

RECOMMENDATIONS – PORTO

To re-think Opera Today rises a series of controversial issues and important new insights that should be taken in consideration in our desire to make professional opera nowadays and in the necessity of preparing young artists to the new artistic challenges of the new labor market emerging from the variety of the new fields opened by Contemporary Opera. In this sense, the concept of Opera appears, nowadays, as an 'empty shell' where a series of different 'insights' of - making opera today - may diverge and diversely emerge.

1. Complementary and Extensive Performance Practices Skills -

Students and young singers' SKILLS required to approach the needs created by contemporary opera and the new labor market

Making opera today suggests that young singers, performers and opera students, generally speaking, during their education process, and in addition to the traditional training, should be given the necessary tools to be able to cope with the new challenges of performing contemporary opera. According to inquiry made to *higher education music institutions (HEIs)*, the new skills identified for the singers are:

“body work, new ways of relating to the body and the emotion, text/language work, improvisation technics and vocal/ear extended technics. Entrepreneurial, social and communication skills were also pointed out as important extra musical features to strengthen the student's profile, i.e., new vocalities, new ways of relating to the body and the emotional being, new ways of relating to the text and its semantics and to the space, and new ways of relating to the practice of collaborative and co-creative work – last, but not least, the necessary tools to deal, when necessary, with the market itself,

by self-managing and self-promotion and publicity, out of the main circuit of the big theaters, and of the grand opera circuit.” It’s noted that these new skills should be “built on the fundament of core skills” and that the profile of the young singers should grow a wider general artistic drive and an updated insight of the social and political positioning of opera of the 21st century transforming their mindset.” (PEREIRA, SALGADO-ESMAE: 2021)¹ & (SALGADO-ESMAE:2021)² & (SALGADO, BINYION-ESMAE:2021)³

2. New and Alternative Circuits of Opera Making

i) Out of the Black-Box

“Opera has been facing, since its birth, challenges and transformations that are consequence of the positive or negative interaction with the socio-cultural and artistic context of each moment in history. Surprisingly, in the last decades, there is a feeling that opera is losing the ability to rethink itself in line with the referred artistic and socio-cultural context of our contemporaneity. In the midst of the major opera houses in Europe we read statistics that point to the continuation of the demand for the Grand Opéra, with monumental interpretations within Opera Tradition. However, the proliferation of an alternative circuit around the opera is evident, with new repertoire being created or with bold approaches to an existing repertoire. Once again, the socio-cultural, artistic and also economic context is playing, of course, an important role in this gradual transformation.” (PEREIRA, SALGADO-ESMAE: 2021)⁴”

¹ PEREIRA & SALGADO:2021 **“A new singer’s profile (?) Vocal approaches for new opera making within the HEIs. How do we see it?”** WG2EOA_LAB - IO

² SALGADO:2021, “Vox Ludos: Singing and the Expression of Emotion. A research on the Performative Process of Making Opera Today” WG2EOA_LAB-IO

³ SALGADO, BINYION:2021, “Workshop feedback during ISP Maastricht, Vilnius and Porto” WG2EOA_LAB-IO

⁴ PEREIRA & SALGADO:2021 **“A new singer’s profile (?) Vocal approaches for new opera making within the HEIs. How do we see it?”** WG2EOA_LAB - IO

Within the proliferation of alternative circuits of contemporary making opera which purpose is to come closer to the audience by getting out of the black box into the urban or nature landscape, creating by this gesture the possibility of crossing information with the landscape's historical background, the public's own history and the opera performative content; and by doing this giving the public the oper(a)tunity of being participative, not just by listening or thinking while they 'comfortably' seated on a theater chair, but actually by being participative as a part of the opera itself.

ii) Alternative new spaces

“Social space is considered as a scenic space, with the ability to trigger ephemeral events and to give us clues about the way individuals project and organize their personal path and make sense of their lives, by reinventing them. Today's new artistic proposals give rise to a plethora of real and virtual spaces with the potential to become scenic spaces. In this sense, the social space has become a privileged place for artistic production and for theorization in the field of social sciences. As such, space can be understood as an open narrative structure that reflects individual opinions and dramaturgies that, in turn, will contextualize a specific social moment. Thereby, we can put forward the idea that social and interpersonal memories play a crucial role in the creation of the scenic space. This is based on the assumption that the public space is a space where acting and performance are in strict connection with the artistic and operatic discourse.” (SALGADO, ESMAE:2021)⁵ and (MARISA, ESMAE:2021)⁶

iii) Alternative new audiences

⁵ SALGADO:2021, “In-Between Time and Space” - WG2EOA_LAB - IO

⁶ MARISA:2021, “When space becomes art” - WG2EOA_LAB - IO

“Focusing on how an artistic experience can face an experience of a landscape, develop new cultural and nature experiences and create new stage room and meeting places. The terms of the interaction between the audience and the actors change radically when one stops to consider the landscape as background/scenography for a stage event or performance and instead using the landscape’s characteristics and historical layers involving the location with people, resources, history, heritage, and gives the audience /participants relationship and status as co-creators. Thus, enabling visitors and audience to transform into participants and co-creators, and what changing clearly the mean of performance for artists and participants.” (ERLINGSDOTTER-SADA:2021)⁷ and (SALGADO-ESMAE:2021)⁸

3. New and Open Profiles

“The socio-cultural, artistic and also economic context have been playing an important role in the gradual transformation of Opera, allowing and obliging many singers, opera composers and opera students, generally speaking, to choose, beyond the traditional circuit, an alternative circuit to the field of opera which demands the choice of new ways of relating to the practice of collaborative and co-creative work around the Opera and the Music Theatre. This need for a more flexible and open profile of a singer, and opera students, may create proactive and attentive professionals to the reality that surrounds them. In this sense, opera may turn into this new artistic and cultural performance practice process which allows it to become intrinsically significant in the communities’ history and also in the audiences’ development.” (SALGADO-ESMAE)⁹

⁷ SARA:2021, “Action, Participation, Meeting” - - WG2EOA_LAB - IO

⁸ SALGADO:2021, “In-Between Time and Space” - WG2EOA_LAB - IO

⁹ SALGADO:2021, “In-Between Time and Space” - WG2EOA_LAB – IO

4. New Opera Making – the outcoming of Virtual and Digital Spaces

We are living times of paradigm change where the virtuality of relationships has been detaching individuals from each other giving a false sense of social interaction and disabling us of having a real and deep interaction. We live within the giddiness of the operative time and the fakeness of a disembodied presence. These are true challenges for the performative arts, such as opera, where the co-presence of musicians/singers and audience is an essential feature. After two presential Intensive Study Programs (ISP) in Maastricht and Vilnius - which have been valuable experiences on collaborative pedagogical and creative work - we had to face the pandemic limitations of these events in presence and to plan an online ISP that could answer, somehow, to our project's vision.

In the discussion of its structure and content we started with the assumption that *“Opera isn't dying but it's changing. The world is changing, isn't it? Is Europe dying in 2021 or it's just undergoing in an inevitable transformation (as anything in life)? “Opera reflects every historical era's particular aesthetics needs and concerns” (Martín, 2002, p. 116) so why don't we accept that?”* (PEREIRA, SALGADO-ESMAE: 2021)¹⁰

One of the most interesting outcomes of this Online ISP was the amazing students' answer to the challenge of collaborative creation of micro-operas of 180s. This provocative assignment led to a deep and fruitful discussion both

¹⁰ PEREIRA & SALGADO:2021 *“A new singer's profile (?) Vocal approaches for new opera making within the HEIs. How do we see it?”* WG2EOA_LAB - IO

during the creative process and the reflection of the work achieved. To work around the impossibility of creating an experience due to the short duration of the works and, at the same time, to overcome the characteristic of an ephemeral meeting between audience and performers was a real and transforming challenge. The tension between opera as the mirror of the historical era and opera as an art form that needs the bound of a real experience has led to the creation of 8 micro-operas created around these problematizations. It has been a truly transformative learning process¹¹.

¹¹ Link to the micro-operas