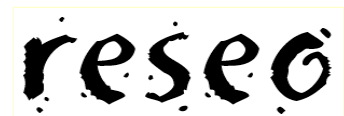# Why Opera Education?
- A RESEO research report

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1. Context

This research report has been undertaken within the context of The European Network of Education Departments in Opera (RESEO)'s 'Why/how Opera Education …today'-project for the European Culture 2000 programme.

Within the project 4 working groups were set up:

° 1. Data base on Opera for Young People

° 2. Teaching modules

° 3. Future of Opera

° 4. Artists training

The research aspect of 'Why/how Opera Education'-project was located in the working group 'Future of Opera' (WG3).

Mapping of current practice in Opera Education

Before investigating the 'Why'-question, WG3 decided that a descriptive mapping of the existing work of Education Departments within RESEO would clarify the context for further work on the rationale or 'why' aspect. In order to achieve this a questionnaire was designed to survey members of RESEO. The first questions of the survey were designed to demonstrate the profile of the participating opera companies and subsequent questions concentrated on the work of their education departments..

The outcomes of the survey gave an overview of current practice within Opera Education Education and this work was presented at the November 2002 RESEO meeting at Como and in a subsequent report by Dr Val Tee and Professor Peter Tomlinson of the University of Leeds.

The Present 'Why Opera education' Work and Parallel Research

Following acceptance of the survey findings, the RESEO steering committee requested Working Group 3 to carry out further research focusing more specifically on the 'why' aspects of Opera education, in time to be reported at the May 2003 RESEO meeting and in a written version for September 2003.

Parallel to this new work and pre-dating it, I had with support from RESEO commenced research into the same issue for a PhD at the University of Leeds under the supervision of Dr Tee and Professor Tomlinson. As a first step in this work, I had started to review literature on the broader cultural context relating to opera and opera education, and had presented some initial thoughts on this area in my paper to the RESEO autumn meeting in Como, November 2002. Another strand of my PhD work already commenced in discussion with my supervisors was the development of interview methodology for studying the views of a relevant sample of persons from the opera world concerning 'why opera education'.

Given the urgency of achieving some findings by the requested date and the existence of my own preparatory work, the most economical way forward was obviously to enable those members of working group 3 interested in contributing to this further research activity to build as a team on our preparatory work. This WG3 study would in return function as a pilot study for my own doctoral research with a wider sample of respondents. An introduction to the research interview methodology was therefore provided by Peter Tomlinson through e-mail communication with the WG3 Interview Study Group (Ann Laenen, Maria Larsdottir, Katie Tearle, Val Tee, Peter Tomlinson plus Luke O'Shaughnessy) and on this basis the group developed a specific interview agenda

during a marathon weekend set of intensive meetings at the Gothenberg opera house in February 2003.

2. The Present Study

Approach and Methodology

The WG3 Interview Study Group took the view that the question 'Why Opera education?' may be taken generally to refer to Opera education policy and its rationale - in other words, the reasons and reasoning of relevant persons in RESEO concerning what they think should be the aims and strategies of Opera education.. However, this may include a considerable range of levels and issues, and, amongst these, different people may stress different aspects and levels. There was therefore need for an interview methodology which would ensure the gathering of views on a broad and inclusive range of aspects. The Group was assured, for example, that the Steering Group was not interested simply in hearing recommendations for and against specific educational strategies, though these would be an important part of the overall picture.

On the other hand, the group was obviously concerned to get as far as possible at respondents' own perspectives and thinking, and therefore to minimise the likelihood of influencing the expression of these, for example, by the use of rigid forms of question and interview procedure which might implicitly bias responding. The group was therefore happy to adopt the *hierarchical focusing* research interview approach (Tomlinson, 1989; Hobson, 1998). In this approach, an agenda of aspects/questions of interest is drawn up, from broad to specific, but the interview starts with the interviewer putting only a relatively broad question which has the potential to elicit the respondents views on all other aspects of the agenda. Specific elements in the agenda are only raised to the extent that the respondent does not cover them spontaneously in the prompted development of their response to the initial broad question. Which aspects are mentioned spontaneously or not is obviously one aspect of interest that can be followed up in this sort of approach.

Therefore, whilst a research report such as this would normally present the whole interview agenda, in the present case that is ruled out by the fact that I shall be administering this interview approach to a considerable further number of persons in the Opera and Opera education world beyond the sample covered here (see sampling section below). To mention specific aspects would potentially change the nature of those interviews for anyone who had seen the full agenda. What can be given is the initial question of the agenda, which is the one question all respondents are asked, namely:

> For you, what should be the purposes of opera education, who should provide it, and what ways of working should they use to achieve these aims?

In the work being reported here, interviews using this approach and agenda were carried out by WG3 members of the interview study group plus in some cases their local colleagues. A total of 5 interviewers were involved and it should be mentioned that for most of these it had not been possible to provide anything approaching the level of training normally required for this rather demanding approach. The instances to be reported below come in both cases from interviews conducted by myself.

Sampling and Procedure

In total 21 interviews were carried out in 7 different countries and in 6 different languages, mainly on a face-to-face basis, but in some cases by telephone. The interview sample included opera education personnel and some directors of opera houses. In all cases, including those conducted by telephone, interviews were tape-recorded: their duration was between 45 and 60 minutes.

In keeping with standard ethical practice in modern social research and to maximise their freedom of expression, respondents were assured of confidentiality and that in the reporting of findings, anonymity would be preserved with respect to their own identities and those of their institutions. Consequently, for example, reporting in this paper will be gender-neutral, making use of devices such as "her/his", "s/he" and so on.

Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

Doing justice to the research aims and large amount of recorded data in this sort of research is normally taken to require firstly verbatim transcription, nowadays typically into electronically word-processed written form. This is followed by analysis for the range of concepts and views characterising the interviewee outlooks at various levels of generality-specificity, such analysis nowadays also typically making use of computer packages for the analysis of qualitative data and requiring various forms of reliability checking.

Given the lack of available time and sufficient further funding, even transcription of the 21 interviews was out of the question, let alone the completion of further analysis. Those interviews that had been adequately conducted from the point of view of hierarchical focusing principles could in due course be transcribed and analysed as part of my own doctoral work. In order to meet the required RESEO timescale, for present purposes it was therefore decided to present necessarily partial findings on the basis of two contrasting selective analyses: one overviewing general trends and the other illustrating detailed analysis within specific themes. In due course, the doctoral work will seek to combine both of these approaches in examining the entire extended sample of interviews, including those yet to be conducted.

Preliminary Analysis of General Trends

In order to arrive swiftly at an initial picture of major themes and variations, each interviewer was asked to provided a brief bullet-point summary of the views expressed by each of the respondents they interviewed. These summaries were collected and examined by Val Tee, who in turn summarised their general themes, trends and variations. These findings were reported by her at the 2003 Barcelona meeting of RESEO and will feature in her written report.

Selective In-Depth Focus

By contrast, the present report uses direct quotations from transcriptions of just two specific interviews in a much more detailed and hopefully sensitive way. This in order to illustrate some of the subtle variations in thinking that may emerge regarding relatively specific issues within the overall domain referred to by the question 'why opera education?'. The four strands selected were:

- *Audience Development:* including aspects of widening and educating the audience.

- *The Public Profile of Opera:* bringing aspects on the 'performance venue' and the 'image of opera' together.

- *Direct Value to Society:* linking in with 'civic responsibility'.

- *Opera Companies and Arts Education:* focussing on relations with school curriculum.

These strands were selected for a number of reasons, including their apparent importance and interest, the particular mix of similarity and contrast with respect to these areas in this particular pair of interviews, and their connection with one of the central issues so far emerging from my exploration of relevant background literature, based on 'cultural choice'.

3. Selected Findings: Two Respondents on Four Themes

The parts of the interviews selected are presented below in tabular form opposite each other in order to see where they agreed and where they contrasted. Similar views, with sometimes subtle differences, were put opposite to one another. When topics where raised by one interviewee that did not seem to match with the other respondents' view within the given area, the field next to the topic was left blank.

A. Audience Development

Audience Development is a very persistent theme for both interviewees. As is shown in table 1, reaching a different audience seems to be important in relation to the future of the art form.

Table 1 Interview Excerpts relating to Audience Development	
Respondent/Opera Company 1	**Respondent/Opera Company 2**
- Throughout the years we noticed that opera attracts the same people over and over again. An audience that is convinced by the genre and passes this over from generation to generation, through subscription. We also detected a certain loss of breath in the audience. So we need to go to another audience. We need to enlarge.	- It is not the task of Theatre education, it is the task of a company to be thinking about its audience of the future. Of course when I see that the average age of our subscribers is about 70 then we should – as culture-creative persons - be worried about the future.

Table 1 continued: Interview Excerpts relating to Audience Development	
- (…) It might sound strange, but as time goes by I'm less interested in the existing audience. They come, they see and they like the performance or they do not like it and that is it. They don't stop coming. (…)	- Our target group is age 10 until graduation. With our restricted offer we try to be as open as possible to their interests and wishes.
What interests me is to find out how to make us known, how to get the attention of the young and the less young that that are so captive but that never had the chance to come.	(…) In the early days children would have had the chance to go to the theatre or to a museum with their family(…) today this only happens sporadically, so extra help is welcome. (…) It is evident to me that we are absolutely entitled offer this help through our programmes for teachers and youngsters.
- (…) We will never be able to reach everyone, but anyway we might hope that those who are sensitive for Opera have the chance to access the art form. In some European countries Opera is much more popular, much more involved in the social life of the city than in France. Take for instance Italy (…). And one sees that in the countries where music education in school is at a high level (…) the audience so to speak enlarges itself.	
- (…) so this is why this house focuses a lot on a young audience to conquer, because they are the links with their families and friends. They talk about what they've seen. (…) it is a snowball effect. (…) I had the chance to come with my parents as a child. I liked it so I kept coming. Friends of mine didn't like it. They choose other things to go to.	- Today financially practically everyone can afford to buy a ticket for the Opera, the problem is that there are so many other things you can do. So we should try to take away the barriers and show that opera can be something for the young too. (…) it is not difficult to convince them that going to a tropical swimming pool is fun, but it is not easy to explain them that it is 'fun' to go to the theatre.

Audience Development: Similarities

As may be read from the quotes, both views link in with the "not-reached" audience. The interviewees seem to detect a certain stagnation in the profile of the 'usual' operagoer, which might become problematic in the future. In the frame of their audience development programmes they focus on the potential audience that doesn't attend a performance or that didn't have the chance yet to attend a performance. They think they should try to attract their attention and offer them the possibility to come and see an opera.

Audience Development: Differences

Respondent 1 (R1)'s target group appears to be the 'wider' public. In order to attract the attention of this group two tactics seem relevant:

- look for ways to reach out into the community and so attract the attention of those might be sensitive to the art form,
- open up to give 'easier' access to those that want to attend a performance and never had the chance to do so.

R1 seems to presume that in a country where opera is more popular and more involved in the social life of the city, the 'enlargement' of the audience is more evident. This respondent also presumes that in countries where the music education in school reaches a high level, the audience enlarges itself. But is this so? Do a closer involvement with the community and a better musical education lead to a 'larger' audience for Opera?

The view on Audience Development becomes even more complex when it is linked with the perspectives for the future. R1 seems to hope that the 'enlargement' of the audience will take away the 'loss of breath' that seemed to have come over the existing audience and thus revitalise the Opera.

But one might ask what are the criteria here to measure against? Why would this new audience be 'more exciting' than the existing one? What are the criteria here? Why would they be 'more critical' and how can 'being more critical' be related to 'more alive? It isn't said that by enlarging the audience, one would be able to change the profile of the audience. So there remain questions as to what is to be understood when people talk about audience 'enlargement'. Is it just having more people involved in opera or is it reaching a new/'more aware' audience. It seems that the aspects of 'widening' and 'educating' are interlinked here, and that a distinction between the two of them is not easy to make, as might be detected through R1's viewpoint: on the one hand 'reaching a bigger' audience (e.g. go out into the community and attract the attention those sensitive for Opera especially the youngsters because they are the link with family and friends), but it might as well be 'reaching' a 'new aware' audience (e.g. create a critical young audience).

Respondent 2 (R2)'s perspective shows another aspect of this complex subject of audience development. This respondent focuses on the 'young' audience and the teachers in order to give them the opportunity to discover Opera and art in general. S/he sees it as the company's task to take over where today's society has stopped being concerned about the cultural development of people and of children especially. Her/his view on the enlargement of the audience and its future perspectives is subtle, because even though it is not seen as being the task of Education to worry about the future audience, R2 is clearly concerned about the future by trying to convince the youngsters that Opera can be something for them too.

B. The public profile of Opera

The second theme selected from the outcomes of the interviews focuses on the profile of Opera in the public's awareness. The art form apparently has to compete with a lot of prejudices nowadays.

Table 2: Interview Excerpts Relating to the Public Profile Of Opera	
Respondent/Opera Company 1	**Respondent/Opera Company 2**
- We must see to it that the youngsters learn to know the performing arts. If not they will never choose to go to a performance. (…) Once they've been to a performance they can decide whether they like opera or not.	- We have to show the younger ones that Opera can be something they might like. That it is fun and that it is relaxing. So we should try to take away the prejudices and make it evident to a child that their 'leisure time' –pallet can have a cultural aspect too..
- It is a matter of giving them at least the chance to choose. We don't impose. We don't say.: come, its is fantastic, you're going to love it. But it is at least about knowing and choosing. I had the chance, when I was little that my parents gave me that chance. I liked it and I stayed.	- You might like or dislike things aesthetically, but to know why you like art or why you don't like it is not so easy to define. (…) So it is important to me that at least young people get extra tools, so that they can decide whether they like the presented art form or not.

Table 2 continued: Interview Excerpts relating to the public profile of Opera	
Respondent/Opera Company 1	**Respondent/Opera Company 2**
- We should not forget that our buildings are intimidating. (…) Us working in these venues got so used to the gold painting and the red velvet that we don't realise anymore how sometimes our buildings intimidate. (….)We struggle with the 19th century image of a rich and posh venue. So we must explain to youngsters that they are welcome even when casually dressed. We must show them that the Opera isn't reserved to an elite.	
- We should take care that the first step to take is an easy one. (…) We shouldn't challenge them too much. We wouldn't offer them *Pelleas and Melisande* , but (…) *The Magic Flute*.	- We just try to bring shows that can be enjoyed by the audience and for which they don't need to know the directors 'language' to understand the Opera performed on stage.

Public/Profile: Similarities

For both interviewees it is a challenge to try and overcome the prejudices regarding Opera. They recognize the fact that Opera isn't an art form you would easily chose to go to when you might want to go out, and that there are quite some barriers that keep someone from making the choice to go to the Opera, so it is 'Education's' task to see how they can overcome these barriers. The respondents named 3 possible restrictions:

- Opera isn't part of the youngsters' everyday life

- Opera is complex (intellectual restriction)

- Opera is elite (referring to the venue) (physical-social restriction)

One of the restrictions both interviewees refer to is their view that Opera simply isn't part of the youngsters' daily life, so in order to be able to choose for Opera the youngsters have to come to know about it. For both interviewees it is thus very important to introduce the art form to that target group, so that they might consider it being worth experiencing at least once. That first experience should take place in the best circumstances. Once they've been at the Opera they can decide whether they like the art form or not. Both respondents seem to think that the 'once in a lifetime' experience might influence the future choices of the young opera attendee. But in the end it is the individual that decides whether he or she wants to go to a performance. This seems to echo the argument offered by J.Jonson:

> It is, of course, our individual right to choose not to be open to the experience of artworks. But it is a free choice only if it is an informed one: there is no freedom in rejecting what has been kept closed to us. Having

cultural choice about art implies that we have encountered the thing about which we exercise choice. *(2002:116)*

Giving the opportunity to discover the art form is a first step in opening up this art form and bringing it into the picture of possible choices. But there are also further issues to be explored here, such as how far 'one excellent experience' may be enough to convince the individual to come and enjoy an Opera. Other influences and circumstances can keep someone from liking Opera even after having experienced it even a number of times.

There are two other restrictions mentioned by the respondents in which they differ slightly.

Public Profile: Differences

Intellectual restriction:. Opera is also identified as being a 'complex' art form, and thus difficult to access, which seems to correspond to Wilensky's perception of High Culture referring to:

> two characteristics of the product: first it is created by, or under the supervision of a cultural elite operating within some aesthetic, literary or scientific tradition, and secondly, critical standards independent of the consumer of the product are systematically applied to it. (Vulliamy 1977:179-180).

For R2 this complexity has more to do with the way the Operas are staged than with the art form itself. If the story is clearly staged, everyone should be able to enjoy Opera. Although certain target groups, such as youngsters, might need extra tools to understand what the presented Opera is about.

R1 relates to the art form itself. Some Operas seem more accessible than others, so in order to make the first Opera Experience successful one should see to it that it is a 'light' step to take, by using an 'easy' Opera from the repertoire. This view highlights the complexity of the matter, though, and may give rise to further questions, such as: what are the criteria to define whether an Opera is 'easy' or not? Do we know whether, let alone why 'The Magic Flute' is better as a first experience than 'Pelleas and Melisande' - even if you give your audience the keys to this opera? The answers may differ according to the viewpoint of the person looking at the question and this might be an interesting area for future research.

So to give easier access, both interviewees point out one need to acquaint people with the standards and the language of Opera. This raises an interesting question and opens a complex debate, because can we presume that the conveying of what Opera is about will lead to a 'less' complex view of the art form and that this will thus become more accessible? First of all, do these specific standards exist? In fact these standards might just lie in the experience of the spectator (Cook 1998:73), so it seems difficult to define the standards at first sight. Furthermore the nature of culture being on the one hand a given society's whole way of life, and being a way of expressing oneself in that society on the other hand (UNESCO 1982), seems to lead to the fact that what is considered to 'difficult' and 'high standard' at one period in time, might be 'common' at another moment in time. Culture and Society cannot be seen apart from on another. "*What people value in one period they might find ridiculous in the next, and what today seems dignified and honourable may tomorrow seem senseless and corrupt*" (Scruton 1997:474). So changes in society may influence the way we 'see' and 'consume' culture.

In this perspective one might say that in a post-modern world, people are generally not going to be swayed by standards generated by other groups, specifically if seen as 'high' culture groups:

> *Art is what you perceive as art: a Brillo box isn't suddenly art because*
> *Warhol puts a stacked bunch of them in a Museum. But by putting them*
> *there he encourages you to make your every trip to the supermarket an*
> *artistic adventure*

- as John Rockwell said when talking about Andy Warhol's works (Storey 2001:149). This immediately questions the so-called 'high' and 'complex' art forms such as opera might be measured against.

Seeing the influences of changes in society on our cultural behaviour in relation to the 21st century, one notices that certain cultural changes do affect our every day life (Chaney 2002):

- The cultural homogeneity of conventional experience has been broken up. Waves of immigration and mass tourism made 'cultural diversity' become standard rather than exceptional.

- The means of entertainment for ordinary people have been have vastly expanded. Mass media blurred the distinctiveness between 'high' culture and 'popular' culture.

- An expansion of leisure time has changed daily rhythm and has brought into life a new range of consumer goods and services.

This results in a crossover of cultural and non-cultural leisure activities. The differentiation between 'high' and 'easier to access' art forms has faded (McLean 1997:25). One evening a cultural consumer would go to the opera, the other evening to a musical or a pop concert and enjoy both. Some sociologist like to call these consumers 'cultural omnivores' (Van den Broek 2000: 39, Peterson 1992) fact is that they no longer distinguish these art forms from one another.

Regarding these cultural changes the intellectual restriction based on the appointed 'complexity' and 'difficulty' of the art form, might not be solved just by 'introducing' Opera to those that 'up to now' didn't come to a performance. A more detailed analysis of these viewpoints against 21st century cultural changes might lead to interesting results in the future.

Social-Physical restriction: R1 points out that the venue might be intimidating. The 'posh' and rich interior of certain houses built in the 19th century seem to make people think that Opera is too expensive and only there for an 'elite'. 'Elite" in the sense of being related to a 'select' group of people that has leadership in some sphere of social life, understood to be relatively homogeneous and with a largely closed membership (Edgar, 2000:124-125). A question is whether 'elite' can be related here solely to the venue. R1 can try to convince 'youngsters' that they shouldn't fear entering the majestic venue to enjoy opera, but will the fact that they can come dressed casually take away the 'negative' connotation of 'elite' to the art form? Is 'elite' to be considered 'negative'? Again this highlights how strong the art form is related to values and interpretations within a given society at a certain moment in time.

C. Direct Value to Society

Both interviewees see it as their task to lower the barriers and take away the prejudices on Opera, so that it becomes easier accessible to everyone. This leads into a third strand that can be identified amidst the views of the interviewees, based on the direct value to society offered by the Opera Companies. The relevant interview excerpts are presented below in able 3.

Table 3: Interview Excerpts relating to Direct Value to Society	
Respondent/Opera Company 1	**Respondent/Opera Company 2**
- To me it is even a civic responsibility we have to take. If we don't do it we go against our mission as public theatre. This theatre gets 2/3 funding from the authorities (the other 1/3 are patronage and ticketing). So if this 2/3 is just used for the percentage of people that are already convinced by the art form, this seems unacceptable to me. So this house concentrates a lot on the young audience (…) to experience opera. (…) That is one aspect of the answer; the other aspect of the answer involves filming and broadcasting performances so that they can be diffused to an as wide audience as possible, geographically. Because the real problem of our houses is that they are concentrated in the cities, but that the majority of the population lives on the country. And it doesn't make sense that the funding we get is just reserved to the people that can come to the opera house, so the diffusion of Opera through broadcasting and film helps. (…) I want to create sort of a heritage of performances that stay available and can be seen by many	
Table 3 continued: **Interview Excerpts relating to Direct Value to Society**	
Respondent/Opera Company 1	**Respondent/Opera Company 2**

	- I think we can agree on the fact that art is a something to enjoy and that art plays an important role in peoples lives.*(…)* But I realise that people need a reason to take that first step to go and enjoy art. Years ago your parents would take you to a performance, (…)but the possibility to enjoy art isn't something so common nowadays that everyone gets at home or at school. (…) so for me it is important that youngsters get some assistance to gain better understanding and so become more sensitive for the enjoyment of art. It seems pretty clear to me we, as an arts institution, have to take a responsibility here and that is wider than to get a bigger audience.
	(…)To me it is loud and clear that our work with youngsters and teachers is absolutely justified (…) and necessary.
- The gap between the ministry of education and the ministry of culture is too big (…) so the theatres nowadays have taken their responsibility and said, ok we will propose you a young audience policy. We will address ourselves towards the teachers and they can than address themselves to the youngsters, the adolescents	

Direct value to society: Similarities

Both respondents see it as their civil task to give something back to society. The way this task is defined differs, which highlights the diverse aspects 'civic responsibility' might have. It is guided by the way the cultural institution is seen and sees itself within the world that surrounds it.

Direct value to society: Differences

R1 is guided by the fact that the amount of funding received from the authorities needs to be justified. This budget can't just be spent on performances for the regular audience that attends a performance. One should give as many people as possible the chance to enjoy the art form. This can be 'life' through attending a performance at the Opera or via Video, DVD or broadcasting. The 'young audience policy' is another way of meeting with their civic responsibility.

For R2 it isn't the funding that guides their civic responsibility, but the fact that as a public cultural institution one should simply offer the possibility to enjoy the art form.

Everyone has the right to enjoy art, which possibly relates to art. 27 of the Human Rights (UN, 1948), which states that *Everyone has the right freely….to enjoy the arts*. But it is a passive right. People have to take the first step themselves to actually go out and enjoy an art form. Years back your parents or school would take you to an Opera, today this isn't common anymore, so it is up to the cultural institutions to fill out that blank and guide especially the young people towards a first Opera experience.

D. Arts Education and Opera Companies

The idea of guiding young people in their ways towards performances also raises questions about the position of Opera Company educational activity with respect to Arts Education in the primary and secondary school system.

Table 4: Interview Excerpts relating to Arts Education and Opera Companies	
Respondent/Opera Company 1	**Respondent/Opera Company 2**
- Unfortunately the National Education System regarding music or theatre education is very week, so we should take this voluntary step towards education. (…) it is not because of the teachers, because they are very willing to go in an other direction. Their demand is bigger than we can offer each season (…) But it is the structure of the national education system that leads to a huge gap between the ministry of education and the ministry of culture.	- Years ago cultural education was simply part of the overall development of a child. Today this isn't the case any longer. It now seems more important to be well trained in science, mechanics, mathematics and computer science, than to be trained in arts. (…) I believe that this is the fate of the 'humanities' courses nowadays. Life is hard, we should study what is financially productive.. (…) not knowing musical pieces isn't such a shame anymore. (…) a lot of teachers have difficulties bringing an 'Opera project' into their programme because school don't allow such extras anymore.
Table 4 continued: **Interview Excerpts relating to Arts Education and Opera Companies**	
- (…) So the theatres now took their responsibility and started to propose a 'young audience' – policy. - It's the teacher's task to prepare their pupils with the materials and information we offer them to work within the Classroom. Once they enter the building they are taken care of by our personnel so that they can enjoy the Opera in the best circumstances	- So arts education needs a little help. At least we have to fill out the blanks in the system, concentrating on music theatre
- The 'inter-active' projects are very rich and moving extraordinary experience to us (…) and to the youngsters that participated.	

	- We decided we needed to provide easier access to teachers and youngsters. (…)We organise 'Insight days' in which we explain and show what Opera is about. The 'insights' are based on a specific opera and give the opportunity to experience all aspects of Opera

Arts education: Similarities

Since the position of 'arts education' within the formal education system weakened the Opera Companies see it also as their civil task to assist the formal education system in this field focussing on music theatre and opera. They try to convey their experience and knowledge on the subject to teachers and students in the best way possible.

This brings three elements into focus, which shows how manifold this viewpoint is:

1. What do the respondents see as 'art' and what as 'culture'? It is not clear whether the respondents see 'culture' as 'art' or whether 'art is part of culture'. It might be that the respondents here define Opera as part of the broader cultural picture and see it as their task try to convey their experience and knowledge on the subject to teachers and students in the best way possible, in assistance to the education system.

2. How is the 'the national education system' defined here? For the respondents this refers to the primary and secondary school system as well as to teachers.

3. The place of culture and/or art in society seems to have changed. This brings the 'entangled' view on 'culture' and 'society' into focus and the 'value' a certain society at a certain moment in time offers to 'aspects of culture' and to 'culture' in general. Cultural critics such as Raymond Williams in 'Culture and Society' point towards this: '*The traditional culture of a society will always tend to correspond to its contemporary systems of interest and values, for it is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation*' (storey 2001:46-47). So it is an open question whether the formal education system and the authorities are to blame in the weakening of 'musical' education. In how far has trend something to do with the set of values and interest the society of today puts forward?

To get a clearer picture on the respondents' view arts education and the role of the cultural institution here one might measure this role against the actual view on culture in the European society.

Arts Education: differences in the way this knowledge and experience is transferred:

- **For R1** the way to transfer their knowledge and experience acts in 3 ways: transferring knowledge to the students in partnership with the teachers, give the youngsters the possibility to discover and enjoy the art form in the utmost circumstances and give young people the chance to take part in participatory

projects. The latter is seen enriching and moving for those taking part as well as for the Opera personnel involved.

- **R2** works in two ways: transferring knowledge to teachers and students themselves, and giving them the chance to experience opera through specially designed insight days covering most aspects of Opera.

4. Concluding Note

This more in-depth, but highly selective approach of looking at the views of just two respondents on four possible aspects of Opera Education is too restricted to be able to draw conclusions at this stage, but the materials cited in this preliminary report show the delicacy and the complexity of the matters involved. The respondents agree to a considerable extent on most of the aspects, but they also contrast in subtle ways, showing how rich the area and in particular the remainder of the present interview study, may be in terms of further probing and analyses.

In the PhD work I hope to look at some of the issues raised in a more thorough way, including the questions raised while writing this interim report, based on a wider set of views on opera education of people working within Opera, across Europe.

5. Acknowledgements

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