should be singing as it clearly serves the vocal health, reliability, sustainability and longevity of that singer in the business. It is clear the advantage to have contracted singers at your disposal for whatever role in appropriate, and the opera-house is free to select repertoire based on its existing company without the fear of not being able to find their principals. A general rule is that the more dramatic the role, the older and more experienced the singer should be. Wagnerian singers, for example, tend to be older than their Mozartian

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colleagues." („The Fach System: origin, function, and the dangers of perception." Dale DeWood, Dr. Kyle Ferrill, Graduate Vocal Pedagogy University of Memphis, Rudi E Scheidt School of Music

This suggests that as educators and landscapers in the operatic field we also have the responsibility of ‚breeding‘ the dramatic offspring: those singers who will later in their development realize the future performances of Wagner, Strauss, Beethoven etc.

The 2019 Bertelsmann Study "Opernsänger mit Zukunft" states that „A "healthy ensemble" that is intact in terms of size acts as a protective space and incubator for young singers at the same time. The ensemble model continues to offer the greatest possible development opportunities, especially for young singers, if the conditions of the 1980s and 1990s, with ensemble sizes of 25 singers at medium-sized state theaters, still existed. Where this is no longer the case - and this applies to the majority of opera houses - a completely different attitude is required, especially from younger singers."

Dr. Michael Klügl, Intendant der Niedersächsischen Staatsoper Hannover specifies in an interview for the same study: „Of course, that's why ensembles still have the advantage that, if it's a good theater, you can really develop in peace. The problem today, and this can be seen a lot in small theaters, is that singers are hired, but the content capacity, what one can actually play and may play with these young singers, that there is sometimes a lack of competence, and young people are burned out much too early. [...] In principle, much greater self-responsibility is expected of young singers than was the case many years ago." Ideally, the artistic and musical leaders will develop a vision for the individual singer, something Daniel Herzog finds lacking: „...I also know that many houses move away from ensembles in order to be able to develop more freely artistically." He still favors a steady team of singers and bringing in additional guests for ‚special‘ tasks like Musical, Baroque, etc.

Overall, we understand that within an ensemble, singers have the opportunity to explore repertoire and find their „Fach" while receiving a steady paycheck, security and a planning horizon- privately as well as professionally. Thus encouraged to actively explore and pursue a certain vocal/ artistic development which in return would secure the artistic and vocal sustainability of the singer. „The ensemble is and remains "the utopian moment of the theatre" (Thomas Ostermeier, after Kaempf and Merck 2017)" Bertelsmann „Sänger mit Zukunft" p.65.

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2.2. Stagione Operation

The other form of operation, the „stagione“ or „ensuite“ operation uses exclusively guest ensembles and -artists. Usually in station, there is no own orchestra and chorus (with exception of La Monnaie Brussels, La Scala Milano, Paris Opera e.g.) The ensembles are hired for each production. This also makes it possible to perform baroque operas and employ specialized early music ensembles for this purpose. Another advantage is that the number of employees behind the stage is much lower than at repertoire houses: an opera company will perform a certain number of performance of the same opera within a limited tunnel of time: for example Opera Zuid, 8 performances of Verdi's *Ballo in Maschera* within 2 months, with singers who were particularly auditioned and hired exclusively for this production. The stagione operation often relies on a large number of co-productions shown at different houses or productions that have been bought by other houses. This reduces the costs for the production of decorations and costumes, and the directors do not always personally supervise the revivals at other houses. This method also reduces the rehearsal times to a few weeks. Thus, Stagione houses are financially cheaper. The artistic advantage of the stagione system is seen in the fact that stagings do not remain in the program for years. This would guarantee an up-to-date aesthetic and that every production is freshly and intensively rehearsed with the whole cast and the orchestra.

Downside is, that the stagione does not offer a varied program. The opera house is closed for several weeks during the rehearsal phase. The same performance can then be played for several days or weeks (in extreme cases months or years), some companies take their productions on tour. It should be noted that, depending on the size of their role, singers will avoid to sing for two days in a row, as this might endanger his / her voice. You then need a second cast. Since a city theater or an opera house should usually offer a varied program as possible, the stagione system is not an alternative to the repertoire system for these houses.

<https://de.zxc.wiki/wiki/Stagionesystem>

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3. REPERTOIRE.

While exploring the present material I noticed a polarity of opinion when dealing with the understanding of repertoire innovation. The discussion seems to be almost bipolar: either traditional repertoire or new/ contemporary pieces. Is this the artistic reality? Is this the economic reality? And if so, how do we solve this 'either/or dilemma' for us and our students? Allow me to insert here that the number of opera houses worldwide with an exclusively contemporary repertoire is zero, as is the number of opera houses with a half contemporary and half traditional repertoire. Nicholas Payne stated in the early 1960s *"the standard repertory covered two hundred years, from Gluck's Orfeo to the (then) new operas of Britten and Henze. Today, it encompasses four hundred years, from Monteverdi's Orfeo to Birtwistle's, still classically derived, Minotaur. The breadth of this much richer heritage is demonstrated by the latest edition of Opera Europa's Future Production Plans database, in which a cross-section of 52 companies lists 450 productions of 250 operas by 128 composers. The downside of this gain is that it can leave less space for new creations, which may be marginalized by the sheer bulk of opera's magnificent legacy. Yet, the same database includes 40 new operas in its total, a proportion of 16%"*.

(https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057%2F9780230299276_2)

3.1. Data

According to the 2019 Bertelsmann Study „Opernsänger mit Zukunft“ we need to look at „the current repertoire and programming policy of the opera houses „ to see that there are significantly less performances.

„While the number of new productions has remained relatively constant for decades (around 650 per year with a fluctuation range of +/- 5%), the repertoire performances have declined continuously, sometimes dramatically, since the mid-1990s: in the operatic area by almost 20 percent to only 5,774 performances, for operettas by 60 percent (2015/16: 886) and for musicals by around 20 percent (2015/16: 2,458)" (Deutscher Bühnenverein 1996-2018).

It is also revealing that the number of visitors per performance has not changed with around 700 spectators. The simple insight is: Fewer performances mean fewer visitors in absolute numbers (calculated from the ratio of visits and performances. (Deutscher Bühnenverein 1996-2018)).

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I will use the season 2017/ 2018 to exemplify the repertoire situation in the market:

- In this season 50 % of all operas and operettas worldwide are by the following composers: Verdi, Mozart, Puccini, Rossini Wagner, Donizetti, Bizet and Johann Strauss Jr.
- Among the 50 most played operas (which make 55% of all performances) only three are younger than 100 years: Puccini/ Turandot (1926) Kalman/ Gräfin Mariza (1924), Benatzky/ Im Weissen Rössl (1930).
- 7% out of all opera productions worldwide are compositions of living composer, of which 0,8% are women.

www.kulturraumverdichtung.de/saison-2017-2018-neuere-und-neueste-opern-nrw.html

From a total of

- 444 opera premieres
- 38 were re-productions of operas younger than 50 years (8,5%),
- 33 premieres were actually world premieres (7,4%).
- In total 16% of all premieres were pieces with a lifespan of 50 years or younger.

Therefore:

- 84% of premieres were repertoire that is older than 50 years, the average age of repertoire is 161 years.
- 77% of the 373 premieres of pieces that are older than 50 years, 287 pieces are 100 years or older.

When attending any opera premiere within the german-speaking countries, the chance to see a piece that is older than 100 years is 65%.

Out of these 65% we have 6 premieres each of :

- CARMEN/ Bizet and
- COSI FAN TUTTE/ Mozart
- DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER/ Wagner
- DREIGROSCHENOPER/ Weill
- DON PASQUALE/ Donizetti
- LE NOZZE DI FIGARO/ Mozart

7 premieres each of

- DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE/ Mozart

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- LA CENERENTOLA/ Rossini
- 9 premieres of
- DON GIOVANNI/ Mozart

In total, this means one out of 20 premieres was in 2017/ 18

- DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE
 - DON GIOVANNI or
 - LA CENERENTOLA (5,2%).
-
- Every 50th premiere was DON GIOVANNI (2%).

YOUNGER THAN 50 YEARS

- The average age of the 38 re-produced operas younger than 50 years is 19,4 years, included are the repetitions of world premieres within a coproduction.
- None of these re-produced pieces lived to see more than 2 premieres per season except for:
- A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE/ Previn
- MARIA DI BUENOS AIRES/ Piazzola
- ANGELS IN AMERICA/ Eötvös (1944) (the only composer in this listing that is considered to belong to the genre ‚New Music‘.

<https://opernmagazin.de/die-ernuechternde-opernstatistik-der-spielzeit-2017-2018-artikel-von-moritz-eggert/>

3.2. The Canon

Every year about 25.000 opera performances take place worldwide. In 2020 the Corona pandemic hit, a fact that led to an overwhelming number of cancellations of performances in productions. We clearly see the impact of the Pandemic in the numbers of season 2021/ 21. Overall, the canon of operatic repertoire has remained remarkably steady over the last decade. Here a comparing graph for the seasons 2015/16 to 2021/ 22 with the 10 most played / most-programmed pieces (including numbers of performances and productions) worldwide:

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2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22
La Traviata/ Verdi 862/ 166	Carmen/ Bizet 819/ 154	La Traviata/ Verdi 894/ 188	La Traviata/ Verdi 954/ 191	La Traviata/ Verdi 840/ 184	Zauberflöte/ Mozart 744/ 109	La Bohème/ Puccini 152/ 29
Carmen/ Bizet 783/ 132	La Bohème/ Puccini 719/ 113	Carmen/ Bizet 723/ 152	Carmen/ Bizet 785/ 148	Carmen/ Bizet 657/ 148	Carmen/ Bizet 675/ 137	La Traviata/ Verdi 123/ 27
Figaro/ Mozart 706/ 126	Zauberflöte/ Mozart 719/ 113	Zauberflöte/ Mozart 707/ 115	Zauberflöte/ Mozart 677/ 102	La Bohème/ Puccini 653/ 143	La Traviata/ Verdi 578/ 131	Zauberflöte/ Mozart 108/ 28
La Bohème/ Puccini 688/ 124	La Traviata/ Verdi 717/ 160	Tosca/ Puccini 631/ 131	La Bohème/ Puccini 637/ 143	Zauberflöte/ Mozart 633/ 113	Butterfly/ Puccini 503/ 113	Tosca/ Puccini 99/ 26
Zauberflöte/ Mozart 662/ 108	Tosca/ Puccini 559/ 126	La Bohème/ Puccini 618/ 114	Butterfly/ Puccini 564/ 115	Barbiere di Sevilla/ Rossini 616/ 131	Barbiere di Sevilla/ Rossini 486/ 105	Così fan Tutte/ Mozart 79/ 15
Butterfly/ Puccini 575/ 118	Figaro/ Mozart 554/ 99	Barbiere di Sevilla/ Rossini 530/ 110	Tosca/ Puccini 543/ 121	Rigoletto/ Verdi 579/ 130	Tosca/ Puccini 470/ 108	Carmen/ Bizet 76/ 19
Tosca/ Puccini 563/ 114	Don Giovanni/ Mozart 538/ 96	Rigoletto/ Verdi 500/ 107	Barbiere di Sevilla/ Rossini 493/ 110	Don Giovanni/ Mozart 559/ 117	La Bohème/ Puccini 465/ 100	Figaro/ Mozart 64/ 13
Barbiere di Sevilla/ Rossini 516/ 111	Butterfly/ Puccini 498/ 113	Figaro/ Mozart 483/ 90	Rigoletto/ Verdi 462/ 109	Figaro/ Mozart 534/ 106	Rigoletto/ Verdi 423/ 91	Butterfly/ Puccini 55/ 13
Rigoletto/ Verdi 481/ 106	Barbiere di Sevilla/ Rossini 492/ 116	Don Giovanni/ Mozart 435/ 95	Figaro/ Mozart 447/ 100	Butterfly/ Puccini 528/ 109	Don Giovanni/ Mozart 398/ 102	Barbiere di Sevilla/ Rossini 41/ 13
Don Giovanni/ Mozart 448/ 91	Rigoletto/ Verdi 453/ 99	Butterfly/ Puccini 402/ 103	Don Giovanni/ Mozart 412/ 89	Tosca/ Puccini 520/ 134	Figaro/ Mozart 323/ 88	9th Symphony/ Beethoven 13/ 11

<https://www.operabase.com/statistics/de>

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4. THE UMBILICAL CHORD

In her article for the paper „DIE ZEIT“ on contemporary operatic repertoire Christine Lemke-Matwey states that *„Opera is accused of many things. Expensive, sluggish, self-indulgent: Nevertheless, new pieces are being created all the time, currently more than ever before. Only a few remain in the repertoire. Once played, never heard or seen again - why? Without new scores and new music-dramatic concepts, there is no future. A society that encounters nothing new, in this field as little as in many others, could, thus released from its duty, quickly get the idea of also terminating the friendship of the old - simply because it is old and getting older and older. And because for the new, almost 40 years after Aribert Reimann's Lear and almost 20 years after Helmut Lachenmann's Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern, it simply lacks practice, sadly still.“*

(<https://www.zeit.de/2014/28/oper-repertoire>)

4.1. Innovation in opera is there, always!

When we encounter groundbreaking innovative and experimental operatic productions we mostly are taken to revisit titles familiar to us combined with new, daring mise-en-scene, in fresh musical interpretations. ‚Traditional‘ repertoire that has been re-framed, re-contextualized and therefore modified and transported, translated - to new times, to new audiences, to new aesthetics?

„If the opera repertory has hardened over time, innovation has not stalled, but become of a less risky kind, shifting to reinterpretation of works by way of new conductors and productions, and trying to reconcile pressures toward creativity and stability. New managers tend to promote moderate changes in repertory, without assuming excessive risks. While distinct in nature, opera manifests practices of risk management that seem similar to those observed in other industries.“

Stoyan V. Sgourev: The dynamics of risk in innovation: a premiere or an encore?
Oxford University Press 2012 on behalf of Associazione ICC

Some examples:

- Les Indes Galantes/ Rameau, and...some „Krump“ (yes, I thought this dancing style was Hip-Hop but it turns out that it is something even more new):

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfQJZ76WR0U>

(Opéra Bastille 2019, Clément Cogitore)

- La Traviata/ Verdi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir8l-1IZLH8>

(Opéra Bastille 2019, Simon Stone)

- Die Zauberflöte/ Mozart

<https://youtu.be/J1xi1PkMuD8>

Liceu Opera Barcelona 2015/16 / Komische Oper Berlin, Barrie Kosky

- Le Grand Macabre/ Ligeti

<https://youtu.be/uS5-A61Ow4s/>

A co-production of Gran Teatre del Liceu, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Opera di Roma, and English National Opera rec. live from 'GranTeatre del Liceu', Barcelona, Spain, November 2011, La Fura dels Baus

But we also see new compositions, truly contemporary, commissioned by and taking place in established/ traditional venues:

- ‚L'Amour de Loin‘/ Saariaho

Worldpremiere Salzburg in 2000 - one of the most re-programmed operas within the contemporary repertoire (talking about what the audience wants). Here one of the scenes between Clémence (Dawn Upshaw) and Le Pèlerin (Monica Groop).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpkFJZDkqAI>

- ‚Matsukaze‘ / Toshio Hosokawa, based on traditional Japanese Nô Theatre. Commission. La Monnaie Bussels.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S6JaoOSRfc>

- Here ‚Faustus, the Last Night‘ (2003/2004)/ Pascal Dusapin (*1955)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Uv0yWqrQR0>

World Premiere, March 2006, Opéra de Lyon

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- ‚Passion‘/ Pascal Dusapin (2006/08)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8sZ8boiiZs>

World Premiere, February 2012, Opéra de Lille

- ‚Les Bienveillantes‘/ Hector Parra (2019)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCQxakn6LLk>

Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, 2019- Calixto Bieito

- ‚Clémence (Susanne Phillips) from ‚L’amour de Loin‘ by Kaija Saariaho at the Met (2017) in rehearsal:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyNYMZ3cd_c

and in the performance:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKBm9mKWJVU>

What do all of these opera productions, old and new have in common?

Even if the programming would change dramatically within the next years, (which is not very likely as the number of quality contemporary compositions are still very limited unless they are being commissioned by established operatic institutions) still the singers are in need of the essential competences - above all:

Sing, sing, sing!!

5. THE SINGER - A NEW PROFILE?

5.1. The Heart of the Matter

The “arts” are subject to continuous change in society and this change of the “arts” in turn has an impact on organization and contents of arts education. As educators, we are called to react to these changes, to develop and adjust our curriculum to the new demands of the professional environment. Performing professionally as an (opera) singer is and always has been a highly-specialized field, unique and exclusive. There are numerous aspects that determine whether a singer will be successful - artistically on stage, as well as economically in the marketplace. What are these qualities and competences and how do singers acquire them?

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5.2. Ergo: The Voice is the Voice is the Voice....

Obviously, the need of a perfect classical technique to perform the opera of nowadays cannot be denied. Singers might be expected to imply some speaking voice (nothing new: operetta, dialogues in opera) or to use the voice in a percussive/ instrumental way (nothing new: character roles, persiflage, travestite role in opera). Still, composers want voices that project super well, especially if they include very complicated orchestrations, in many cases with a whole "army" of percussionists. The voice is expected to soar! And that is only possible with a reliable, sustainable and knowledgeable vocal approach. Supporting electives on concepts of extended vocal techniques and co-creation: wonderful - as an addition. Essential innovation in the curriculum needs to come in the form of extended acting training and body work in combination with enhancement of the vocal training in all its aspects. Independent productions can be interesting as well as artistically rewarding but are not exactly the most profitable. That is known. What will make our students self-sustainable performers is to be well-trained in the core aspects of the singing profession. Is the alternative scene growing? Maybe. Does that give reason to believe it will replace 'the market' as we see it in the data? Quintessence: new repertoire, old repertoire - core competence: excellent singing, strong acting, intelligent musicianship.

5.2.1. Free Vocality and Authentic Role Portrayal

Successful singers master their instrument, their voices are well-trained with a sound vocal technique, distinctive timbre and amplitude. Reliable. Sustainable. We expect intelligent and creative musicians who have become proficient in multiple languages. Ideally, they have developed exceptional acting skills, stage presence, timing and overall are charismatic and authentic performers.

5.2.2. Cultural Entrepreneurs

We observe, that Marketing has become an essential part in being a performing artist. As the pool of singers is continuously growing, it is easy for opera companies to hire, exchange and possibly replace artists. Contracts no longer are negotiated three or four years in advance but according to the immediate needs of the employer. This is possible because of the excess of singers on the market. The role of the agent as mediator between employer and employee, possibly even as impresario and career guidance counsellor has changed as well. Numerous agencies are flooding the market, often the 'agent' not only has no professional network but also little to no vocal expertise.

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Therefore, today's singers must treat themselves as independent artists, continuously reinvent and market themselves accordingly: they need to be cultural entrepreneurs. This involves a more sophisticated use of digital media and social interaction. Artists promoting themselves need to find a good balance between market-oriented and artistic-identity-oriented strategies. Yes, music is a vocation- nevertheless, it is also a business. We are therefore not only training future artists, but cultural entrepreneurs.

5.2.3. Resilience, Grit, Bounce-Back

Just like top-athletes, any artist and entrepreneur needs to have the training and tools on how to perform at their full potential at any given moment. Today's singer may no longer be associated with the same company for an extended period of time, giving them stability, financial security and the opportunity to grow and emerge. Now the cultural entrepreneur assumes full responsibility for the economical risk. Therefore, we need to provide them with the opportunity to train and develop strategies to bounce back from failure and let go of disappointments. As singers, we know this is an ever-evolving process, but the best entrepreneurs tend to be those who are more resilient, allowing them to get back in the game quicker. Mental training and performance empowerment need to be recognized and trained as crucial and powerful tools to last in the profession.

5.2.4. Physicality

Singing is an extremely physical and athletic activity. It requires strength, elasticity, engagement, lengthening, and grounding. Our body is our instrument. Why wouldn't we, as singers, want to find the most effective way to build the athletic and physical instrument? Also, we see that there are changing physical image standards in present- day opera- clearly, the good-looking, attractive performer is preferred. Why not recognize the issues, and develop stronger physical behavior to support the voice- and the career.

5.2.5. Kilometres on Stage

The best tools are worthless without an opportunity to explore, test and possibly re-evaluate and dischard/ replace them. More than anything our students need space to connect academic training to ,working in the field'. Education needs to create that junction. When we look at the modules the EOA offers we see that the most popular ones are those that offer fully-staged opera productions with

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orchestra. However, still the demand is by far larger than the supply. If opera companies want to hire young singers with the necessary bit of experience, they need to supply the young talents with opportunity to make these experiences. This is where the Opera Studios come in, the oldest already existing for 50 years (Deutsche Oper am Rhein). Following the study „Opernstudios im deutschsprachigen Raum“ there were 28 opera studios with a total 114 singers in 2017, all of them in union with an opera house. The smallest studio has one singer, the largest employs 16. Average age of singers is 25 years.

Focus of training in all studios is in the area of stage and includes:

- coaching (stage presence, scenic work) and master classes given by experienced stage artists.
- At some theaters German lessons for foreign opera studio members play an important role.
- In addition, there is also language coaching in various places, especially for the German opera repertoire.
- The practical aspects: Code of conduct when working in an opera house, contract negotiation, audition training, make-up.
- Musical coaching and Vocal training are less as they are covered in the master classes.

(Prof. Dr. Constanze Wimmer und Domen Fajfar, Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität, Linz: „Opernstudios im deutschsprachigen Raum“- Körber Stiftung

<https://docplayer.org/52016440-Opernstudios-im-deutschsprachigen-raum.html>

6. FINAL THOUGHTS

Opera is storytelling. Is a story better told if the music is contemporary? Is the narrative better when the format is traditional?

„Cultural managers are constantly faced with a dilemma - should the values of art dominate with entertainment secondary, or should art be used to serve the ends of entertainment (Lampel et al., 2000)? Hence, a key managerial task is finding balance between the imperatives of artistic freedom and commercial success,

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typically leading to innovation that recombines existing elements in a way that does not break existing conventions (Caves, 2000)."

Stoyan V. Sgourev: The dynamics of risk in innovation: a premiere or an encore?

Oxford University Press 2012 on behalf of Associazione ICC

The umbilical cord between the old and the new needs to be acknowledged and endorsed: by striving for inclusion and diversity, by reinforcing a colorful kaleidoscope of repertoire, artists and approaches: a new world repertory (Payne)!

„...it would be devastating if there were no more ritual places where we as a community could communicate about our emotions and affects without always having to talk about joining a sect or running to the nearest football stadium. Places for music, places for eyes, ears and senses: opera houses.“

(<https://www.zeit.de/2014/28/oper-repertoire>)