



**AN OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION PRACTICES EMPLOYED BY
THE OPERA AND THE DANCE EDUCATION SECTOR IN
EUROPE**

**SURVEY CARRIED OUT BY RESEO
February – May 2012**



Education and Culture DG

Culture Programme

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For many years now, evaluation has been incorporated into the RESEO road map. This study, conducted with our members between February and May 2012, forms part of a long-term research project on evaluation practices employed by the opera and dance education sector.

Since the mid-2000s, evaluation has been at the heart of discussions. This practice has become commonplace in all sectors, and ours is no exception: the large majority of our members¹ evaluate their activities. These results inevitably throw up various questions: how do education departments evaluate the impact of their actions on audiences? What tools do they use? Why? And how do we explain the interest in evaluation practices in the midst of such a troubled economic climate?

Should we consider evaluation as an obligation or as an incentive? It's true that, as a result of the economic crisis and subsequent budget cuts, producing quantified reports for sponsors, partners, local or national authorities, or management is a double-edged sword.

And what if the figures provided do not live up to the expectations of the sponsors or fail to comply with what they consider a "worthwhile use" of the funds granted? Is this expectation of justification legitimate? Is it right to ask cultural institutions to "justify" their cultural activities, at the risk of reinforcing the phenomenon of the "commodification" of culture and promoting figure-assessment at the expense of artistic quality?

At the same time, being able to produce and present objective data on the impact of opera and dance education activities may reassure sponsors and assure the longevity of the projects evaluated. Positive results may assure increased and more regular funding, and may even legitimise and strengthen the position of the education service within its organisation.

However, evaluation should also be considered in its most positive sense. It provides a source of inspiration for improving educational projects by integrating audience feedback, in a process of mutual enrichment. Conducting this process, despite the potential technical and/or financial difficulties, enables us to truly comprehend the impact our actions have. Gathering feedback on our work can serve both as a source of motivation and creativity that can only benefit our work.

The aim of this study is to provide an overview of evaluation practices on a European level. In addition to identifying general trends or disparities in European evaluation practices, our goal is to provide our members inspiring examples from elsewhere as well as a new perspective and a new scope for reflection on the subject, helping them to enhance their own evaluation practices.

1 96% of 25 participants - Mapping of the opera and dance education sector in Europe, 2011, RESEO

RESEO - Evaluation in Europe - 2012

RESEO is conscious of the difficulties that may arise when implementing an evaluation process, and has intended to provide an overview of the most commonly observed practices amongst its members in the hope of pooling resources and practices which could stoke the discussion and inspire you in whatever approach you may take.

RESEO would like to thank the members who participated in this study.

A big thank you also goes to Ms Jeanne Briqueler, who conducted this study with, and on behalf of, RESEO.

RESEO
June 2012

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•Organisations which participated in the preliminary study

AUSTRIA

Bregenzer Festspiele

BELGIUM

La Monnaie/De Munt
Opéra Royal de Wallonie

DENMARK

Royal Danish Theatre
Den Jyske Opera

FINLAND

Finnish National Opera

FRANCE

Cité de la musique
Ensemble Justiniana
Les Talens Lyriques
Opéra de Dijon
Opéra de Lille
Opéra de Massy
Opéra de Rouen
Opéra National de Bordeaux
Opéra National de Lyon
Opéra national de Paris
Opéra National du Rhin
Théâtre du Châtelet
Théâtre du Capitole

GERMANY

Deutsche Oper am Rhein
Junge Oper Stuttgart
Sommer Oper Bamberg
Staatsoper Berlin

HUNGARY

Hungarian State Opera

ITALY

Associazione Musicale Tito Gobbi

LUXEMBOURG

Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg

HOLLAND

De Netherlands Opera

NORWAY

Den Norske Opera & Ballett

POLAND

Polish National Opera

PORTUGAL

Casa da Música
Companhia de Música Teatral
Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

SPAIN

Gran Teatre del Liceu
Teatro Real
Teatro de la Zarzuela

SWEDEN

GöteborgsOperan
Kungliga Opera
Malmö Opera
Norrlands Operan
Vadstena-Akademien

SWITZERLAND

Jeune Opéra Compagnie
Opéra-Théâtre

UNITED KINGDOM

Glyndebourne
Opera North
Royal Opera House
Scottish Opera
Welsh National Opera

•Part 1: Overview of European practices and expectations

||

The impact of educational or cultural activities is something which interests me enormously. I'd like to see the realisation of a reliable evaluation system, not so much for management or sponsors, but more so as to be able to evaluate the actual intellectual interest involved in our actions. I'm fairly lacking in resources in this respect

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Methodology

In February 2012, a short questionnaire comprising six questions was sent, via an on-line form, to sixty-five European member organisations of RESEO. Forty-seven of them responded, giving a response rate of over 72%. The simplicity of the questionnaire (an on-line multiple choice survey) and its limited size evidently facilitated the high response rate.

The questionnaire was prepared by the team on the basis of remarks and comments made by some RESEO members and its Steering Committee. Moreover, mapping the opera and dance education sector, as carried out by RESEO in 2011, enabled us to succinctly highlight the various evaluation tools and methods potentially or actually implemented by members.

Certain terms were defined in the introduction: “organisations”: Opera, festival, company; “activities”: includes all your activities (practical workshops, both in-house and out-of-house, guided tours, performance talks, etc.) excluding productions; “participants”: the actual people that participate in your activities and/or the people they are accompanied by (teachers, parents, etc.).

All questions were obligatory. The only optional question was a paragraph at the end of the questionnaire which enabled members to leave their impressions of the questionnaire or to note any additional information with regards to evaluation. The comments left in this space are acknowledged in this report (main section and red font). Only one response was permitted for questions 3), 5) and 6). For the other questions, participants could tick as many responses as they wished.

* The quotations in red are taken from comments made by members on the questionnaire

1) In order to obtain feedback on my activities I have...

- organised debriefing meetings with my team
- drawn inspiration from emails, pictures, texts, etc. sent by participants
- consulted box-office statistics/participant numbers
- observed or briefly spoken with participants
- handed out questionnaires to participants
- co-operated with an external specialist
- I have not undertaken any particular actions
- Other (please specify)

2) Via this feedback, I am currently able to find out if my activities...

- were appreciated by participants
- could be altered in the future and in what way
- have encouraged participants to come back as members of the audience
- have reached the goals set by management
- have transmitted art-related knowledge and know-how
- have developed participants' interest in the arts or changed their perspective on them
- have had an impact on the psychology of certain participants
- furthered the social integration of certain participants
- I do not strive to know anything in particular
- Other (please specify)

3) I am satisfied with this feedback...

- Yes
- Sort of/moderately
- No

4) Ideally, I would like to know whether my activities...

- were appreciated by participants and why
- have encouraged participants to come back as members of the audience
- have transmitted art-related knowledge and know-how
- have developed participants' interest in the arts or changed their perspective on them
- have had an impact on the psychology of certain participants
- furthered the social integration of certain participants
- I already have access to all the information I am interested in
- Other (please specify)

5) But in order to initiate a process to obtain such information, I mainly lack...

- time
- money
- support from management
- appropriate tools
- trust in how the results obtained will be used
- trust in the reliability of the results
- What I am doing is sufficient for me
- Other (please specify)

6) I am obliged to report back on my activities to management, private or public sponsors, etc.

- Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
-

Results

The results presented in this report should be considered bearing in mind that the responses were provided primarily by individuals. Only one organisation stated that the responses given were valid for the service as a whole. For the other members, this implies and signifies that responses for the same organisation may well have varied depending on the person completing the questionnaire or even on the point in the season.

Furthermore, the different statutes of the member organisations and their countless activities are also factors which lead to varying interpretations of the same questionnaire. The term 'activity' can cover numerous actions. Moreover, only the organisations of five countries received the questionnaire in their mother tongue (French or English). The questions and suggested responses were sometimes only roughly understood, with the difficulties encountered in correctly determining the meaning of a question adding to potential comprehension errors due to the language barrier. The term "evaluation" was avoided as it evokes a series of preconceived images. It was replaced in the questionnaire by "feedback on activities" or "goals achieved"...

Having detailed the limitations of this questionnaire, we must also acknowledge the merits, through the responses obtained, of determining the key aspects of and points of view on evaluation practices, as contributed by the opera and dance education sector in Europe. Three major aspects can be discerned:

- current practices:

The first set of questions determined the various evaluation practices currently in place within the organisations, what kind of knowledge is acquired as a result of these methods and gave us an idea of how satisfied members are about the feedback obtained;

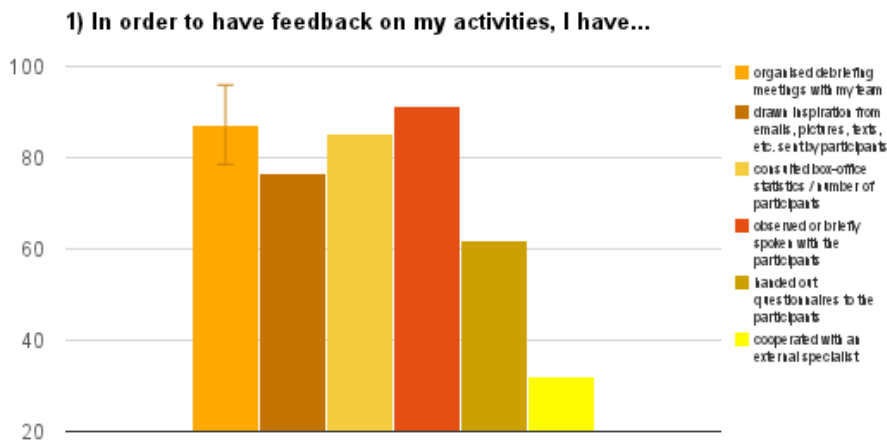
- expectations and limitations:

Secondly, the questions highlighted the end goals of the organisations, what members would ideally like to know about their audiences and the impact of their actions, and what they lack in terms of achieving their objectives;

- obligations:

The last question revolved around gaining an insight into the extent to which organisations are required to submit performance reports or results to management divisions, programme sponsors or decision-makers. The obligation, or absence thereof, to systematically provide feedback to a third party may in some cases explain the preference of one evaluation method over another.

I Evaluation in practical terms or the here and now



Overview of

practices

How do organisations obtain feedback on their activities? Considering the responses provided, it would seem that the three main tools used, or which have been used, by respondents are participant observation (91%), team assessment (87%) and consultation of box-office figures or participant numbers (85%). Emails, pictures or texts sent by participants are taken into consideration by 77% of respondents as a source of information.

The distribution of questionnaires is a method widely used by almost two-thirds of respondents (62%). In three-quarters of these cases, this practice is used in addition to and to complement all other tools described above. It is therefore rare for an organisation to send out questionnaires without also implementing a more comprehensive evaluation process at the same time (except on a specific case basis according to the activities offered).

Finally, contracting an external specialist to evaluate a project or an activity is less commonplace amongst respondents, applying to only one-third of questionnaire participants. It can be noted for illustrative purposes that all of the British opera houses that responded (five out of six) use, or have used, an external specialist to evaluate their projects. This particularly high figure, notably with regards to the European average, demonstrates that the implementation of evaluation tools in Great Britain is significant. Moreover, all of the other tools mentioned previously are also seemingly used by British opera houses (only one institution did not select the response "drawn inspiration from emails, pictures, texts, etc. sent by participants").

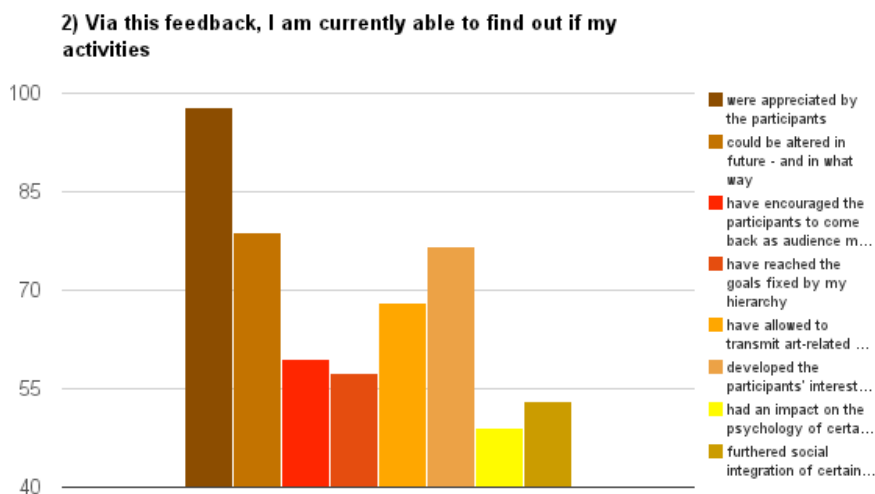
Some practices which were not suggested in the questionnaire were identified thanks to the comments supplied. The education department of the Royal Opera House indicates, for example, that participants are provided on-line questionnaires. Furthermore, this same institution organises "creative/participatory evaluation sessions" with participants. In the same way, the Opéra National de Bordeaux has implemented the *billets complices* (partner ticket) scheme, to generate short-term feedback on the number of participants who have come back of their own free will. Opera North, on the other hand, states that the data allowing them to determine clearly

identified objectives is collected before, during and after the project. A brief glimpse into the various practices employed by the members can be found in the last section of this report.

It is a widely held belief* that Anglo-Saxon countries (often known as "Northern" countries) are more inclined to implement evaluation procedures than Latin countries (or "Southern" countries). Nothing in the responses given to these six questions has enabled us to invalidate or confirm this polarising view of Europe. Firstly, it should be noted that some countries are represented by a single organisation, occasionally with an original statute. No national generalisations can therefore be made from the practices of a sole individual. Secondly, and considering countries where more than three members have responded, we see a pattern emerging between the United Kingdom (five participating organisations, widespread evaluation), France and Germany (thirteen and four participating organisations respectively, moderately widespread evaluation) and Spain (three participating organisations, less widespread evaluation). This trend however, taking into account the number and relevance of evaluation tools implemented within the organisation, is quickly upset by Portugal (a "Southern" country, but with relatively widespread evaluation) and Sweden (a "Northern" country, with less widespread evaluation). The other countries are only represented by one or two organisations, therefore their results cannot be considered representative of the national reality.

This study thus provides no real conclusions on this North/South divide, firstly due to a lack of representative data, and secondly as a result of this theory being deemed invalid for the well-represented countries in terms of the number of organisations participating in the survey.

Degree to which organisations are aware of the impact of their actions



It has thus transpired that all members who responded to the questionnaire have implemented and/or are implementing formal/informal, established/non-established procedures enabling them to collect feedback on their activities. On this basis, it is interesting to consider the nature of the information that this feedback provides the organisations.

* See the report on the Aix-en-Provence Symposium 2011

The initial data collected from the members concerns the opinions and assessments of participants with regard to activities. Indeed, nearly all organisations who responded believe they can find out whether an activity has been valued by the target audience (only one member did not select this response). Almost 80% of members know how to modify their projects accordingly, if need be. Thus, we can see that results from an evaluation may serve to help projects and activities implemented by organisations evolve, according to assessment by participants, their comments or the reflections of the organisation itself on the work.

In addition, just over three-quarters of respondents can determine whether their activities have allowed participants to develop an interest in the arts or to change their perception of them. A total of 68% of members believe art-related knowledge and know-how is actually transmitted to participants.

With regard to the longevity of visits to the organisation, 60% of respondents believe they can find out if project participants have returned to the organisation as members of the audience at a later date. This may be short-term monitoring, monitoring during the course of a season, or monitoring on a more long-term basis over many years.

Lastly, around half of respondents can find out whether their activities have encouraged the social integration of certain participants (53%) or have had an impact on their psychological factors (49%). This lower rate may be explained by difficulties encountered in determining these kinds of variables amongst participants. What is social integration and how can it be measured in a reliable manner? Difficulties in responding to these two questions may be a plausible indication as to why organisations have more trouble finding out whether their activities have such an influence on participants, compared with other factors.

Satisfaction with this feedback

We estimate that, on the whole, organisations are satisfied with the feedback they obtain from participants. Indeed, of the respondents 47% are satisfied and 49% sort of/moderately satisfied with their feedback. These percentages nevertheless enable us to ascertain that almost half would like more information on their audiences and on the impact of their actions, as these members claim to only be "sort of/moderately" satisfied and not "fully" satisfied.

Only two of the forty-seven members claim to be unsatisfied with their feedback. These two examples should remind us that the responses provided in this questionnaire are done so primarily by individuals. Thus, the character and commitment of the individuals should clearly be considered to facilitate a more qualitative processing of responses, taking into account the history and context of each organisation. In this instance, it should be noted that these two organisations carry out relatively advanced evaluations, notably employing questionnaires. However, the thoughts and demands of these two individuals seem particularly thorough, which may explain their lack of satisfaction on a personal level, despite a relatively comprehensive evaluation process.

II Ideals or expectations of members

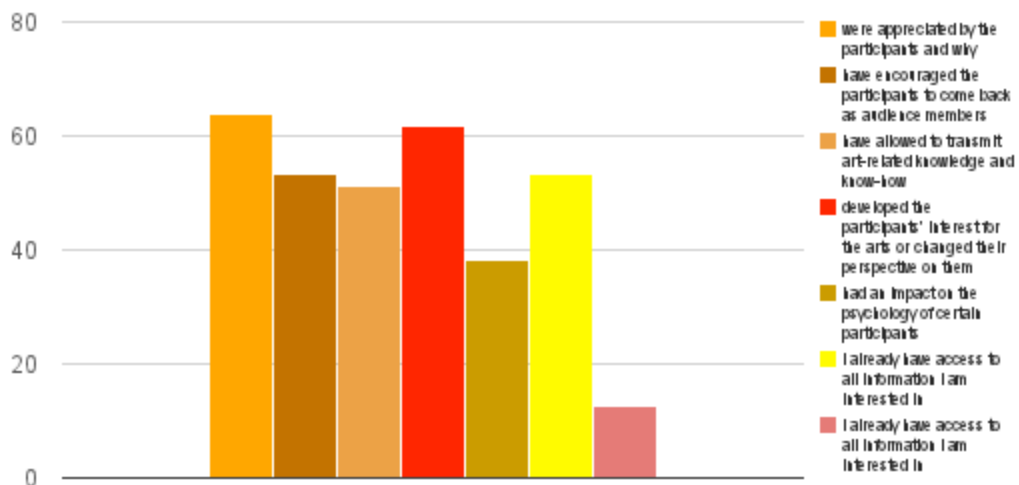
What RESEO members would like to know



Explaining what we do, what we'd like, is a bit complicated. Of course we've got information, and of course it's always good to have more, but for us, at this point, it's not our priority



4) Ideally, I would like to know whether my activities...

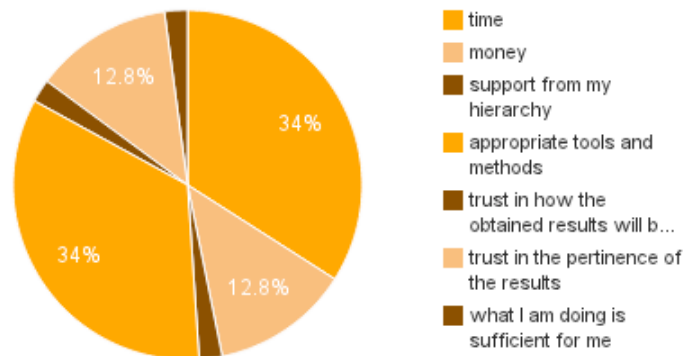


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responses to this question are difficult to analyse without considering the individual comments provided during qualitative interviews with certain members. Firstly, it seems that this question was misunderstood: generally speaking, the same range of suggested answers is found for both "ideally, I would like to know..." and for "I am currently able to find out...".

Interviews have enabled us to ascertain that these similarities should be taken into consideration granting more importance to what the members would ideally like to know rather than what they already know. It is noted that almost 13% of members would not like to know any more than what they already know.

5) But in order to start a process aiming at obtaining such information, I mainly lack...



What is missing

The graph above shows the distribution of reasons given by respondents to explain the difference between what they know about the impact of their actions and what they would ideally like to find out. We see that one-third of members lack time, whilst another third mainly lack the appropriate tools and methods. If RESEO cannot do anything to help this first category, the network can nevertheless establish a platform for pooling resources to help those in the second category. Some tools, notably questionnaires, already make their way across Europe and in specific cases may pass from one organisation to another. For example, resources can be exchanged during co-productions or as a result of staffing changes in organisations. On the same lines, at country level, the same evaluation specialists can act for and within different organisations (this is notably the case for Annabel Jackson in the United Kingdom).

Far less numerous are members who lack money (around 13% of respondents). The budgets of these organisations do not seem to be able to cover the costs of evaluation. We may be tempted to link time and money, but this is not the case. The budget is divided up according to certain priorities, and evaluation is not yet one of them. Organisations must make decisions and respond to priorities, meaning that there is not always room for institutionalised evaluation.



Being able to contract an external evaluation specialist from time to time for our most ambitious projects would be a luxury. The problem here is both money and managerial support!!



Only one member highlighted the lack of support from management. It should be mentioned here that only one response was permitted for this question. Moreover, the questionnaire was not anonymous. These two aspects may, to a certain extent, help us understand the low number of members who selected this response. For example, the person

who's comment was highlighted above chose neither the response "lack of support from management" nor "lack of money". The lack of trust with regard to the use to which the results are put and the reliability of results were only selected by one member each, i.e. 2% of respondents per category.

Lastly, around 13% of the members who responded to these questions believe that they currently do what suits them, and as a result, do not lack anything in particular in terms of implementing and undertaking evaluations. At least two scenarios can be distinguished amongst these six members. On the one hand, we find organisations able to collect lots of information on and from participants and which, as a result, believe they have substantial knowledge on the impact of their activities. And, on the other hand, we find organisations which do not employ significant evaluation resources, and therefore obtain limited feedback, but which use the data obtained purely for justification purposes, for a sponsor or management. Finally, some members do not request any further feedback and are simply satisfied with what they already know about their projects and their impact.

Bearing in mind these results, it is clear that few members doubt the efficiency of the evaluation process or the use of the results obtained from this process. Given that we may consider the evaluation implemented by RESEO members incomplete (remember that only 13% of members are satisfied with the feedback on their activities), these limitations can primarily be attributed to technical aspects (in total, over 81% of members lack time, tools or money) rather than to a blanket rejection of the evaluation process itself (a minority of 13% are satisfied with their evaluation process whilst only 6% of respondents do not trust in the tools or the use to which the results will be put or lack managerial support).

III Constraints

The sixth and last question centres on members potentially being obliged to send feedback on their activities to management, a decision-maker, a sponsor, whatever the nature. Indeed, if evaluation can be used as a tool for improving programmes and activities in place, the results obtained may also be essential for obtaining or redirecting grants awarded, whether public or private, or for presenting figures in concrete terms, to help legitimise the work of the organisations and/or departments.

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We have to send reports to the Ministry of Education to retain the recognition we have been awarded as a training organisation for primary and secondary school teachers

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With regard to the organisations that responded, 68% have to send feedback on their activities to management or to programme sponsors (private or public). A large proportion of respondents must therefore provide information on the activities in place and/or the results obtained by the service. However, despite the clear formulation of the question ("I am obliged to report back on my activities to management, private or public sponsors, etc." the term "obliged" was sometimes understood not as a mandatory obligation, but, an accepted, shared and justified one.

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I do not feel obliged to send feedback, I do so with the idea of qualitative growth for all in mind.

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A quarter of members who responded are *sometimes* obliged to send feedback. The importance and funds awarded for projects vary and may well depend upon the obligation, or absence thereof, to report back.

Finally, only three members (6% of respondents) responded that they are not obliged to provide feedback on their activities. It should be pointed out that, out of these three organisations, one has no real management division to speak of. These members organise themselves autonomously and their funding sources vary from one project to another.

This relatively high figure of 68% above all demonstrates that despite the diversity of the member organisations of RESEO, of their actions and their statutes (see RESEO 2011 mapping), members have common obligations placed on their activities, involving them reporting to one person outside the department (organisation management, patrons, sponsors, etc.).

•Part two: Practices put into practice

After the responses to the questionnaire were returned and analysed, we decided that some organisations would be contacted for telephone interviews. The aim of these discussions was to reflect more thoroughly on the practices and opinions of members; comparing the organisations was not an ulterior motive.

These interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and enabled us to highlight practices employed. The sheets below were prepared on the basis of these interviews and aim to provide an illustrative overview of the various practices employed, according to the organisations, by summarising the main points raised in the interview. The vision given is therefore relatively succinct and would benefit from being complemented by more detailed interviews or on-site observations.

There are obviously just as many different ways of evaluating as there are opera and dance education departments, however it is possible to distinguish and group together certain practices.

●Interviews

I Informal evaluation

In many organisations, evaluation is carried out in an informal manner, by observing or discussing with participants or relying on oral or written comments. The reasons organisations are held back in terms of implementing more institutional evaluations are varied: lack of time or money, current practices deemed satisfactory or lack of trust in the tools or in the pertinence of an external evaluation.

The case studies below present two organisations, different in their statutes, their activities and their geographical location, but which both obtain informal feedback (comments from participants, texts, pictures, observations, etc.) allowing them to judge the impact of their actions.

Polish National Opera (interview with Anna Sapiego, Head of Education Service)

Organisation

The main objectives of the Teatr Wielki education service are to reconcile young people with the opera and to develop artistic and creative awareness amongst participants. To do this, various types of project are in place: activities mixing photography, theatre and opera for young adults, matinées for children, etc.

Evaluation

The service maintains contact with participants and some programmes have even been initiated after discussions with the young people themselves. Project evaluation is based on exchanging opinions and the comments left by participants. The institution must be the driving force, contacting participants by email or organising meetings after events; however, feedback, it seems, is always honest. Finally, the high and frequent participation levels of young people, children and families is considered by the service as proof of programme success.

Limitations

The service has tried to send out questionnaires but has not followed up this approach given the low number of responses. In the future, Anna Sapiego would like to develop an interface on Facebook to get in contact with young people using a language they understand. In particular, this would allow her to send out invites to or announce events. One of the flagship projects of the service has given rise to the publication of a catalogue - a collection of photographs and texts from participants. It is a way for the service to promote their activities, to keep a record of them and to bring a project to conclusion by presenting what has been achieved. Unfortunately, this type of initiative comes at a price. Sponsors must therefore be convinced to provide funding or choices must be made with regard to budget distribution; schemes like this cannot be implemented for all projects.

Junge Oper Stuttgart, Germany (interview with Barbara Tacchini, Head of Young Opera)

Organisation

This department has numerous objectives: to encourage new audiences to come to the Opera and help them along during their first visit. The department has a production wing, but also offers workshops aimed at various audiences.

Evaluation

In order to find out whether the project has had the desired effect, the service is based on close observation of participants during the activities, on participant feedback such as texts or pictures, and on how often activities are attended. Teachers or intermediaries can also provide information on the progress of activities, their strengths and their weaknesses. Questionnaires are sometimes distributed after the activities. They aim to find out what participants have grasped and understood about the opera and whether they warmed to it or whether it made them want to see a performance. The questionnaires are basic but adapted to each project.

Limitations

A simple but adequate report is sent to the sponsors, but the service only uses the results of the questionnaires internally. Indeed, Barbara Tacchini wonders whether they are professional enough to be disseminated. For her, an ideal evaluation would be conducted by an external specialist throughout the project and by preparing an overview at the start. Students can sometimes be too inexperienced; the service would need a person who is familiar with the opera world and knows how to deal with it. In addition to the issue of finding a suitable person, sponsors are not always willing to commit to such an expense. Lastly, the service does not want to implement an evaluation that would take time and money away from the projects.

II Dual evaluation

Some organisations have implemented tools which complement their empirical analyses with the perspectives of third parties, whether specialists or otherwise. This particular system is in place in the Casa da Música Education Service.

Casa da Música, Portugal (interview with Jorge Prendas, Education Service Manager)

Organisation

The education department at Casa da Música organises workshops for school audiences, educational concerts for families, projects with disadvantaged communities and training for teachers or musicians. For five years, eight general objectives established by the service and the institution and compiled in a document called "Philosophy of the Education Service" have directed their activities (each department within the institution acts in accordance with a similar document). Each project then has more specific goals to achieve, but they are always developed with these eight general objectives in mind. Once a year, Jorge Prendas presents the strengths for the year and introduces the programme for the following year.

Evaluation

To evaluate the impact their projects have, members of the service rely on their observations, on emails or comments received, on activity levels on their Facebook page, on box-office figures, etc. However, the service has also developed a partnership with the psychology faculty: student interns or observers prepare a report for the team, providing an idea of the impact the activities have. It is a mutually beneficial scheme as students use it as an opportunity to test out new evaluation tools.

Limitations

Jorge Prendas believes that figures are important for sponsors, but that they do not reflect the reality of the department. For him, a good evaluation requires figures, but also elements which demonstrate the impact of the projects on participants and the changes that may arise. Setting aside the issue of resources, the service would lack the time needed to process the information generated from a detailed, long-term evaluation, applied to all those involved, using different methods.

III Evaluation using an external specialist

Some organisations have decided to devote part of their budget to an evaluation conducted by a team of specialists. This is the case at Opéra National de Lyon and Associazione Musicale Tito Gobbi.

Opéra National de Lyon, France (interview with Stéphanie Petiteau, Cultural Development Service Manager)

Organisation

The main objective of the "cultural development" service of Opéra National de Lyon, established in 2004, is to attract people who would not normally come to the Opera. Projects are centred upon three primary themes: school programmes, discovery of professions for young people searching for career vocations and support for amateur artistic practice. The main aspects are determined by management, based on which the service sets project objectives.

Evaluation

Most projects, notably the most experimental, are interspersed with meetings which enable the project to be redirected if need be. During a final assessment conducted with participants or their intermediaries, the service decides whether the project can be implemented again or improved. These evaluations are used internally to develop the service. For some projects, new but small in terms of budget and people involved, the service may employ questionnaires (in-house, or aided by an intern for example).

For large-scale projects, the service contracts external specialists who evaluate the project and its impact. The first experience of this kind occurred in 2006 with limited success. A group of researchers worked with the service but the end result did not live up to the expectations of either party. For the next project, the department enlisted the help of a specialist to prepare a more relevant remit, then launched an invitation to tender. The second evaluation was more conclusive in terms of development and results. The department decided upon and organised this study, but it was only possible thanks to European funding. It has nevertheless been publicised by the management to promote Opera activities.

In the long run, Stéphanie Petiteau would like to be able to repeat these external evaluations on the proviso that they do not negatively affect the other projects led by the department; up to now this has been possible due to the expansion of the service.

Associazione Musicale Tito Gobbi

Organisation

The association was created to establish or re-establish a link between young people and the opera, targeting schools and, on a more general level, families. Activities are aimed at teachers and pupils, and progress in two stages: firstly, the world of opera is tackled as a whole, through an association publication; then, a major opera is studied and performed.

Evaluation

The projects and their impact are evaluated by an external specialist who, every year, carries out interviews with participants, hands out questionnaires, observes activities, etc. The first evaluation of this type was initiated when the association was created, on the request of the Ministry of Education, but it is no longer a requirement today. Informal feedback might suffice for the Ministry, but Cecilia Gobbi, who has experience in marketing research, considers that an evaluation worthy of the name should be carried out by an external entity, which is in a better position to see the limitations of the projects and especially more inclined to be honest.

Feedback can also be collected by other sources participating in activities, avoiding any intrusions, or through the final performance.

Evaluation is a way to assess projects on behalf of sponsors and to improve projects if need be. Moreover, and because the methods employed by the evaluation agency are identical from the start, evaluation is also a way to see how the impact of the actions taken by the association evolves.

•Conclusion

The aim of this study has thus been to determine and present the progress of evaluation in the opera and dance education sector in Europe and, more specifically, to highlight the various practices implemented by RESEO members. Far from establishing comparisons with a view to ranking organisations or countries, the goal has been to outline a practice in constant cultural development in numerous sectors.

Of course, the methodology used in this study is not perfect: "international comparisons are [...] limited by there being no clear coincidence [...] between the socio-demographic categories adopted and the definitions of the practices highlighted". To these difficulties, as listed by Françoise Benhamou², we can add the complications linked to the number of widely varying responses from one country to another. Nevertheless and despite an inevitably imperfect methodology, it has been possible to accrue information on RESEO members and to give an insight into the field of evaluation within the opera and dance education sector.

The overview provided with the help of a basic questionnaire has enabled us to ascertain that all organisations that responded evaluate, in one way or another, the impact of their projects on participants. This may be done informally, by observing the progress of activities or using comments received, or in a more detailed manner, by contracting external specialists. Most RESEO members are satisfied with the feedback obtained on their activities, but many would also like more information on the impact of their actions. Although time and budget restrictions apply to many organisations, the exchange of resources and advice between members is possible. RESEO could therefore be a vehicle for dialogue and sharing on a European level.

The interviews carried out with six organisations of varying size and geographical location enabled us to present the evaluation processes implemented by these entities. Lastly, we see that the most successful evaluation is the one that best suits the relevant organisation and depends, above all, on the use to which it is put.

RESEO hopes to continue the research on evaluation by pushing the boundaries of this thinking further, and would like to thank all members who participated in this study. We hope that it will prove useful for many of you.

RESEO,
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2 BENHAMOU Françoise, *L'économie de la culture*, La Découverte, Collection Repères, 2004