

## Artistic Development of Young Professional Singers



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## Chapter I. Mapping the Research

### 1. Introduction

This book is an edited version of PhD research on the term *artistic development* undertaken from the perspective of cultural institutions studies. It is an attempt to fill the gaps and enrich the existing literature by examining the term in the context of the performing arts, opera in particular. The choice of this subject is a result of personal interest; it is also an outcome of my professional orientation towards opera and young singers in particular. My academic studies in Musicology, Music Education and Arts Management have offered me knowledge and an increasing love of opera and interest in its institutions. My engagement with the European Opera Centre has enabled me to experience at first hand the context in which young singers start their professional lives and build their careers.

The purpose of this research is: to examine the term *artistic development* from a cultural institutions studies perspective; to offer an insight into its associations and characteristics and to provide a definition; to discuss if and how artistic development is practised in developing young opera singers, to identify associated issues and issues for further research; also, to highlight the importance of artistic development and its relevance to associated initiatives such as Young Artists Programmes and to offer reasons for public funding authorities to support such initiatives.

I was soon to realize that this research is original since there is no available information on the term from the point of view of cultural institutions studies. This contribution is a discussion of *artistic development* within the framework of the interdisciplinary field of cultural institutions studies, with insights from disciplines such

as aesthetics, musicology, performance studies, cultural studies, human resource management, cultural economics and cultural policy and management.

### 2. The Rationale of Research

Although the term *artistic development* is used widely in performing arts as well as in policy documents, little, if any, research has been conducted on the subject. The lack of literature specifically for *artistic development* itself was therefore the most important challenge faced; at the same time this was the biggest opportunity to justify the importance of the research.

Literature comes from areas as diverse as aesthetics, performance studies, cultural policy, cultural studies (particularly parts that refer to cultural production and the cultural labour market), cultural economics and Human Resource Management. All literature was selected because of its association with the term, describing as it does the process and principles of *artistic development*. The term has also been researched from the view point of developmental psychology and some reference is made to that here. However, as this project investigates a different perspective on the subject, all references to the term from other disciplines are used to highlight and discuss this different view in the approach to *artistic development*.

The variety of areas included allowed me to ensure that performing artists and singers in particular are viewed from a perspective which is as wide as possible: they are students and teachers, therefore form a part of the education system; they are artists and therefore hold and transmit aesthetic values; they are part of the labour force and the human resources of an arts organization, but also subject to policy instruments, markets and institutional policies.

A part of the research is also dedicated to citing and discussing quotations from various literature re-

sources, all referring to *artistic development*. This I have decided to include in order to investigate the way the term is used in contemporary literature, as well as to present other terms with which it is associated (for example, *professional development*), to discuss these associations and to reflect on issues emerging from them.

After conducting a preliminary research in 90 opera organizations, I identified the following 15 opera companies which had schemes for young artists:

1. The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, London
2. Teatro alla Scala, Milan
3. Opéra National de Paris
4. Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin
5. English National Opera, London
6. Bayerische Staatsoper Munich
7. Oper Graz
8. Opéra National du Rhin, Strasbourg
9. Lithuanian National Opera, Vilnius
10. Oper Köln
11. Hamburgische Staatsoper
12. Opernstudio der Region Nürnberg<sup>1</sup>
13. Opernhaus Zürich
14. National Opera Studio, London
15. Amsterdam Opera Studio

I have tried to identify those young Artists schemes which are conducted on a regular, long-term basis and are not simply workshops or seminars of limited duration; they are programmes in which young artists have the opportunity to participate in productions in addition to receiving coaching and classes. The

<sup>1</sup> Found no further information until February 2011 apart from the website which was under construction.

preliminary trawl was conducted mainly by internet research but also by telephone, in order to identify whether the organization had a programme such as the one described above. The list includes not only houses with an international reputation such as the Royal Opera Covent Garden and La Scala, but smaller houses too, and also companies whose artistic policy differs from the norm (such as English National Opera, at which operas are sung exclusively in English).

I decided also to include the European Opera Centre which, although is not a Programme in the aforementioned sense, is involved in artistic development but in different ways. In order to provide a picture of the position in the United States I have also included the Programmes of four major opera companies: The Metropolitan Opera, New York, Chicago Lyric Opera, San Francisco Opera and Houston Grand Opera.

Key areas of the artistic development process in opera in the context of this research are the postgraduate opera courses in conservatories and music colleges, Young Artists Programmes (YAPs), opera institutions themselves, the music media and individual performing artists. Interviewees, therefore, are involved in all these stages of the artistic development process. Interviews were conducted with directors of postgraduate opera courses, directors of Young Artists Programmes, opera critics, singing teachers preparing people for opera and artists from differing backgrounds, either in terms of national or educational practice; singers who have completed postgraduate opera courses were interviewed as were members of Young Artists Programmes, and singers who did not attend such a Programme.

Important primary research material was acquired mostly through semi-structured interviews. In total, 27 interviews were conducted, mostly in person after an initial contact with the interviewees explaining the research project and asking for their consent to participate. In those cases where interviews in per-

son were not practicable (for instance, in the United States) the interviewee was given the option of either a telephone interview or being sent questions by e-mail and responding by email. All interviewees chose the second option mainly because of tight and unpredictable schedules (and the time difference in the US cases) which would not readily allow a telephone interview.

Apart from interviews, informal discussions were held with some 150 singers at the beginning of the research. The purpose of these informal discussions was to map the field of artistic development before progressing to formal and codified means of primary data collection (such as the semi-structured interviews). These discussions were not recorded on tape but on paper as notes, and proved important in gaining useful information in the early stages of the research, helping to shape the research procedure.

In addition, during my time at the European Opera Centre I was able to participate in the auditions held by the Centre every year, in which about 2000 young singers were heard. As the European Opera Centre is the only opera organization in Europe dedicated to developing exclusively young European singers, I was able to obtain a clear idea of the situation of young singers in Europe today as well as to hear young singers (especially those who auditioned more than once in the period) and identify their progress and change. This was enhanced by the use of diaries kept since 2003 during work with the Centre; these allowed me to have to hand a significant quantity of high-quality material used in this research.

### 3. Arts Management as Research Field

As a starting point, I used Derrick Chong's argument that arts management is an interdisciplinary field since it encompasses a wide variety of other areas; in order to address issues that fall within arts management it is therefore necessary to adopt a synthetic

approach. His argument that "the interaction between managerial, economic and aesthetic objectives, which all visual and performing arts organizations in contemporary society must confront, has gained increasing attention" (Chong, 2002: 3) proved to be fundamental for this research; this approach was justified at its conclusion.

By applying Chong's opinion, I felt *artistic development* in the context of arts management should be examined from the perspective of more than one area if a researcher wants to acquire the broadest possible view of the term. So in the initial stages of the research, and in order to find what these perspectives would be, I broke down the term *artistic development* to examine its two components: *artistic* is related to art and is synonymous with a philosophical/ aesthetic aspect.; *development* is more practical and seemed associated to disciplines of a more applicable orientation such as performance studies, vocational training research and perhaps management theory.

Chong's argument about the industrial economy's three-stage process was also relevant to this research. In *Arts Management*, Chong (Chong 2002: 13) argues that "the classical industrial economy is represented as a three-stage process from *production* to *distribution* to *consumption*. This is analogous to how some perceive the basic elements of a performance: the creative raw material and a person or persons to interpret the material (production); a place to present the material (distribution); and an audience to witness the performance (consumption)" (Chong 2002: 13). I realized that by taking into consideration all stakeholders of the artistic development process, I would include all three stages of performance according to Chong; that is artists for the production stage, critics and opera organizations for the distribution and audiences for the consumption.

After the research was completed, I appreciated that using Chong's argument as a starting point was ju-

stified. The interdisciplinarity of arts management – very obvious throughout this research – is an advantage for researchers as it allows them to gain insight from many disciplines, hence providing a holistic perspective on their research subject. I also realized that all the fields and areas that I decided to include overlap at some point, so using only one, any one approach, and excluding others would not provide either the necessary information or a clear, rounded, complete and inclusive a picture as possible.

### *Arts Management and Cultural Institutions Studies (Kulturbetriebslehre)*

Referring to arts management, Chong (2002) argues that from the 1960s there are points of contact between the arts and management practice in general – hence that an interdisciplinary approach is required in the field, especially since the theoretical texts relating to arts management come from a wide range of important disciplines both in and beyond for the subject area. These disciplines include, but are not limited to, cultural economics, sociology of culture, art history, cultural policy, museology and management theory (such as marketing and organization studies for example). As a result, synthesis of these disciplines has proved to be crucial in discussions in the field of cultural management and an interdisciplinary approach a necessary requirement.

There is also an approach practiced at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna in the Institute for Cultural Management and Cultural Studies that aims for an “interdisciplinary, scientific explanatory knowledge of cultural institutions” (Hasitschka 1997: 89 in Tschmuck 2006: xvi). Kulturbetriebslehre (cultural institutions studies) was introduced in the late 1980s and developed in part from the disciplines of cultural economics and cultural management. It is an academic approach which “investigates activities in the cultural sector, conceived as historically evolved societal forms of organising the conception,

production, distribution, propagation, interpretation, reception, conservation and maintenance of specific cultural goods” (Zembylas 2004: 13).

Cultural institutions in this framework are not only organizations but also “explicit rules and implicit conventions that constitute and stabilize cultural praxis” (Hasitschka, Tschmuck & Zembylas 2005: 153), they are institutions that produce “cultural symbols”. The focus of research in cultural institutions studies is thus concentrated on the transformation of cultural symbols into cultural goods (for a detailed and thorough discussion on Kulturbetriebslehre see Zembylas 2004). Within this framework, however, cultural goods exist generally in institutional environments – in the contexts in which they are produced and consumed.

Cultural institutions studies aims at providing simultaneously analysis both for cultural goods and cultural services considering both their economic and symbolic functions. The difference between cultural management studies and cultural institutions studies is primarily that cultural institutions studies goes a step beyond cultural management studies. Cultural management studies is more practical, more applicable, combining art and management theory. It embraces discourse on cultural goods; but cultural institutions studies goes deeper, examining the function of cultural symbols from an economic, social and political aspect. Cultural goods are observed using a holistic approach which examines them in their entire functionality – symbolically as well as economically; the economic function cannot be fully understood without the symbolic and vice versa. Both symbolic and economic functions are implicit and cultural goods cannot be viewed without considering both aspects simultaneously (Tschmuck 2006).

According to Hasitschka, Tschmuck and Zembylas (2005: 147) cultural institution studies include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The explanation of the process by which cultural goods form significant, symbolically charged entities and of their transformation into objects possessing economic exchange value.
2. The analysis of those cultural practices and their institutional embedding which characterise the production and circulation of cultural goods in a constructive and regulated way.
3. The research of the specific characteristics of cultural institutions as organizational entities.
4. The examination of the social organization of art and cultural jobs as well as other activities (i.e. consumption, reception, etc).

In cultural institutions studies the borders between disciplines are fluid and sometimes overlap, which proves to be useful and necessary in acquiring a holistic approach of the subject. Cultural institution studies is also about processes and theory-building. From all the above, therefore, I believe this work falls happily within the remit of cultural institutions studies, especially as one of its aims is to investigate processes and to theorize.

#### 4. Practical Use of the Research

The results of the research can find practical use in cultural policy design and implementation schemes. They can be useful sources of information for observation of the profession itself and its changing characteristics; and they can be used in designing and implementing programmes for young artists' training and development and in identifying and changing aspects of education that do not meet the needs of the profession. As the research attempts to answer questions relating to what, why, how and discusses consequences, it can provide reasons and rationales for implementing policies at national and European Union level.

Since arts organizations are also involved in shaping taste, another use of the research could potentially be in developing singers who would themselves assist in developing and widening audiences for opera through their artistry and excellence. This use needs long term dedication and commitment by opera houses and opera organizations; it seems to be crucial for their future especially nowadays when opera is facing the biggest crisis since its inception.

Consuming opera is influenced by aesthetic, educational, social and financial factors; so cultural policy in opera needs to be aware of these factors, must be able to react to them and must examine the role of the cultural institutions involved in this consumption. It is hoped that this research provides an insight within these parameters, being a useful source of information from this perspective.

#### 5. Brief Description of Chapters

Apart from this introduction, this book comprises three main chapters. Chapter two is an overview of the opera singer's field of activity. It includes a short history of singers in opera and of the operatic profession; a discussion of singers' educational courses; issues relating to the creative process, to performance and interpretation; as well as the role of various other participants in the artistic experience such as agents, peers, critics and audiences. It elaborates upon terminology from cultural economics nowadays utilized in the operatic field.

Chapter three is a discussion and analysis of the findings of the research. It analyses the term *artistic development* in detail with information on its use in various literature sources; analyses interviews and provides a definition of the term in the context of this research. It discusses young artists training and professional development programmes which are samples of the training methods and social processes of the profession. It identifies their context,

characteristics, differences, necessity and use, and considers the important issue of exploitation of young artists in the name of professional experience; it also presents thoughts on the gate-keepers to the operatic profession.

In the final chapter the reader can find my conclusions as well as recommendations for further research. This chapter discusses issues such as the role and changing job description of the artist nowadays; the quality of higher education available for young singers intending to join the profession; and the role of the audience in relation to the operatic profession.

## Chapter II. Opera and Singers in Context

This chapter provides a theoretical context for the research and includes terms that will be encountered in the discussion and analysis. I start with a brief overview of opera up to our own times and then proceed with a presentation of differing interpretations of terms and concepts that are important to this research. My purpose is not to provide definitions as such but is: to present a discourse on relevant terms and the opinions of experts in order to familiarize the reader with the variety of meanings of the terms and concepts referred to in the primary research interview material; and to provide a view of the historical, social and economic framework in which artists and particularly singers, find themselves. Theory is not exhausted in this chapter; there is also discussion in Chapter III. In that chapter, however, the reader will find concepts that are informed by the results of interviews and primary research findings.

### 1. Opera and Singers: a Brief Historical Overview

#### *From the Beginning to the End of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*

Opera is the clearest example of an art form that is expensive, labour-intensive and which has very little capability of taking advantage of technological progress and economies of scale. Opera, as a union of music, poetry and theatre, was developed in Italy; the first composition commonly cited as an opera was Jacopo Peri's *Dafne* (c.1597). The work is lost so our knowledge of it is extremely limited.

The last decades of the 16th century witnessed a development of instrumental virtuosity and as a result, musical skill became of much greater impor-

tance. Perhaps for the first time in history, we see in Peri's time the ingredients for the creation of what would later be acknowledged as a star singer: "he sings complicated music which dazzles the fashionable audience, he accompanies himself brilliantly, he looks elegant and refined, writes his own music, and (curiously, in view of the most successful tenor manifestation of recent times) is supporting of two echoing fellow tenors" (Potter 2009: 13).

In his book on tenors, Potter (2009) discusses the history of this particular voice type, providing information on the history of the solo voice, singers' education, the development of the singer as a professional, his role in history and in the society he found himself in. Discussing this period of music, Potter argues that we know little about performers of the virtuosic solo song. What, according to Mayer Brown is described as "the first golden age of the virtuoso performer" (Potter 2009: 9) is known to researchers through very few pieces, limited references to the quality of the singers and some didactic work.

The names of actual singers are recorded for the first time during this period, as tenors sang roles in early operas before the castrati became the fashion of the times and the favoured voice-type for composers. This period from the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards is described by Potter as a "short-lived golden age" (Potter 2009: 11). It is significant for the development of the voice not only because of the perception of the tenor voice as something special but also because of the status afforded to musicians in society.

Many musicians of those times had connections to the aristocracy by birth. Being able to understand notation, read music and improvise was a result not only of experience but of learning; only those with a certain social and financial status were able to afford such study. Musicians' employers and patrons were either the church or the aristocracy/ the court;

musicians were completely dependent on them often for life. Singers always belonged to a patron who was wealthier and had better connections than themselves. Not many professional musicians including singers were pure aristocrats by birth; paid work was considered vulgar at the time and the members of the aristocracy and nobility followed certain social conventions and constraints; it was expected that they should be skilled in certain areas, such as music, but not that they should undertake paid work.

The development of singing from the 16<sup>th</sup> until the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is defined by increasing virtuosity, constant pushing of singers' virtuosic limits, including expansion of the vocal range – especially upwards; all of this was a natural consequence of the increasing size of theatres, developments in instrument making and the development in opera itself away from the tessitura of the baroque. This expansion and extension was a common feature of all voice types, although changes did not occur at the same time for all (Potter 2009: 23).

The Italian tradition of singing, in particular, evolved over 300 years until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The role of the composer was to reflect singers' talent in his art. The music then belonged to the singers whose role was to demonstrate the composer's talent through their performances. In terms of education, it was time-consuming but relatively simple to learn to be a singer. The perception at the time was that singers were born and not made; there was only one way to sing that could work for anyone who had a good voice (ibid.: 78).

### *The 19<sup>th</sup> Century*

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, successful singers were much sought-after and had the opportunity to travel and work throughout Europe, North and South America. They had developed negotiating skills to make the best out of the offers they received. In order

to be able to sing in as many theatres as possible, singers had to be quick learners. According to Potter, all the pedagogical works of those times have almost the same structure: that is exercises on single notes, then scales and then embellishments. Learning was neither easy nor quick but once achieved, singers could cope in the main with any music they had to sing. Singers' careers depended on their agility and the beauty of cadenzas, so singers were dependent on virtuosic exercises which could determine the progress of professional lives (ibid.: 47).

### Belcanto

One of the most important features of this era was the belcanto tradition, which spread from Italy to the rest of Europe. Belcanto is the second influential singing tradition; the style of the Baroque era should be considered the first, emerging as it did when opera began to be popular. According to Fraga & Matamoro, Manuel Garcia (Manuel del Popolo Vicente Garcia, 1775-1832: composer, singing teacher and opera impresario) introduced technical novelties which allow the voice not only to demonstrate its vocal range, but to enrich its expressive quality – indispensable for the new repertory. Techniques include the gradation of the volume of the voice, rapid scales, embellishments in general and the selective use of vibrato. At this time, voice categories as we know them today began to emerge. (Fraga & Matamoro 2007a: 13)

Despite music teachers and singers keeping alive the belcanto tradition, the genre eventually became less popular. The two voice types that Donizetti had written for (dramatic soprano d'agilit  and soprano coloratura) were gradually forgotten. This is seen in the progression of the female voice from Verdi to the almost complete extinction of soprano leggero in Wagner and its substitution with mezzos. According to Mart n Galan, the gradual decrease in the number of female singers able to perform the taxing soprano



roles of Donizetti was a result of the changes in musical textures, aesthetic perception by the public and the teaching of the art of the song. As a result, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century only four out of over 60 completed operas by Donizetti were performed on a regular basis (*L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Pasquale*, *La favorite* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*) with Lucia being often simply a hollow means of demonstrating a soprano's vocal agility (Martín Galan 2007: 27). There is the view that, in this period, Lucia was first adequately performed and presented to the public as a rounded character only with Maria Callas in 1950.

### Wagner

It can hardly be questioned that the most influential figure in 19<sup>th</sup> century opera, both in artistic and administrative terms, was Wagner given the transformation of opera he brought about. After him opera would never be perceived in the same way again. Wagner, as opposed to the Italian composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who tried to revitalize singing, totally reinvented the art-form of opera. As Potter argues, it is in the development of Wagnerian tenors that we can observe the possibilities of the voice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Potter 2009: 62). In Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, music was identified as only one of the elements of the complete operatic work. All elements had the same value. This made the composer's attitude towards singers complex, as the then traditional demands of singing were in conflict with Wagnerian aesthetics. In this new concept of a work of art, there was no room for the past tradition of vocalism and the improvised ornamentation usually embraced by singers previously. (ibid.: 66).

There are two important changes that opera in general and singers specifically owe entirely to Wagner: the first is the creation of the Heldentenor, a completely new voice type that changed the categorisation of voices. The Heldentenor is heard in roles such as

Siegfried, Siegfried or Tristan. The music world of Wagner's operas comprises baritones transformed to tenors (for example Lauritz Melchior); sopranos that can sing mezzo roles (such as Kirsten Flagstad and Waltraud Meier); and basses that can sing into the range of a baritone (Fraga & Matamoro 2007b: 15).

The second change – an important consideration for this work, is the altered relationship between composer and singer. Singers in Wagner's operas have the opportunity to operate at a deeper level than the purely vocal, considering themselves as interpreters rather than mere performers. And according to Potter, it is from this time onwards that singers can call themselves artists (Potter 2009: 68). In Wagner's operas singers stray from tradition and do not address the public when they sing; they address the other singers on stage and act their role realistically (apart from the obvious requirement to sing the score) trying to unravel the psychology of the role they play (Fraga & Matamoro 2007b: 14).

### *The 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

In Italy, Toscanini in 1921 was lobbying for the opera theatre to become an "*Ente Autonomo*" (independent organization). Guilbert & Shir note that according to the Law on Musical Associations, or "*Enti Lirici*", any autonomous musical association founded by local or other authorities can obtain state subsidy for an opera season the duration of which is one month or more. This is the path La Scala followed and which allowed it artistic and financial autonomy (Gilbert & Shir 2003: 34).

This was also the time of change for the structure of opera houses in Germany and Austria. Former court opera houses became municipal, state or national entities. This introduced new financial structures and the idea of public accountability for those institutions that were formerly monuments of conservative culture. In the early 1920s the financial problems of

many opera houses in Europe became acute because of hyperinflation. A major part of the core audience for opera – the educated bourgeoisie – was much affected by this hyperinflation; their income was often based on savings which became seriously devalued. This affected adversely attendance. At the same time and partly as a result of the financial circumstances, this period witnessed a change in audience structure: the cultural elite was hit by financial hardship and was replaced by other categories of people, among them workers, who accessed opera houses through union-organized cultural programmes. When the financial situation stabilized, after 1923, new groups belonging to the new middle classes of civil servants, executives, etc., who had in the meantime profited from financial stabilization, became the audience for opera.

This change in audience structure resulted in a change in operatic taste; it is during this period that we observe many new operas written in Germany being performed but not gaining a place in the repertoire in the long term. It is interesting to observe, as Heldt notes, that “in the 1926-7 season, new works accounted for 20 percent of opera productions, but only for 4.5 percent of performances (Walter 2000 103f.). The repertoire of older opera, though, remained stable and was in 1927 not much different from that in 1917 or 1907. Most frequently performed were the works of Wagner, Verdi, Mozart and Lortzing; Bizet, Weber and Offenbach also figured prominently. The rise of Puccini (in third place in the German statistics in 1926-7) was the most conspicuous development in this respect” (Heldt in Cooke 2005: 147f.).

During this time, opera also found new ways to reach new audiences. UFA (Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft) was established in 1917 and the first radio programme was transmitted from Berlin in 1923. Opera grasped the opportunity to expand, with, for example, music from *Jonny spielt auf* presented on the radio (Heldt in Cooke 2005: 157). Opera on ra-

dio became popular with composers writing operas especially for radio transmission, such as Martinu’s *Comedy on the Bridge*.

The 20th century also marked a change in the operatic experience through records and recording. Opera audiences did not have to attend a performance in an opera house; they could experience opera in private, in their own home. This privatization of the operatic experience is thought to have influenced markedly the development of operatic taste in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and has deeply affected opera houses’ programming and the creation of new works (Sutcliffe in Cooke 2005: 323f.).

Payne argues that the 1920s is without question the decade that marked a turning point in opera in terms of creativity. Works by composers such as Berg, Puccini and Strauss, among others, that are now part of the standard opera repertory, were created during this period. Also, some of the most influential and legendary figures of the operatic scene (Toscanini, Bruno Walter, Erich Kleiber, etc) were heads of major opera organizations such as La Scala, the Salzburg Festival and the Berlin opera houses. Opera was felt to be a great force and it is not a coincidence that this enhanced creativity occurred in a period of great political turmoil (Payne in Cooke 2005: 319).

### After the Second World War

After the Second World War opera went through important changes in most aspects: performance style, funding, management, accessibility to a wider public but also in the training of singers. Productions incorporated more dramatic and design elements, which offered singers the opportunity to demonstrate different aspects of expression rather than sheer technique. Subsidies were no longer generally available in some parts of Europe so attracting audiences was of paramount importance – but proved more challenging than for non-operatic theatre. A good example of

the size of the funding is mentioned by Heldt in Cooke: in a *Dreispartentheater*, which is a theatre that comprises opera, ballet and *Sprechtheater*, “opera tended to soak up two thirds of the funds, its need to spend less and attract more customers was direct. The ensuing attempts to popularize programmes reinforced a trend towards operetta as a financial mainstay of musical theatre – a trend which had already begun before the war (Walter 2000: 71-130; 79)” (Heldt in Cooke 2005: 147).

According to Payne, this is the second period that was a turning point for opera; it had to reestablish itself effectively as part of the welfare state. This reestablishment continued for most of the century with the final turning point being in the 1990s with the emergence of the global market. Opera could expand geographically and socially in a scale that couldn’t do in the past but at the same time it was not as important in the cultural realm (Payne in Cooke 2005: 319).

### Chamber Opera and Music Theatre

Opera theatres realized that their repertory consisted of (too) well-known pieces. These were loved by and familiar to audiences, which made programming not to mention commissioning new works potentially hazardous in financial terms. That seemed to be understood by composers, who in an attempt to create new operatic works that would not be over expensive to put on, chose to reduce the scale of their pieces. This “cutting down” of the scale of opera did not entail any artistic compromise; it has led to chamber opera and music theatre works that are by no means of lesser quality than their large-scale predecessors. It is not an easy task to distinguish between music theatre and chamber opera. Distinction has been made using size as a means of measurement (music theatre was performed in smaller venues and was itself smaller in proportions – length and number of performers – than chamber opera) with music

theatre often described as using straight theatrical practices in combination with chamber music.<sup>1</sup>

From the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, opera themes tended to concentrate on the presentation of realistic situations and psychological portraits, in contrast to treatments of earlier periods in operatic history. Composers started again to use the term “opera” for their pieces (instead of music theatre, music drama, etc) but, according to Adlington, with its contemporary sense described above, rather than with the old connotations (Adlington in Cooke 2005: 241f.).

Gilbert & Shir (2003) in their book *A Tale of Four Houses* argue that by this time, young singers’ training had become more sophisticated and demanding in order to meet the needs of a wider repertoire. That came perhaps as a result of the changing needs of casting. By the 1990s it was difficult to cast the dramatic Verdi roles, whereas for Mozart, Rossini, Baroque and twentieth-century operas it was relatively easy. Nowadays young singers are extremely competent in terms of their musicianship and dramatic understanding, readily demonstrating flexibility and intelligence.

These authors refer to the example of Great Britain which, from being a country with no real tradition in opera, has developed a system of training that has attracted many young singers. Covent Garden for example, unlike the Vienna Staatsoper or La Scala Milan, had not had a permanent company; there was therefore no strong native operatic tradition to return to after the war (Gilbert & Shir 2003: 53). Advanced training in Britain was not reserved for singers alone; there was also a sophisticated approach to audience development. At his farewell performance in 2002, Bernard Haitink thanked the Covent Garden audience, mentioning “the dialogue that had

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion on music theatre and chamber opera see Adlington in Cooke 2005: 228).

been established between performers and audience” (Gilbert & Shir 2003: xv).

In the 1990s opera houses began to appreciate another role they could and should play in the community – that of educator. This approach came partly as a result of the challenge of ageing audiences and through the need to attract more people and a broader make-up of audience in order to maintain public subsidies. Continental Houses according to Gilbert & Shir were still maintaining audience loyalty so pressure for them to find ways to attract the public was not as urgent (ibid.: xvii-xviii).

As we move through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, audience taste for opera becomes retrogressive (Sutcliffe in Cooke 2005: 321). Until the 1900s opera goers were much attracted by new operas or operas written recently, but as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progresses we see audiences preferring works written in an “easier” language from the Baroque onwards. Earlier works become the standard repertory of opera houses. The growing interest in Baroque music came also as a result of recording and historically informed performance practice; this interest has in turn led to a demand for different types of performer than those needed for opera from the classical era onwards.

Opera’s links with its past amount to more than simply aesthetic considerations. Chong writes about the exchange between the critic Andrew Clark and the opera patron Alberto Vilar in the *Financial Times* (8/9 and 22/23 September 2001), which highlights the economic view: “Clark puts forward the case that “opera is an art form that was fully developed in the nineteenth century. It’s not just hung up on the past, it’s also tied to the economic equations of the past, which render it unacceptably expensive today”. He continues: “The high noon of opera was the late nineteenth century – the high noon of the European bourgeoisie. Aristocracy was still the leading patron: without King Ludwig of Bavaria, Wagner would

have been lost. But without an educated middle class there would have been no audience to fill the large, elaborate opera houses that have been built to replace intimate court theatres” (Chong, 2002: 104). Clark writes that “opera has become the opium of a rich and educated minority” and Chong comments further by saying that “one has to learn the core “repertoire” (say from *Kobbe’s Complete Opera Book*, an authoritative reference book which includes just over 200 works); it is assumed that one attends well-versed with plot summaries, not least to be seen to participate in the interval quiz which is an integral part of the Metropolitan Opera’s radio broadcasts. A seasoned opera-goer, who focuses on beautiful voices and elaborate stage décor, should be able to make aesthetic comparisons with previous productions” (Chong 2002: 105).

“Opera may no longer be a living, pulsating entity but its well-preserved corpse will be worthy of inspection for decades to come” says Clark and Vilar, recognizing the financial situation of opera around the world, concludes that “opera is a very costly art form because of the considerable resources it requires: choruses, orchestras, costumes, sets, lights, stagehands etc. Nobody has ever pretended that opera could expect to pay for itself through ticket sales, which is why public and private support, which I relentlessly campaign for, remains essential” (ibid.).

Giannou (Giannou 1985: 100) argues that nowadays, the opera theatre both in terms of its artistic output and its means of production is perhaps the most complex cultural entity in the history of culture before the emergence of cinema. The artistic experience offered by an opera theatre is first and foremost extremely difficult to deliver for technical reasons. It is not suitable for amateur creation. Even in countries with developed and diverse amateur cultural education and creation, a very small percentage of people have a personal creative experience from participation in the production of an opera or operetta. Furthermore,

the challenges of production necessarily restrict opera to a very few centres in comparison with other art forms. These characteristics of opera theatre appear most obviously in countries where the development and the dissemination of opera is not continuous and where it might be said that locally this development of musical and theatrical art has stagnated.

Opera audiences are not now seduced by contemporary pieces and in seasons without subscription schemes this is particularly obvious (Sutcliffe in Cooke 2005: 322). This unpopularity of the new is common to most opera houses, with programming being affected and extremely few, if no, new operas being presented each season. Unfortunately there are few signs of change; what is changing is not the operatic canon the audience has become familiar with over the past decades, but the way in which these works are presented to the public in the era we have described as “postmodern”; as Sutcliffe continues, “how their design context related to and promotes the philosophical themes on which their stories throw dramatic light” (Sutcliffe in Cooke 2005: 322).

Potter compares voices to faces and argues that our voice is part of what defines us as individuals. During modern singing training, the individual characteristic of a singer’s voice is sacrificed to produce a voice that is technically “good” or “correct”; this tends to make the listener recognize the voice type rather than the individual singer. We may still be able to tell one soprano from another; but what we first recognize is the soprano sound rather than the individual singer. It is interesting to note that, as Potter says, “once we start to delve into the voices of history we find that this preoccupation with sound only becomes crucially important from the nineteenth century onwards, at about the same time as institutionalized instruction became widely available” (Potter 2009: 2).

Singers of today produce a sound that is the result of demanding training which is time-consuming and

to which it is hard to gain access. In an attempt to describe and define what the voice is, Fendon argues that we end up discussing parameters such as its weaknesses and limitations; we are then drawn into a discussion of the owner’s personality which is the most distinctive feature of all (Fendon 2003).

## 2. Performance Issues and Skills

In relation to the skills needed by an artist to perform, Ghiselin writes: “Every genuinely creative worker must attain in one way or another such full understanding of his medium and such skill, ingenuity, and flexibility in handling it, that he can make fresh use of it to construct a device which, when used skillfully by others, will organize their experience in the way that his own experience was organized.” (Gardner, 1973: 283). In the case of music, knowledge and the command of an instrument or of the voice itself demands constant practice and regular, intensive exercise. Musicians agree that practice should start early, during childhood, leading – it is hoped to mastery later in life (ibid.: 283f.).

There are two ways for skills to be acquired: one is explicit instruction; the other the creation of a situation in which particular skills can develop. This second method includes ateliers; there apprentices perform gradually more difficult tasks (ibid.: 285). Both approaches can be found in singers education, with explicit instruction during the formal education period and what I will call *atelier-instruction* in the period after formal education – experienced especially in young artists programmes. Postgraduate education for singers can embrace both methods.

A musician who prepares for performance needs to meet two objectives: the first is to develop and form the interpretation of the musical work he will perform; the second to acquire enough technical expertise (skill and dexterity) to be able to realize this interpretation. These two objectives are interde-

pendent for a successful performance; they are, however, different skills/ levels of artistic competence that require different types of work and development from the performer. The balance between these two distinguishes musicians who have achieved mastery from amateurs/ beginners (Reid 2002:104).

In his article *Preparing for Performance*, Reid (2002: 104f.) writes that according to Fitts and Posner (1967: 11-15), there are three stages for skill acquisition:

1. the *cognitive stage*, an initial phase when conscious attention is required
2. the *associative stage*, characterized by refinement of the activity and elimination of errors
3. the *autonomous stage*, where the skill no longer requires conscious attention as it has become automatic.

Apart from technical skills, physical and mental skills are also necessary for artists. Physical demands and constraints can be very stressful and can cause many problems to performers; performers must therefore find those mechanisms which help them cope with both physical demands and psychological constraints such as stage fright; they must develop and refine the ability to bring music to life – to deliver a composer’s work with their own distinctive artistic input. To do all this effectively, they need an in-depth education which enables them to understand the structure and the requirements of professional performance in music.

All these abilities are very energy-, time- and resources-consuming and as Clarke argues, musicians are extremely hard-working individuals. Apart from the basic requirements they must produce in a performance, that is the correct notes, dynamics, the correct rhythm etc, they must go well beyond that, to the level of artistic expression, with *expression* defined by the author as “the inevitable and insuppressible consequence of understanding musical structure, yet it is also a cons-

scious and deliberate attempt by performers to make their interpretations audible” (Clarke 2002: 65).

Wicinski discusses musical preparation and argues that it is divided into three phases:

1. getting an overview of the work and developing initial interpretative ideas
2. overcoming the technical demands of the work
3. combining the first two phases and refining the interpretation (in Reid 2002: 108f.).

Expert musicians (musicians that have reached a level of professionalism) are likely to have spent over 10,000 hours practicing by the time they are 21, and these hours do not include formal music education in conservatoires and universities and what Wicinski calls “musical enculturation” (Clarke 2002: 59); this is defined as the informal knowledge of music which is the result of personal effort but without the requirement for formal education it includes for example listening to music with different interpreters, reading books about the topic, attending seminars, etc. Expert performers also use intuition to assist them in the interpretation of a musical work. John Rink calls this “informed intuition” and as Reid argues, it is not a natural ability but comes as a result of many years of experience in performing and listening to music (Reid 2002: 109) and of musical enculturation.

Expressive skills are thought to separate middle-ranking performers from those who are of the highest quality and especially gifted. These skills can be taught and can also be separated in different groupings. Such categorization is found in Davidson (2002: 98) who distinguishes five different categories of characteristics of expressive devices:

1. they are systematic, that is they happen at certain times in a musical work
2. they improve communicability between the work and the audience (Davidson refers to the

example of hearing a metre more clearly if the first beat is accented by the performer)

3. they are used in a stable manner, that is they can be used repeatedly in many performances to achieve a similar effect
4. they are flexible so performers can for example exaggerate an expressive line
5. they are used automatically by performers at the appropriate times during a performance, without the performer actually realizing it.

Singers, like all performers, claim they act automatically without realizing exactly what they are doing or how they are doing it while they are singing; yet their concentration is in the highest state during their activity. A combination of parameters beyond technical mastery, training, stamina and will, goes to make what we call “artistry”; artistry is well-rooted at the heart of Western classical musical life; it is the determining factor in defining the difference between exceptional performers (Dunsby 1995: 35). Performers themselves do not find it easy to define artistry; but they definitely must have an instinct as to what it is and this is also the case for the listener (Dunsby 1995: 36). Artistry is an important factor that influences judgments of quality and therefore affects decisions over attendance in music events.

### 3. Music Education Institutions

Not much later than the emergence of opera, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, music conservatoires appear among the charitable institutions of Italy, the *ospedali*. In these institutions orphans and underprivileged children were entitled to professional musical training as part of their education. The first *ospedale* as far as we know today was that in Venice. Other similar *ospedali* in cities such as Naples were called *conservatori* (Mark & Gray 1992 in Sandgren 2005).

Through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, young singers’ education was in the hands of established, professional singers (not castrati as had been the case in the past) who taught the technique and principles of the profession. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, singers were generally educated in conservatoires and not exclusively with a private teacher. Before the wide availability of recordings, there were no universal examples of professional singers for young singers to have as exemplars; hence each singer’s technique, sound and personality tended to be unique and distinct (Potter 2009: 58).

The first institutions for advanced musical education were established from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in London, Paris and Vienna and have been a source of attraction for many young musicians since. The Vienna Conservatoire (now the University for Music and Performing Arts) was established in 1817 and the Royal Academy of Music in London (the oldest music institution to grant degrees in the UK) was founded in 1822. The Paris Conservatoire was founded in 1795 and originated from the *École Royale de Chant* (The Royal School of Singing) by decree of King Louis XIV. It was refounded as the *Conservatoire national supérieur de musique* in 1795 by the National Convention of the French Revolution.

The Conservatoire in Paris in particular was a magnet for singers. Its curriculum was broader and more rounded than the English system, and young musicians were able to receive a musical education in Paris based on tradition strongly associated with the Conservatoire’s long history. Potter writes that “it epitomized French musical artistry, and the seriousness of intent that succeeding generations were expected to show towards the national cultural heritage: all French tenors would study there if they could, even if they started at one of the provincial outposts” (Potter 2009: 141). In Potter we also read of the three great traditions in operatic singing: Italian, French and German. The principal characteristic of the Italian was its legato; of the French,

charm and finesse; and of the German, diction and dramatic fervour (ibid.: 71). Singing teaching at the Paris Conservatoire could be characterized as using the *bel canto* tradition with a French touch and sophistication; its popularity among music students, resulted in singers with clarity of diction and elegance to serve the lyric and lyric-dramatic French repertory, but not adequately equipped to suit the Italian and German roles that were becoming part of the repertory of opera houses as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed (ibid.: 136f.).

As a generalization, the main languages in which opera libretti are written are Italian, German, French and Russian. In order to understand the meaning of the text and be able to reveal fully the composer's intentions to the public, singers need actually to understand these languages as well as being capable of singing them in an understandable and convincing manner. French operas are especially difficult for non-French singers because of the particularities of the sound of the language; Russian also presents challenges for most non-Russian-speaking singers.

Artists generally have a high level of formal education. It is education together with training that are the most important factors in relation to the employment of artists. For some categories of artists (for example, orchestra musicians) training is regulated; but for others, such as writers, there is almost no formal training available (Artworks 2003: 11). It is generally acknowledged that university education alone does not enable graduates to enter the professional market in the arts.

Musical performance is now a key component and objective of university music. Especially in the UK, but in continental Europe too, university music education tended in the past to be more theoretical and academic, as opposed to music college education which was more practically based (Dunsby 1995: 18). These boundaries are now more fluid. It seems

that the music world has started to recognize the importance of both elements – the academic/ theoretical and the practical – to achieve a performance that is accurate technically, historically, stylistically and which reveals the artistic abilities of the performer.

As well as the theoretical education which young singers receive in higher education institutions, they also attend one-to-one courses in singing with professional singers; these teachers have almost always been (or still are) active performers who, apart from teaching, sing in opera houses and concert halls around the world. Singers also have the opportunity to further their knowledge through master classes with acclaimed soloists who offer guidance, comment on skills and provide advice stemming from experience in the field from which both established artists and young professionals can benefit. With regard to training methods and established performers, Gardner claims that performers are considered established “only when they become aware of their role, of their distance from others, only when they become able to realize and convey the subtleties of a notated piece or an artists conception” (Gardner 1973: 329); Krampe & Ericsson go further to suggest that the standards of elite performance (which is a feature of established performers) are rising in line with the improvement in musical technique and training methods (Krampe & Ericsson 1995: 84).

The status of higher education institutions for artistic-related studies in Germany and Austria has changed during the past few years between the Hochschule and Universität. The study programmes of these institutions have altered emphasis, moving from the offer of technical skills to a more academic and analytical approach to artistic work. According to the Artworks study, “the most conspicuous result of this change is the abandonment of the organisational principle of master classes in favour of institutes or departments. The master classes were based on a strict principle of classification, which concentrated



on training in a specific medium. Working in only one medium no longer corresponds to contemporary artistic production, nor to contemporary pedagogic principles” (Artworks 2003: 12). It is also important to note that the Artworks study goes on to suggest that universities of the arts are facing difficulties adapting to the changing circumstances and the consequent changes in the definition of the role of art and artists (ibid.).

#### 4. Creative Process, Performance and Interpretation

##### *Performance*<sup>2</sup>

Mundy, in his work *The Performing Arts. A Manual for Managers* (2003), makes a distinction between creative and performing artists. Creative artists are defined as those who originally create a work, for example composers, writers, designers; performing artists are those who re-create the piece and whose creativity is important for the work to be presented to the public. Performing, according to Mundy, is not about reproduction or literal copying of a previous experience; it is about the re-creation and fresh presentation of a piece so that the audience can experience new elements of the work that they have not in the past, even in those cases where the work is known extremely well (Mundy 2003: 10).

Performance can be considered as a series of stages starting from the time of first introduction to it and categorised according to the development of the performer. The table 1 (adapted from Krampe & Ericsson 1995: 88) demonstrates the five different phases of performance:

Year at which practice was initiated	Development of skills at a basic level	Transition to full-time involvement	Experts seeking to make outstanding achievements	Maintenance of skills; unique musical style
<i>Phase I</i>	<i>Phase II</i>	<i>Phase III</i>	<i>Phase IV</i>	<i>Phase V</i>

Table 1

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note here that Performance Practice as a term is only available in Grove Music and Musicians and not in Grove Opera.

The end of Phase II coincides with the transition to full-time commitment; this is usually the time students enter a music university or conservatoire. In Phase III, students are taught by experts and devote a considerable amount of time to a range of activities. Students decide themselves how much time they will devote to performance; at this stage they also seek financial support to further their studies, through loans, scholarships, etc. The last phase is marked by the end of formal training, with the young artist receiving professional status. In this phase, financial contributions from previous sources stop so young artists must earn their living from their art, ideally as solo performers only, or undertaking teaching or work in orchestras and ensembles in the case of orchestral players (Krampe & Ericsson, 1995: 88). This is the most interesting phase for this particular research. Young singers in this phase are professionals whose aim is to achieve a high level of musical success which will be the turning point for their careers. They seek full-time engagement as solo performers and public performances (combined with the associated discipline of preparation) improve their artistic ability. They measure achievement by public recognition, success in competitions, financial reward and demand from promoters (ibid.: 89); to achieve all these, young artists should offer excellence in performance, distinctive interpretations and professionalism in everyday work (punctuality, stamina, team-work, etc.).

Performance training includes optimization processes which have been codified by scholars in the field of performance studies. It is particularly interesting to focus on deliberate practice, which is commonly used by musicians of all instruments and voice to improve aspects of performance. Deliberate practice is different from common practice in that it is used more by expert performers; performance is monitored for weaknesses and then specific methods are used to deal with them (ibid.: 86).

In their attempts to maximize the results of their practice in all phases, elite performers face three major constraints:

6. the *resource constraint*: is about the availability of resources for artists – resources being defined as including materials and facilities such as practice rooms; the availability of public concerts and work opportunities in general; the accessibility of private teachers and sources of funding;
7. the *motivational constraint*: deliberate practice is neither easy nor enjoyable but must be exercised to achieve specific results the basic of which is better performance. It is quite different from common practice or music-making as those do not facilitate skills development.
8. the *optimal intensity constraint* or effort constraint: deliberate practice is effortful and can only be maintained for a certain amount of (limited) time (ibid.: 86).

Deliberate practice is necessary for elite performance but is also related to skill acquisition. The amount of deliberate practice required to acquire skills is different according to the level of accomplishment in young musicians, and in the case of older musicians it is related to maintaining those skills (ibid.: 99).

#### *Expert performers and eminent performers*

The combination of deliberate practice and instruction lead to expert performance, which in opera is about mastery of technique and excellent interpretation of operatic roles. Eminent performance goes well beyond this, as it is about unique technique and interpretation and about offering an important contribution in terms of style. Its basic difference from expert performance is that an eminent performer, as Krampe and Ericsson write: “irrevocably changes and expands the known possibilities for a given instrument or repertoire, and this involves

something which cannot be taught, something beyond the mere acquisition of skills and interpretative techniques necessary to the particular performance domain. One important factor enabling the musician to move beyond what has already been attained may be a comprehensive knowledge of prior eminent achievements, and for this reason the limited societal resources dedicated to music performance imply that only a very small number of individuals will be able to undertake such a rigorous investigation of innovative aspects of solo performances” (Krampe & Ericsson 1995: 97).

Selection of individuals likely to become eminent performers takes place early on in their professional career by winning international competitions that lead to solo careers (Roth 1987 in Krampe & Ericsson 1995:97). These individuals may already be expert performers but it is after the selection process that they acquire the characteristics that will transform them into eminent performers.

### *Interpretation*

Part of the magic of music and opera is that despite the fact that artists use the same, fixed score for each performance or production, the piece is re-created anew each time it is performed. Issues of interpretation and particularly the question of how much freedom are performers allowed to interpret an opera, were underlined in the 20th century with recording and electronic means of reproduction (Mayer Brown & McKinnon 1992: 370). Also, with the assistance of recordings, it should be easier than in the past for performers to produce authentic interpretation of operatic roles, ensemble pieces, etc.

A great amount of research in the psychology of performance is on interpretation and expression (Clarke 2002: 59). Performing artists walk a tightrope, as they must, on one hand, respect the score and the wishes of the composer but on the other hand,

must be able to add their own creative input and their own idea and aspect of the work at the same time (Reid 2002: 106f.). When interpreting a piece, the performer’s awareness grows to understand the wish of the composer and to fulfil his will. As Schneiderman says, “there is an expansion of the sense of self through this growing to fill the music, to become equal to it, to enrich it with new life and participate in the creative adventure” (Schneiderman 1991: 17). Scholars’ interest focuses on trying to explain the cultural constraints upon musical interpretation, the different ways of thinking of it, and assess an artist’s performance. But answers to these questions are not easy, as music performance is not a simple issue since music is much more than sounds. (Dunsby 1995).

### *Performing traditions and trends*

Opera is also subject to traditions and trends with regard to the way it was composed and performed. Until 1800 almost all opera roles were created for voice types and not for particular voices, but they were composed with particular singers in mind and for a specific reason (a celebration, a commission, etc.). The idea of an opera becoming part of a repertory did not exist, as there was no repertory as we understand it today. When operas were performed again, which was not necessarily the case for many of them, they were revised to suit singers other than those for whom they were originally written (Jander, Sadie et al. 1992: 459). Especially in Italy, however, writing for a particular singer was a guarantee of the success of the piece, so this practice continued until about the end of the 19th century (ibid.: 459).

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, composition was an open and flexible process, more than it was in the years to follow, with the piece changing from one performance to another and singers being allowed to improvise on stage during performances (Dontas 2006: 66). In terms of individual voices, the soprano was the last voice type to fit in operatic music. The

rise of the madrigal in the 16th century had legitimated female singing socially, as until then most female musicians had been courtesans. According to Grove Dictionary of Opera “the cult of the female voice was developed late in the 16th century, with the famous *concerto delle donne* (a consort of high voices) at the Ferrara court and the admiration universally accorded to Vittoria Archilei, who sang in the Florentine *intermedi* of 1589 and may have created the title role in Peri’s *Euridice*” (Jander, Sadie et al. 1992: 457).

In Mozart’s time, artists were selected for particular works because of their stage presence but also according to age, and young singers convincing on stage were those for whom new works were created, with the first Pamina, for example not even being 18 years old and the first Don Giovanni 21. This remained the case even until Wagner’s time, with the first Tristan being just 29 years old (Dontas 2006). This custom has changed completely today, as in most cases young singers are not considered good enough to sing such roles. This change is a result not only of the better quality of life (life expectancy has risen significantly and therefore definitions of “old” have changed) but also of the role of opera in everyday life: in Mozart or Wagner’s time, opera was part of the everyday life and entertainment of the public and operas were written to be performed, whereas today it is regarded more as a remnant of times past.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the audience had an appreciation for thin voices, with little or no vibrato and composers were writing for voices with very little volume, which would find it very difficult to be heard in today’s opera houses. Taste in Mozart’s time was so different that he would find it unbearable to hear a contemporary tenor singing high notes. Also the process of opera writing did not take the differences between same sex-voice types into consideration (for example soprano and mezzo soprano, or bass and bass-baritone) as categorisation of voice types did not exist until the mid-19th century (Dontas, 2006: 64).

In the 19th century a repertory began to be established and therefore singers were asked to perform music that was not written especially for them. Singers now had to be flexible and able to perform many different styles (Jander, Sadie et al. 1992: 459) and this ultimately resulted in the classification of voices and different voice types, as for example basse profonde, soprano spinto, soprano lyrico, etc. The most important result of these 19th century developments, however, was the change in the opera composing tradition, as composers were now writing operas without a particular singer in mind; therefore singers had to be found to suit the composer’s work and not vice versa (ibid.: 340).

### *Casting*<sup>3</sup>

The establishment of a repertory and the change in the way composers were writing operas led to the development of casting as a means of selecting the appropriate singers for a production. Casting requires the availability of a pool of singers and a set of artistic criteria that need to be met to satisfy the musical and dramatic needs of the opera. Until the 19th century, selection was the responsibility of the composer, who had to rewrite a piece to suit the available singers. Until Verdi’s time, operas were written in a way to ensure that the right singers would be able to perform every role.

Casting was an influencing factor for the development of a company as a steady group of singers to perform operas. Theatres found it easier to form such groups on a steady basis and were then able to cast most of the operas in repertory from the singers in their ensemble. The idea of the ensemble as an artistic group emerged. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, casting decisions were made by the casting directors of opera houses, who had the power to influence the audience’s taste and their aesthetic/ musical experience but also the careers of the singers.

<sup>3</sup> All from Harewood 1992.

For most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italy did not follow this general pattern of an impresario engaging a team of singers. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Italian singers were selected from theatres at a very short notice (apart from those in the Metropolitan Opera in New York) so over the years some of them became closely associated with particular theatres but very few of them had long-term contracts.

With regard to the relationship between composer and performer, there were arguments between them as to the ownership of the music, with the singers being the “stars” of the time and therefore prevailing. This changed with Toscanini, who was the first to ensure that singers sang exactly what was on the score, and this was when the composer and his work acquired an authoritative power and the performer assumed the role of the interpreter of the composer’s intentions (Potter 2009: 77).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the importance given to the visual aspect of opera, casting was passed on to conductors and directors. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century packages of conductor-singers-director, assembled primarily with commercial rather than artistic factors, are often found in opera houses, who are now considering financial factors as much as the artistic ones in their decision-making. The difficulty of putting together the right artists for the right opera has led to the long-term pattern of programming of opera houses (for its major productions the Royal Opera House for example engages singers approximately five years in advance). This, however, does not ensure that there will be no gaps in programming, as in five years singers often find their voices have changed or other factors have obliged them to pull out of the production.

A variety of criteria influence casting decisions, and only some of them are artistic. To cast a Mozart opera, for example, one needs singers with exceptional technique, agility, vocal flexibility, intelligence, abi-

lity to blend equally within an ensemble (and not trying to be the one who is heard the most so as to display vocal and technical mastery) and with interesting personalities as well.

Changes in the use of voices according to the different demands of the composers and the audience have also influenced the way we perceive singers. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century we consider virtuosos to be those singers who demonstrate technical facility and flexibility, who sing high notes comfortably and project their voices easily enough to be heard in theatres that are much bigger than those of Mozart’s or Beethoven’s time. This is a different understanding from the prevalent view in the times of Monteverdi, for example, who wrote for highly trained singers but was not asking for a display of their vocal abilities (Harewood 1992: 760).

### *Recording*

As mentioned previously, a significant factor that changed singing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the invention of recording and the gramophone at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The music experience became an individual experience that could be enjoyed domestically and not in an opera house, and apart from changing the way of listening, this also changed the way people thought about it. For the first time in music history, people were able to experience music away from its traditional space, the concert hall or the opera house. They could hear music without seeing it and that removed the human contact from the music experience as well as enabling people to listen to the same identical piece as many times as they wished.

In the mind of the audience, this created a very particular idea of the singers and the requirements they should meet for the audience to like them, thus also changing the factors influencing taste. Many of the singers of the pre-recording era would not be as po-

pular in the age of recording, since part of their success was their personalities and individuality. On the other hand, being successful as a recording artist did not necessarily mean being successful on the stage (Potter 2009: 81).

A reason why people attend live classical music events is to see performers on stage, as what they do is impossible for the audience to achieve or even strive for. This quality of the singers comes as a result of unseen gifts and efforts that enable it to happen. But this is made possible not just by a performer's talent and training, or the efforts of agents, managers and social and cultural processes (such as communications, electronic media, etc.) but also by the audience's taste for a particular event (Said 1992: 17).

Capturing the sound automatically made it measurable, comparable and subject to severe criticism. Comparison of live and recorded performance, as Dunsby argues, takes place in the search for characteristics that exist in the ephemeral (the live performance) and the permanent (the recording), which are of interest for both listeners and artists (Dunsby 1995: 37). A few decades were enough for a new idea of singers to develop, as audiences had different (higher and stricter) expectations of them and the variety of voices began to give way to more standardised voice types as they took recordings to be the reality of singing and began to prefer it to the actual stage performance (Potter 2009: 81). However, Potter suggests that there are cases of interaction between recording and singers that proved beneficial to both. The famous tenor Caruso is an example of a singer who was lucky to be at the right place at the right time and to develop just as recording technology was evolving but before it had become so developed that singers were no longer self-sufficient and needed a high level of technical assistance to record. In a sense, one helped the other to succeed, since Caruso also became widely known from recordings and recordings benefited from his stardom (Potter 2009: 81).

Recording also had an impact in reducing national differences in opera and enabled the emergence of American singers on the international operatic scene. With recording, the particularities of national schools of singing (Italian, French, German) were gradually eliminated and differences in technique and style were no longer audible (Jander, Sadie et al. 1992: 460).

Potter takes the tenor voice as an example, saying that "it is beyond dispute that there has been a gradual increase in power (the volume at which they could comfortably sing) among *all* significant tenors during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This has meant that *all* roles tend to be reinterpreted by larger voices with each succeeding generation, until we arrive at the twenty-first century, when there are so many tenors who overlap into more than one area of repertoire that the traditional subdivisions no longer mean very much" (Potter 2009: 85). He further argues that if the tenor as a voice develops in the future, it will be in terms of the individuality with which singers will interpret the very limited repertoire (*ibid*).

## 5. Taste, Preference and Participants in the Artistic Experience

### *Taste formation*

Taste suggests explicit or implicit preferences that are based on and presuppose differences, and it is not rare for justification of taste to take the form of a negative statement or distaste (Bourdieu 1980: 253). Experiencing art is associated with taste and preferences, as arts are considered to be a cultivated taste (McCain 2003: 445). Taste and preference are a result of experience and education, and in the case of the arts in particular, as McCain argues, preferences and choices occur only after people have some experience in aesthetic fields (*ibid.*).

Cultivated taste suggests that there are some individuals who have cultivated taste and some who do not, which in turn implies that taste is distributed among sections of the population and that distinctions can be made. McCain argues that any sense of cultivation of taste presupposes a dichotomy between cultivated and uncultivated taste (ibid.: 446)

In recent times, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has become the person most associated with the discussion on taste. His work examines issues that have been subject to much scrutiny since the 1970s, such as aesthetic value, social position and role of artists, the relationship between high and popular culture and cultural practices and social processes. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu argues that there are systems of domination in most areas of cultural practice such as art and music (but also in sports, food, etc.) These systems of domination determine preferences and therefore taste. One of Bourdieu's most recognisable lines is that "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier", to which he then adds: "Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications in expressed or betrayed" (Bourdieu 1993: 2). Art and cultural consumption also legitimate social differences but without creating class divisions.

Bourdieu has also written extensively on the field of cultural production. The meaning of production of cultural works includes both material and symbolic production, and his theory analyses various factors that provide meaning to the cultural work. Bourdieu claims that cultural works are produced in specific historical and institutional situations and their reception is also made in specific environments. These works are significant for particular individuals or groups according to their own criteria and needs, so the discussion on their reception includes a recognition of these criteria and needs as systems of classification (ibid.: 20f.).

Bourdieu has discussed the interconnecting fields in which artistic work is realised, highlighting the social, political and economic contexts in which aesthetic judgments are made. These fields are places in which cultural hierarchies are made but in which artists must also struggle for position. This can be extended to musicians, especially regarding their struggle for reward and recognition and how all this takes place in activities that are traditionally acknowledged as production and consumption. Bourdieu, however, does not discuss these struggles as part of the working environment of cultural or commercial organisations or how individuals that are part of those organisations function and facilitate the making of various fields themselves (Negus 1999: 18f.).

Bourdieu distinguishes between two forms of capital that are significant for participation in the cultural production field: symbolic capital and cultural capital. Bourdieu writes that "*symbolic capital* refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*). *Cultural capital* concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions" (Bourdieu 1993: 7). Cultural capital is discussed in detail in *Distinction* and is defined as a form of knowledge that gives the individual the ability to interpret cultural works and cultural relations. For Bourdieu, an art work is meaningful for someone who can decode it and understand its meaning. Cultural capital is the acquisition of this method of decoding, which the individual can possess through a long process that includes education in its formal/ institutional and informal way (pedagogical action) (ibid.: 7). Symbolic and cultural capital are shared between social classes and social categories and different forms of capital can be converted to other forms (for example education capital to economic capital, etc.), but possession of one does not automatically suggest the possession of another (for example an individual

who has economic capital does not necessarily have cultural capital (ibid.: 7). Through his discussion on the theory of cultural production to which all these pertain, Bourdieu indirectly provides us with useful information on the social circumstances for the production and consumption of symbolic goods like the arts, such as artistic competence, access to art and the role of education.

The foundations of artistic competence may be set in the family and are related to its level of economic, academic and cultural capital. They are strengthened by the educational system and by contact with works of art. Competence in understanding the meaning of an art work is referred to by Bourdieu as “aesthetic disposition” and is a form of cultural capital that requires a long-term process and is not acquired or shared by all (ibid.: 23). Furthermore, Bourdieu argues that works of art exist only for those who can understand them (as those who do not do not regard them as works of art) so physical accessibility is only one form of access to art. Artistic competence therefore offers the individual the method to decode and understand works of art, so it is a means that provides accessibility to art (ibid.: 22).

The role of an educational system that offers access to art in the form of art appreciation programmes (in Bourdieu’s France the education system was particularly orientated on literature) is very important, as it encourages a familiarity with what is considered as culture in a specific time and, in a way, is an influence on works of art. The educational system creates an ability to appreciate legitimate works of art and artistic classification, which gradually becomes associated with particular social status groups.

If education were truly democratic and thus equally available to all, an individual should be able to acquire the same or almost the same aesthetic disposition as everyone else. However, as Bourdieu suggests, institutional education does the opposite – it strengthens

social differences rather than homogenising them. This is because it transmits the culture of the dominant classes and so attributes “natural” talent (and therefore superiority) to those students whose levels of knowledge stem from informal learning processes within the family (ibid.: 23f.).

Although taste is in a sense an individual characteristic, it is possible to identify three zones of taste, as Bourdieu calls them, which are associated with the relevant educational and social classes (ibid.: 228f.):

1. *Legitimate taste*: this is the taste for the legitimate works of art that increases with educational level (as, as previously mentioned, it provides more access to legitimate art). It is associated with those groups of the dominant class that have a good deal of educational capital.
2. *“Middle-brow” taste*: this is a sort of combination of the minor works of the major arts and the major works of the minor arts. It is associated with the lower middle classes (“classes moyennes”) rather than with the working classes (“classes populaires”).
3. *“Popular” taste*: this is commonly found in the working classes and it is inversely associated with educational capital.

As Williamson notes, “taste, in the sphere of Art, is seen as something unspeakably profound” (Williamson 1992: 14). Taste and preference are qualities that highlight our critical abilities and our freedom of expression and are implicit in many features of society. Choice as a means of individual expression is very personal, but taste cannot be extracted from education, ideology, financial and social factors. Williamson’s work *Deadline at Dawn* concentrates on film criticism, but it is interesting to note her argument about taste – that it is irrational to see it as an individual act but of very deep value – and her argument about critics. She writes that the critic’s position is very peculi-



ar as he is someone making personal judgements that represent an inherent quality of what it criticised and whose personal judgements are regarded as objective at the same time (ibid.: 14f.).

From the point of view of economics, taste and preference is the point of origin of demand. Economics does not directly examine the formation of taste; the new consumer theory does not take into consideration differences in taste and suggests that consumer behaviour is based on different prices of commodities produced to serve household functions. Consumption of these commodities changes not because taste changes but because prices of other goods and services change with human capital characteristics. This theory is not shared by all economists and there are still those who believe that different taste influences demand, but all share the opinion that issues on taste formation are a matter for sociologists, psychologists and other behavioural scientists (Throsby 1990: 115).

Throsby argues that the aspect of taste as a factor that determines demand relevant to the arts is that taste for art is cumulative; it is acquired through education and access to arts in its various forms (Throsby refers explicitly on Bourdieu's work) and leads to more powerful and discriminating taste by those who are more educated and have more opportunities to access it. These views have now been formalised in what is called the *theory of rational addiction* (see further Becker 1988: 675-700), which covers the consumption of a wide variety of goods and services. Whether it concerns the cultivation of taste or addiction, Throsby argues that should one wish to explain demand for the arts sufficiently then it is necessary to associate taste with economic models, even if it is only to compare present to past consumption (Throsby 1990: 115).

### *Participants in the artistic experience*

Gardner (1973: 27) uses a circle to describe the artistic process, to denote the unity and completeness of the arts. He puts four categories of participants (artists or creators, performers, critics and audience) and argues that the artistic experience is a closed circle in which all participants must co-exist and communicate in order both for members of the circle and for the circle itself to grow. A break or abnormality in one of the members of the circle (such as abusive powers of critics, lack of audience, limitation in freedom of creation for creators, lack of good performers etc.) can be problematic for the artistic experience. A major concern of critics in the 1970s, when Gardner was writing *The Arts and Human Development*, which is still timely today, was that the aesthetic circle would disintegrate (Gardner 1973: 334).

The participants in the artistic process are interrelated and the place of each in the circle highlights these relationships. Audience and creator are placed opposite each other as they have complementary functions. The audience member's presence and reactions are important for the creator, whose work is interpreted by the performer and translated by the critic (ibid.: 28, 297).

It is interesting that Gardner defines one of the participants of the artistic process as *artist or creator* and another as *performer*, thus distinguishing them and implying they are different. He defines the performer as "an individual who transmits a work created by an artist to a larger audience" (ibid.: 27) and, commenting on the difference between creator and performer, says that "the roles of creator and performer were once usually combined, but now the performer generally masters the work either through reading the Artists prescriptions or notations, or through intensive study of another's performance." (ibid.: 27). In his definition, Gardner seems to remain within the very explicit qualities of creator and performer,

so that a creator creates and a performer performs (and re-creates, so is different from the creator) with the artist being a separate category because of his artistic qualities, which are not necessarily found in a creator. Thus an artist is a creator but a creator is not necessarily a performer.

### *The Critic*

Gardner describes the critic as “an individual who goes beyond the audience member; he studies works, compares them with one another, and describes his conclusions to others” (ibid.: 326). Critics are familiar with the art form and sometimes even with the particular artwork they are commenting on and use specific tools for their criticism, which they support with reasoning. This is how criticism is different from the other aspects of the artistic process that are not dependent upon operational intelligence. Criticism is not only about understanding but also about the ability to evaluate an artwork verbally.

Williamson agrees that criticism is more complex than simply making judgements on an artwork (Williamson 1992: 14). A critic can act operationally in an artwork by applying a set of various formal operations but without changing it, which is a characteristic of the creator (Gardner 1973: 327f.). Critics practice expert appraisal, which, as Throsby argues, can offer an important means of measurement of cultural value. It can provide judgments on aesthetics and authenticity and together with the critic’s experience can offer a well-informed evaluation (Throsby 1990: 30).

The role of the critic goes much further than that of the audience; apart from experiencing the work, the critic must communicate his opinion and evaluations to the consumers. He must make judgements on the specific work and on the art form that he comprehends as expert, and for these he might use prior knowledge and personal experience but first and foremost he must have the ability to understand

the essential features of the work and its symbolic meaning. He can find relations to the past and present, identify the artist’s development and make overall assessments of the work but most importantly he must identify and bring to light characteristics of the work, that the audience might miss, communicate his views unambiguously to the public and he, the only one of those participating in the artistic process, must react logically for the art work and the arts in general (Gardner 1973: 26).

Debenedetti’s paper (2005) on the role of press critics in particular is very illuminating. Debenedetti proposes a critical reflection on the nature of the press critic and tries to answer questions such as how critics evaluate artworks. He claims that critics are part of the economy of the artwork and have multiple roles. He analyses the intermediary role of the critic between artists, managers and the public and discusses the way different stakeholders in the cultural industry benefit from these roles.

The role of the press critic for the artists, managers and the public is more than symbolic. Management research, however, does not embrace the discussion of the role of critics for two main reasons (Debenedetti 2005: 2):

1. Writers on management have commenced research on the impact of criticism without first answering the basic question of what criticism is or providing a definition of it.
2. Among the functions of criticism in the cultural field, management theory seems to concentrate only on its direct impact in economy and the benefit of cultural organisations.

Wyatt & Badger (1990) argue that criticism is roughly defined as the means to judge intellectual works or, particularly for the press critics, as evaluative journalism whose aim is to inform the public and evaluate a work of art (in Debenedetti 2005 : 2). In

management terms, we refer to criticism as a privileged regulator of the cultural market, which is influenced by the uncertainty of the consumers regarding the validity of the artworks and their difficulty in developing a form of understanding given the individuality of each artwork (ibid.: 2).

Shrum (1991) argues that the contemporary discourse on criticism includes three categories of element on which the authenticity and credibility and power of the critic depend: descriptive, analytical (to enable the consumer to understand the artwork) and evaluative in the form of positive or negative judgments (in Debenedetti 2005: 2). Opinions of critics are not only aimed at the general public but also to fellow artists and other critics.

The different roles and the impact of critics can be categorised according to the point of view adopted in each case:

1. the role of the cultural-industry public (the final consumers)
2. the artist and artistic administrator
3. the cultural organisation's managers
4. the cultural field in its entirety

It is argued that the impact of the press criticism depends on the following factors: the influence of the particular media (Larceuneux 2001; Reddy, Swaminathan & Motley 1998), the distinctive characteristics of the critique itself (d'Astous & Tuil 1999; d'Astous & Colbert 2002), the cultural and social relationship of the critic and his public (Bourdieu, 1979) and the individual characteristics of the consumers (all references from Debenedetti 2005: 6).

Press critics influence the success of cultural artefacts (Debenedetti specifically mentions films here) as they can shape public preferences. From the point of view of the final consumers, criticism is a means that enables them to shed their inhibitions regarding

consuming a particular product or service whose quality they could otherwise only evaluate after that had consumed it. So in a sense, criticism facilitates the decision process and minimises risk in a context of many alternative choices and limited time.

Further, research also demonstrates that there is a positive relationship between positive criticism and the commercial performance of an artwork (Debenedetti 2005: 6). What Throsby describes as the "qualitative characteristics of events" (that is, what is being performed, who is playing and what is the opinion of the critics) are influential factors that determine prices and demand (Throsby 1994: 7).

From the point of view of the artist and the artistic administrator, press criticism is a kind of short-term measure of artistic quality that is able to establish artists' reputations and critics are therefore called "reputational entrepreneurs" (Allen & Lincoln 2004: 878 in Debenedetti 2005: 7). The consensus of press critics can be a measure of short- and long-term posterity (ibid.), but also a measure of the artwork's commercial value. Reputation or lack of it can be a means of motivation or lack of motivation among artists and artistic administrators (Shrum 1991; Van Rees & Vermunt 1996 in Debenedetti 2005: 7).

From the point of view of cultural managers (the managers of cultural organisations), criticism works as a means of publicity separate from that of the organisation itself and perhaps more effective, since it is regarded as being more objective (Shrum, 1996 in Debenedetti 2005: 7). If positive, press criticism is used as primary material in instrumentalised publicity campaigns of cultural organisations, which disseminate it to the media or use it in printed material such as programmes and flyers, in posters, etc. (Debenedetti 2005: 7f.).

From the point of view of the cultural field in its entirety, critique has a double function: it serves as the institutional regulator of innovation (Hirsch 1972 in

Debenedetti 2005: 8) and as the legitimator of the sector. Critique is a mediator between offer and demand, but in the cultural industry it can be regarded as an institutionalised way of selecting or filtering artworks by experts (Hirsh 1972; Wijnberg & Gemser 2000 in Debenedetti 2005: 8). Béra and Lamy (2003 in Debenedetti 2005: 9) write that according to Bourdieu the existence of one specialised critic is a way to measure the autonomy of a field, that is its cultural legitimacy. It is argued among researchers that it is not only criticism that influences the public but also the public influencing criticism, as the consumers who are informed by critics and therefore mass media are those who determine the content of the media (Martin, 1991 in Debenedetti 2005: 10).

Music criticism is socially legitimate, as it allows the understanding of music phenomena by the public and is part of social discourse and is associated with institutions of social control and financial interests such as the press. Music critics mostly have a journalistic writing talent and an interest in music but are not necessarily specifically trained to become music critics (Adorno 1991).

A category of criticism that is important for the creative processes and careers of artists (and scientists as well) is peer-group criticism. Particularly in the arts it is used together with gate-keeping systems (for example professional organisations, agents, critics) that influence creative activities, production processes and information of consumers of cultural products (European Task Force on Culture and Development 1997).

Bourdieu writes that “every critical affirmation contains, on the one hand, a recognition of the value of the work which occasions it ... and on the other hand an affirmation of its own legitimacy. All critics declare not only their judgement of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it. In short, they take part in a struggle for the monopo-

ly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art.” And he concludes by arguing that in criticism there is also an interest in disinterestedness (Bourdieu 1993: 19f.).

### *The Audience*

An audience member, according to Gardner, is an individual who is moved and affected by the work of art. Unlike the artist who is also affected by the art work, the audience member does not necessarily feel the need to share his experience with others (Gardner 1973: 26). The term *fans* is used for a category of audiences of music genres such as pop and rock; these active members of the audience play a major role in production, reproduction and circulation of music (*fans* are also affectively associated with the artists). Active in this context means that they not only attend a performance but follow their favourite singers and write to record companies with comments or complaints. Fans’ behaviour has led scholars to develop theories of the active audience (as opposed to the passive audience, who only attend the concerts) that imply the manipulation of behaviour by the entertainment industry. These theories are used by the music industry to create databases, to engage new artists etc. (Negus 1999: 127).

The paper by Carú and Cova (2005) discusses the aesthetic aspect of the artistic experience from the point of view of the audience. It is argued in the paper that characteristics of the artistic experience are, among others, multidimensionality, subjectivity, complexity and a tacit dimension. Further aesthetic experience is constituted on four dimensions: emotional, cognitive, connotative and affective (Duhaim, Colbert & Giguère 1991 in Carú & Cova 2005: 40). Csiczentmihalyi and Robinson (1990 in Carú & Cova 2005: 40) refer to four slightly different dimensions: perceptive, communicative, cognitive and emotional. Artistic experience is also influenced by psy-

chological and socio-cultural factors such as others, knowledge, self-esteem, involvement and cultural capital (d' Astous & Colbert 2002, Bourdieu 1984 in Carú & Cova 2005: 40).

Many in opera house management and audiences believe that if a singer is exceptional vocally then other aspects of artistry such as dramatic ability can be overlooked and vice versa, although the first opinion is much more common (Harewood 1992: 762). But this view is progressively losing ground: on the one hand audiences have become more demanding and, as they are more choosy (mostly due to financial constraints), they prefer singers who are excellent in more than one aspect of their profession. On the other hand as there is a large pool of singers in today's opera scene and too much competition, so singers themselves have become painstaking and try to perform at the best possible level.

Audience expectations rather than objective standards seem to be a factor influencing casting. As Harewood writes, "the MET in New York ... has traditionally been thought of as a temple of operasinging, with casts packed with great voices and the expectations of audiences and critics so geared to grandiose vocalism that lighter-weight casting is hard for them to accept" (ibid.: 762). The situation is not much different in Italy, with Italian audiences being famous for their expectations of opera singers (but fierce criticism as well) and especially from non-Italians singing Italian repertoire. On the relationship between audience and casting decisions, Lord Harewood writes in Grove Dictionary of Opera: "Casting, then, may be done with an eye to the national characteristics of the audience as well as to the music's needs; to suit the short-term scale of a festival and the highly-pitched expectations of its audience or to develop the long-term capacity of a permanent ensemble; to fit a '*stagione*' calendar with several performances within a short period, or that of a company playing in repertory with perfor-

mances sprinkled over ten months" (ibid.). Casting can be the result of the taste of various stakeholders in the opera field such as the director, the conductor and the stage director, but nowadays opera-house managements and casting directors seem to take the audience's preferences very much into consideration in their final decisions. Harewood comments on this by saying that "however priorities may seem to change, decisions on casting will continue to affect operatic performance, both positively and negatively ... No stressing of any of the factors which influence the casting of an opera – artistic, economic, personal – will of itself guarantee success or lead to certain failure, but each will continue to affect the company's budget, the singers' morale, and the individual opera's success. There is no magic formula- and ultimately no chance of appeal against the audience's verdict" (ibid.).

In terms of audience trends, it is interesting to note the relationship of opera as an art form and society. Potter presents a good example to understand this relationship by saying that in the times of Verdi there was a significant connection between opera and the audience; even though there was a sort of hierarchy of classes in the theatre, it all disappeared when celebrating great singers of the day (in the sense, for example, of congratulating the singers after the performance, waiting for autographs, etc). This relationship may still be found in some Italian and German opera houses but in the important operatic centres such as London, Vienna, Paris, Berlin and New York the audience will generally have paid a significant amount of money for a ticket in opera and will not be participating in any kind of celebration of the singers (Potter 2009: 148f.).

Mass media and especially radio and television have increased access to information, have made consumers more demanding and loyal and have increased access to opera with relevant programmes. In opera, recordings have changed the relationship between

singers and audience, as the audience does not have to attend a performance to hear their favourite singers but could own one of their records and hear them at home (ibid.: 99f.).

Access to opera is also facilitated with surtitles, a powerful technology that is thought to have changed the way audience listens to opera (Payne in Cooke 2005: 318f., Sutcliffe in Cooke 2005: 325). The impact of surtitles (or written text versions of them) for audiences is very significant: texts in languages other than the public's may be comprehensible and changes the balance between these factors define a satisfying performance. The audience can now react more effectively to the action on stage, as there are no constraints on its imagination and inspiration, which influences its overall communication with and comprehension of the piece (Sutcliffe in Cooke 2005: 325). However, as Sutcliffe argues, there is also the other side of the coin with regard to the power of surtitles: they may be a means of facilitating the audience's comprehension of the text of the opera without any effort on their part to truly hear what is being sung and whether it is being sung correctly. Also, surtitles can be an alternative for the singer's lack of understandable singing of a text that may be in a language they do not fully comprehend (and sometimes must learn parrot fashion) but which they are required to communicate faultlessly to the audience (ibid.). The most important disadvantage, however, is for countries that do not have a native operatic repertoire, as surtitles make it even more difficult for opera to become part of the repertoire (ibid.: 326).

### *Agents and managers*

Pierre Bourdieu has referred to the impact of mediators and has particularly used the term "cultural intermediary" for the professionals involved in "presentation and representation ... providing symbolic goods and services" (Bourdieu 1984: 359). Negus

referring to Bourdieu argues (Negus 1999: 18) that what Bourdieu stresses, is that these professionals have a place *between* producer and consumer (between the artist and the audience) and that they do not occupy this position according to their formal qualifications or a system of merit. They obtain and advance their professional positions through connections that are a result of experience, influence and networking within certain social groups.

The most common representatives of cultural intermediaries are artists' agents and managers. They appear early in a professional singer's career, usually during the last part of the postgraduate studies or the early part of a young artists' programme and their importance is becoming increasingly significant in the operatic profession. Artists' managers are employment agents who arrange auditions and act as intermediaries between the singer and the opera organisations. Their job is to promote and "sell" the artist but also to act as a professional adviser with an opinion on the singer's career choices and offers of suitable roles, repertoire and contracts.

### *Interactions between participants in the artistic experience*

Participants in the artistic process can function individually, but it is their interaction that moves the circle of the artistic process that leads to artistic experience. Audience and critic seem to function in a complementary way, as potentially every audience member can be a critic to some extent and every critic is member of the audience and is subject to some of what the audience experiences (Gardner 1973: 28).

Critic and performer, on the other hand, appear to function in opposition to one another although they have complementary skills. Critics must distance themselves to shape an opinion and make judgements on the work, whereas performers must immerse themselves in it in order to fully understand

and interpret it to the best of their efforts (ibid.: 28f.). Gardner argues that the relationship between critic and performer is less fundamental to the artistic process than it may have been in the 1970s. But nowadays, when the artistic process is increasingly influenced by non-artistic parameters such as financial reward and stardom, this relationship seems to be acquiring greater importance.

Creator and critic, Gardner argues, are very closely related as in most cases the critic has previously been involved in some kind of creative work (and may even have been an artist) and the creator must have the ability to adopt a critical view of his work during the process of its creation. However, criticism and creation are two different things, as criticism assumes an existing art work whereas creation does not (ibid.: 29). Creator and performer need an audience who will experience the art work and be affected by it. For an art work to exist, the creator and the audience are essential whereas the critic and the performer need to be present to some degree (ibid.: 28).

A very accurate description of the relationship between creator and audience comes from Falcinelli (2007: 95), who says: “the receptivity of listeners of the [Rossini’s] time was quite different from our own, more psychologically orientated attitude. The characters of opera *buffa* as of *opera seria* were ‘types’, eminently interchangeable. The composer’s task was to press buttons liable to enthrall the listener by setting off, in the end, fairly primary reactions (with little heed paid to the verisimilitude of the librettos); as a result, the difference between composers was apparent in the aesthetic – and not psychological – elegance with which they succeeded in creating a cumulative phenomenon whereby the work as a whole gave pleasure through the combination of its finely chiselled parts. And it is because our composer [Rossini] was blessed very early with this talent, this spontaneous sensitivity, that the pleasure

has survived over the centuries, whereas the subjects he treated no longer interest us in the slightest.”

Packages of singers-conductor-director assembled with commercial rather than artistic factors in mind are affecting the power of opera in the world, which has traditionally been in the hands of managements of opera houses (in Harewood 1992). In this sense, the interaction between the artists (performers and creators) and the agents is primarily linked with career development and only secondarily with the artistic development process (Kolokitha: 2006b).

## 6. Singers’ Careers

An artist’s career is defined by Throsby as “a series of stages related to the stratified market structure ... whereby advancement can be seen as a step up from one market level to the next” (Throsby 1994: 7). As career advancement is related to the recognition of professional work, artists are interested in forwarding their careers as this would be an indication of the quality of their work.

Artists’ career choices and contingent earnings are characterised by risk, and reward in the arts can be very uncertain compared to other professions. This, however, does not seem to discourage artists from entering the profession and aiming to become stars, although the possibilities are extremely remote. For some of them this uncertainty is part of the risk of the profession and they try to minimise it by holding multiple jobs (Throsby 2001: 121f.). Artists pursue three types of occupation, often at the same time: genuine artistic work, arts-related work (for example teaching) and non-arts works. All these are influenced by parameters such as education and experience. The belief that artistic success is the result of talent alone is shared by many, but it seems that, as Throsby argues, in formal analytical terms the role talent in a successful career is questionable, as there are no reliable methods of measuring it (ibid.: 121).

Theories of labour supply in the arts recognise the importance of multiple job-holding and the fundamental desire of artists to make a living by making art that influences their professional decisions. From this point of view, Throsby writes that artists belong to the category of probably most knowledge-based professions, such as researchers, academics and other professional groups for which non-pecuniary motives are fundamental for work satisfaction and influence their time allocation and work decisions. Within this category, however, artists are different in that in most cases over a significant period of time they are unable to earn a living wage solely from their creative work, because of lack of work opportunities and/ or very low pay rates (Throsby 1994: 17).

In the performing arts, training is a factor that is related to and can affect artists' remuneration, since better trained performers are preferred and can therefore demand higher fees. And since better artists can get more engagements and are therefore likely to become established, there is also a relationship between the hours of work and the artist's remuneration. Artists devote more time to arts work over time and as their careers become established, but there are so far no results that demonstrate whether this is a result of a successful career or of a diminishing career that discourages artists so they spend more time on arts work (Throsby 1994: 18). Filer (1990) and Throsby (2001) argue that it is not the formal education system that contributes to a successful artistic career but on-the-job experience and the resulting enhancement of those skills that are important to earning ability.

### *Talent and success*

The question of whether talent is a determining factor for a successful career is highlighted by the asymmetry in artists' financial rewards. Throsby argues that although differences in talent may be reasonably justify extremely high earnings (and thus the

acceptance that more talented artists earn more money because of their talent), this justification is not easy to verify, as there is no independent measure of talent (Throsby 1994: 19f.). Another way of looking into the question is to examine artistic production, artistic consumption and artistic exchange and see how they relate to the rise of remuneration for some talented artists. Karhunen (1997: 228) argues that the parameters for measuring artistic success or career are the artistic income, grants and professional activities such as performances and publications.

MacDonald (1988) provides a different definition of talent, saying that every performing artist can have a good or bad performance and what differentiates performing artists in terms of their talent is not quality of the performance itself but the probability of a good performance being the same throughout an artist's career. From the point of view of the audience, however, this probability is lower for a new artist than for a famous one, so they decide to consume their artistic services rather than trying another one. Artists with bad reviews are more likely to leave the business, whereas those with good ones can have a larger audience and higher fees as consumers will not risk attending a poor performance; it is these artists who eventually become stars (Schulze 2003: 432).

In the music industry but also in opera nowadays, successful singers are also aided by contemporary marketing strategies, mostly by record companies who want to ensure that their products will be viable and sustainable over a long period of time in which there is an enormous pool of singers, many of them very talented, and where competition is fierce. Technology provides a helping hand in this case, as consumers are encouraged to either replace old records with new media (such as CDs for example), or to have more than one interpretation of the same opera with different casts in their collection (Potter 2009: 181). New singers are familiar with the media and marketing techniques and the star singers of today are



singers with interesting personalities and particular physical and musical qualities (ibid.: 181).

In his book on tenors, Potter gives examples of internationally famous singers to describe the qualities that made them successful: “More recent British tenor successes have included Philip Langridge, Ian Partridge, Anthony Rolfe-Johnson, John Mark Ainsley, Ian Bostridge and Mark Padmore, all of whom have brought new insights into operatic roles and the interpretation of songs. These are sophisticated singers with broad musical and intellectual interests. Unlike their purely operatic counterparts they tend not to be primarily concerned with making beautiful sounds (though they do that too); they are engaged with a search for musical meaning that is not constrained by the dedicated opera tenors’ need to confine themselves to a small number of commercially viable roles. While international opera stars strive towards a kind of perfect vocalism in which they can only be distinguished from each other by personality, it is in the more commercially modest achievements of some of their less famous counterparts that new developments in tenority can be heard. The performances of Monteverdi by Rolfe- Johnson and Ainsley matched instinctive musicianship with a creative intelligence derived from their acknowledgment of earlier singing styles, and Langridge has excelled both in Britten and in post-Britten roles” (ibid.: 135).

### *Stardom*

Artists’ roads to superstardom, and superstars themselves, have been the subject of research among others in the fields of sociology and cultural economics. One of the most famous papers on stardom comes from Mosche Adler. In “Stardom and Talent”, Adler (1985: 3) defines superstars as “individuals who attain considerable prominence and success in their field and whose earnings as a result are significantly greater than the earnings of their competitors,” an opinion shared by Rosen (1981), who

says they are very few number of people who earn enormous amounts of money and dominate the field in which they belong. Adler (1985: 3) argues that the fundamental factor that enables the process of the creation of superstars is actually a learning process, and what separates superstars from other similarly talented artists is not differences in talent but in the consumer’s need to imitate others by consuming the same art as they do.

Learning as a process is important, because the more one learns for art the more one is inclined to appreciate it and the more art one consumes the more art consumption capital one accumulates. This process refers to particular art forms and particular kinds of artist, with “artist-specific consumption capital” being the capital accumulated by consuming the art product or service provided by a particular artist. By discussing with other consumers who know the artist, the artist becomes known and this process leads to stardom: so stars may be created because more people happen to know them (rather than other equally talented artists) and pass on their opinion. According to Schulze, artist-specific consumption capital is accumulated very quickly so this artist is likely to become a superstar (Schulze 2003: 433).

Sherwin Rosen (1981) writes that there are two factors that lead to superstardom in the arts: hierarchy of talent and the perfect or nearly perfect reproducibility of art. In his article “The Economics of Superstars”, he supports his definition of superstars by explaining how small differences in talent lead to huge differences in artistic income. On one hand, on the demand side different qualities of the same service cannot be substituted perfectly – Rosen specifically mentions as an example here that “hearing a succession of mediocre singers does not add up to a single outstanding performance” (Rosen 1981: 846). On the other hand there is a joint consumption mechanism to describe artistic service: the same effort is needed by a performer whether there are 10 or 1000

individuals in the audience; therefore few artists are needed to serve the demand of the entire market and even fewer if they are more capable. The combination of imperfect substitution and joint consumption magnifies the possibilities for talented artists to become superstars and earn very high incomes.

Rosen (1981) has produced a superstar model that sees artists' income as equal or less in comparison to talent. Small differences in talent may result in large differences in income. Rosen also argues that a few talented artists can dominate artistic markets and therefore command very high incomes. Trying to answer the same question, Adler (1985) argues that the more knowledge of a range of performers a consumer acquires, the more likely he is to channel his demand towards them and therefore to raise them to stardom.

Schulze supports Adler's opinion on the making of superstars, saying that talent is not the only ingredient for success. It is not the difference in talent that is the determining factor for stardom, but luck that increases the chances of an artist becoming a star (Schulze 2003: 434). The opinion that today's music and opera industries are consumer-led is shared by many, but usually with negative attributes. However, as Potter argues, historically voices appear and disappear according to demand or are created for particular circumstances (Potter 2009: 168), so it is not in fact a new trend. The negative connotations of this opinion are based on the way consumer taste is influenced and decisions are made.

Ruth Towse (1992) argues that Rosen's claim that information about talent can be obtained without cost, and MacDonald's claim that singers' careers depend on the first season's interviews are both unrealistic. She writes that whereas in Rosen and Adler the question was on the role of talent and risk in explaining artists' earnings, it has now shifted to the cost of information about them, and she suggests that identifiable talent exists but that it is very expensive to get infor-

mation on it. In her paper she analyses the role that intermediaries play for superstar singers in classical music, which is to reduce search and information costs of opera houses. In this market, the fee serves as a signal of quality and popularity and thus reducing it would not increase the demand for a singer.

Superstars are not a new phenomenon and they have been enjoying audiences' admiration and fascination for decades. Potter says that singers such as Caruso, Gigli and others "ruthlessly exploited their talents and their music with enormous commercial success, and all of them brought whole towns to a standstill when they died." (Potter 2009: 186). However, he goes on to argue that superstars of today are different, and he refers to the example of Pavarotti, who, he says, "was the first tenor to transcend the aesthetic and musical world in which he matured as an artist; as Jurgen Kesting puts it: 'This voice has long ceased to be synonymous with the voice of music. It has become entertainment. Pavarotti himself is no longer a singer, but the subject as well as the object of that entertainment, that gigantic industry whose sole purpose is to produce human happiness.' This has popularized a certain sort of tenor singing, but it has had a debilitating effect on opera: Pavarotti was heard increasingly rarely in the opera house, and most of his fans would in any case rather have paid a relatively small sum to hear him on a football pitch than the vastly inflated prices to be paid for seats in an opera theatre" (ibid.: 186).

## 7. Art as a Commodified Good

Art has been a subject of various areas of research; I will specifically concentrate here on a discussion of art and artists from the point of view of cultural economics, in order to highlight issues of practical nature that are important to my research (such as artists as professional workers, Artists labour markets, etc) and demonstrate the view of the arts as

a commodified good and the problematics of the shared use of the language of the artistic and economic sector. The reader will find terms such as cultural industry, production and reproduction, products, consumers, etc. that do not seem to be part of the artistic vocabulary.

The term *art* is quite recent. In England, for example, we do not encounter the term *art* or *artists* with their contemporary meaning, that is in relation to creative arts and artists, until the 18th century. There were no relative terms either for *art* or for artists before the development of the professional traditions of the fine arts (Fuller: 1980). The word *art* emerged with the rise of the middle classes, the academisation of artistic education and the inauguration of a professional tradition of fine arts. The nature of this tradition was different from country to country: for example, in the Italian Renaissance city-states some artists emerged directly through the local tradition of handcrafts. They were regarded as geniuses and their names were inscribed below their works, in contrast to the primitive artists whose names were not inscribed at all. (ibid.: 168f.).

The definition of art has expanded from the late 1960s as a result of socio-political changes in Europe that affected artistic practice. Nowadays artists provide means of change in the social and public spheres, to which they add the potential of artistic processes (Artworks 2003:1). What therefore becomes a broader field of work involves flexible routines and wider work and development processes, where terms such as movement, experiment and change exist and where work is about communication, connection, accessibility and cooperation between individuals with very diverse skills and expertise. What all these result in is an employment sector where artistic and cultural work has a key role and is a field of employment that can be used as a paradigm for the development of new genres of training and opportunities (ibid.).

The term *artist* and other associated concepts such as *non-artist* or *cultural worker* have also changed during the 20th century, mostly as a result of the interaction of the economy in the cultural field and the change in art production, distribution and reception. Time spent on artistic activities, membership associations, peer recognition, self-definition and income are all parameters (not necessarily used all together) to define artists in modern times (ibid.: 5).

### *The arts and economics*

Arts and cultural economics are two different disciplines, and very interesting issues arise when the world of art is seen from cultural economics perspective. Culture in the new economy, according to Healy (2002), focuses very much on the intellectual capital and the creative worker, who apart from intellectual capacities has flexibility and skill. Healy also argues that cultural policy tends to embrace a wider definition of the cultural sector, one that encompasses commercial cultural goods and emphasises the role of culture in promoting innovation and economic growth. The creative industries are therefore associated with goods of artistic, cultural and entertainment value.

Frey distinguishes between two views of the economics of the arts (Frey 1994b: 3): the analysis of economic or material aspects of artistic activities and monetary dealings in the arts (since arts also need an economic base to flourish), and the application of the “economic”, or the “rational choice” methodology to the arts. He also comments on the twofold economic approach to the arts (ibid.:4), according to which individual behaviour depends on preferences and economic constraints and that institutions (in the form of any decision-making systems such as traditions, norms and even organisations) can be kinds of constraints on the individual’s behaviour and thus determine their possibilities.

Frey suggests (ibid.: 5f.) that the concept of art from the point of view of the economists is a result of individualism and begins from the individual's preferences (which determine the production of art), and this is what differentiates it from views of other areas. In the economic approach to the arts, individual preferences are recorded but no judgments are made, so art is what people think it is. Art is a dynamic concept that changes with time and is different for each person. Economists are not interested in judging art as "good" or "bad", a view that is different from the evaluative approach of art offered by experts in other fields such as philosophy, who, like art professionals, can make judgements on the quality of art works.

Frey also distinguishes between two kinds of preference for art, the basic and the revealed (ibid.: 6), which apply both to the demand and the supply side. Basic preferences are constant and exogenously determined according to the fundamental wishes of the individuals. Unlike the revealed preferences, which are determined by the constraints individuals face, these are not researched by economic analysis. The demand for art is also based on the individual's preferences as to what he thinks art is. For economists, demand for art is the willingness to pay and although it is observed, researched and commented upon, but no intrinsic artistic value is attributed to it (ibid.: 8).

The economics of the arts are indirectly related to artistic and cultural organisations. Whether an arts institution defines itself "artistic" or "cultural" is its own free decision, but is also a result of interactions of various parameters associated with economics, such as government regulation and subsidies (ibid.: 9). For reasons of categorisation and analysis, economics often distinguishes between "creative art", "performing art" and "cultural heritage" (ibid.: 10).

What an artist is from the point of view of economics is related to the equilibrium between demand and

supply and more importantly to the interaction with demand. Economics was able to overrule the myth of the poor artist, which was very popular during and after Romanticism, but also to prove that artists who command high fees are not necessarily bad artists and those of the highest quality can earn very high incomes (ibid.). What Abbing thinks makes the economics of art exceptional and different from the economics of other fields is what Throsby (1994a) calls "the work preference of artists" (Abbing 2003: 437): when creative artists earn higher incomes they use it to work longer hours (on their artistic activity) rather than to give themselves more free time, like other professional groups.

### *The definitions of an artist*

The definition of an artist has always been an area of debate between scholars. It is extremely difficult to arrive to a universally accepted definition of the term, for various reasons, many of which are due to the complexity of issues that the term *artists* is associated with (such as artistic characteristics or the debate on what is art and what is not).

In an 1813 essay E.T.A. Hoffmann (in Dunsby 1995: 54) writes: "The true artist lives only in the work that he has understood as the composer meant it and that he then performs. He is above putting his own personality forward in any way, and all his endeavors are directed towards a single end – that all the wonderful enchanting pictures and apparitions that the composer has sealed into his work with magic power may be called into active life, shining in a thousand colors, and that they may surround mankind in luminous sparkling circles and, enkindling its imagination, its innermost soul, may bear it in rapid flight into the faraway spirit realm of sound."

Although this was a romantic view of the artist and would be appropriate in the 19th century, in the 20th and especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries the situati-

on has significantly changed. In an era of financial criteria domination, the world of art could not avoid applying financial parameters to its components. In 1973, Gardner argued that the artist or creator was an “individual who has gained sufficient skill in the use of a medium to be able to communicate through the creation of a symbolic object” (Gardner 1973: 25). From this, Gardner suggests that communication is a characteristic of art and that the artist acts and impacts on other individuals.

Unesco provides a different definition: “any person who creates or gives creative expression to, or re-creates works of art, who considers his [sic] artistic creation to be an essential part of his life, who contributes in this way to the development of art and culture and who is or asks to be recognized as an artist, whether or not he is bound by any relations of employment or association” (in O’Brien 1997: 252).

Heikkinen & Karttunen have also researched the subject in their paper *Defining Arts and Artists as a Methodological Problem and a Political Issue* (1995), in which they examine definitions of *art* and *artists* and conclude that there are no generally accepted criteria to define art and artists that could apply to different fields – in different art fields the same criteria could lead to different results (Heikkinen & Karttunen 1995: 4). Their arguments are based on Bourdieu’s sociology of culture, the neo-Weberian theory of professions and cultural economics studies (ibid.: 1). They argue that definitions of the terms *art* and *artists* are not neutral but variable, sometimes conflicting, and socially and politically created, and that they can be a means of domination, as they reflect the social circumstances that have produced them (ibid.: 2).

They also discuss three parameters that are important for the definition of an artist, which, however, pose problems and questions and can also be a political issue if viewed from the point of view of arts po-

licy, with implications for the status of artists (ibid.: 12): Bourdieu’s theory, which is based on the legitimate belonging to the artistic field and therefore poses questions on the limits of the art world; self-definition, such as in taxation, telephone directories, etc., and all cases in which artists declare themselves as such, but they have to comply with the meaning of the term *artist* (ibid.: 3); and, last but not least, the role of the state in the form of public subsidy, support and patronage, with governments influencing taste and making aesthetic judgments (ibid.: 7).

The question of why (to understand) and how (to compare) to define an artist has also been treated by Mitchell & Karttunen. In their report *Why and How to Define an Artist* (1991), they attempt to answer *who* is an artist (artists viewed externally, as members of a professional group) but also *what* is an artist (artists viewed internally, using the characteristics of artistic works and artists themselves) (Mitchell & Karttunen 1991: 1), and for them these two are inseparable. Their argument for the necessity of a definition of artists is based on the fact that such definition would define the boundaries of art world or of different art forms. There can be no aesthetic neutrality in the definition of the artist, and both questions mentioned above serve to isolate, include or exclude artists from the rest of society (ibid. 2).

The term *define* for them is twofold: its practical side signifies the identification of the members of a professional group using technical and empirical social science research, and its conceptual side signifies the revelation of special qualities and characteristics related to the individual’s ability to interpret the world (ibid.: 1f.). Mitchell and Karttunen identify two specific problems in defining artists: the first is the interaction of different types of definition and the way they may influence different professional groups in a specific cultural and social context. The second is the way different regional, national and cultural definitions allow for “variations in the composition

and structure of and the social and artistic practices within this formation” (ibid.: 2f.).

According to them, a definition of artists is based on four different parameters (ibid.: 8) and is not much different from the Unesco definition:

1. Self-definition: when an artist indicates that he or she is an artist.
2. Production: in this case, an artist is the person who produces works of art or carries out artistic activities. This assumes “serious artistic activity and full-time production during a whole life-span” (although they do not specify what is meant by *serious* artistic activity and how they measure *full-time* production). Artists’ work is disseminated to the audience by an arts institution and is expected to be “commercially successful”.
3. Society: artists form distinctive categories within society at large and they have their own particular characteristics, rights and obligations (tax payment, social benefits etc.)
4. Peers: in this case, artists recognise a person as a fellow artist and colleague.

All criteria and considerations taken into account in defining artists are clearly shown in the table 2 (adapted from Mitchell & Karttunen, 1991: 4).

From this table it is obvious that aestheticians provide internal, conceptual and aesthetic criteria, while the support structures provide more external/practical criteria.

Frey & Pommerehne (in O’Brien 1997: 251) provide eight criteria to determine who is an artist, which, however, can prove to be problematic:

5. Amount of time spent on artistic work.
6. Amount of income derived from artistic activities.
7. Reputation as an artist among the general public.
8. Recognition among other artists.
9. Quality of artistic work produced.
10. Membership of a professional artists’ group or association.
11. Professional qualification in the arts.
12. Subjective self-evaluation of being an artist.

Practical considerations (from support structures – artists, politicians etc.)			
<i>External</i>  <i>criteria</i> (from intermediaries – art admin, educators, media, etc.)	1. Criteria to define a good professional?	2. What does the artist do? How he relates it to his work?	<i>Internal</i>  <i>Criteria</i>  (from artists as individuals, groups, etc.)
	3. How does a work of art reflect/ define the artist? What kind of artist?	4. What is art? What is an artist?  What is his task or predicament?	
Analytical, moral or conceptual considerations (from aestheticians).			

Table 2

### *Profession and employment issues of artists*

O'Brien (1997: 257) argues that "professions are occupations displaying particular traits. These include long periods of training, stringent entrance requirements and occupational control which ensures social and economic privilege for its members. The higher a profession rates in each of these, the higher its perceived status." He also acknowledges law and medicine as elite professions and says that professionalisation requires the ability to control part of the market. Therefore the members of these professional groups maximise income by exclusion (as not everyone can belong to them) from their professional associations, which control entrance, standards and discipline of members. He concludes that, from a sociological point of view, professions are "tightly regulated occupational groups which control a sector of the market and collude to keep the cost of their services at a maximum" (ibid.: 259). Artists according to O'Brien are "an occupational group who derives satisfaction from their work and lifestyle (referred to as 'psychic income') and not just the income it produces" (ibid: 260) with artistic practice being labour-intensive with generally low potential for high income (ibid: 259).

A formalised way of defining artists for employment issues such as tax and benefit systems is necessary; there are countries, however, that do not have a legal or fiscal definition of artists, although they have specified tax rules for them (McAndrew 2002: 62). Self-employed and employee status are completely different and therefore require a different approach. This is also the case with the various categories of artists according to arts genre such as visual artists and performing artists (as for example performing artists may have a different working life from visual artists). Artists generally strive to survive financially from their artistic work and many may be required to work in non-arts professions to earn their living. Artists may turn to teaching to complement their

income rather than to any other non-artistic-related work as teaching fees are higher (ibid.: 63).

McAndrew says (2002: 64) that it could be argued that artists should be treated as individuals who work for a living and should therefore be paid for their work and what they make. However, most self-employed artists are mostly paid for the product they deliver and not for the process (which is the period of research and development of the product, be it a painting for visual artists or learning a role for performing artists) which remains unpaid.

### *Artists' labour markets*

Artists' labour markets differ from labour markets of other categories of the workforce as they present particular characteristics such as multiple job holding (Artworks 2003; Karhunen 1997), temporary work and various sources of income. In addition, artists can identify themselves as freelancers, unemployed or between jobs at the same time (Karhunen 1997: 227). According to official labour-market statistics, artists have a variety of employment arrangements that are not easy to identify and there are cases in which even artists themselves cannot define their employment status. For artists, recruitment can also differ from other categories of the workforce, as word of mouth, reputation and networking can play an important role in employment and remuneration (Karhunen 1997: 228; Artworks 2003:10), as in other categories of freelance workers.

In a report on the job potential in the cultural sector (2001) the European Commission acknowledges that the culture and the media sectors in EU countries are particularly distinguished by atypical forms of employment, which have the following characteristics (European Commission 2001: 25):

- flexibility
- mobility
- project work

- short-term contracts
- part-time work
- voluntary or very low-paid activities
- employee-like, pseudo-self-employment/freelancing

For all groups of the workforce, access to the labour market is facilitated through education and training, but artistic qualifications are different from other categories of skill that are important for the labour market (Artworks 2003:37). The number of academically trained artists has increased, but it is questionable whether this has any implication for their status and their position in the labour market (Karhunen 1997: 225). In other categories of the workforce, formal education is a means of skills acquisition, selection and screening of a candidate for a job position, but for artists it is not as important, as selection is made according to talent, which is not measurable by formal degrees (ibid.: 231). It has been observed, however, that artists who have undertaken long training periods spend more time on artistic work than those who have not (Throsby 1997: 266). In the *Artworks* study it is argued (Artworks 2003: 43) that universities of art have the responsibility to provide their students with an updated picture of art and artists. The image of the “artistic genius” may be old-fashioned but it is still conveyed by universities. *Artworks* proposes that new developments internationally can be followed with the implementation of new curricula, special programmes and practice for work in the third sector (ibid.: 43).

According to Throsby (1997) artists supply two different labour markets: the artistic (in which they are involved due to their artistic activity) and the non-artistic, from which they gain additional income to support their artistic aspirations. They will supply the latter only until they acquire enough income to support their artistic endeavours, but the opposite does not apply as they will continue to belong to the artistic market, which supports the argument that artists

do not become artists in order to earn a lot of money (Throsby 1997: 265f.) but to seek non-monetary rewards such as satisfaction and peer recognition (Abbing 2003: 438). Although the arts sector is thought of as a sector of opportunities for artists, they often face atypical employment conditions, low income and inadequate social safety nets, and as a result they have to seek employment in the third sector or in social services (Artworks 2003: 40).

Abbing (2003: 442) makes the interesting argument that as multiple job holders it is not easy to distinguish between amateur and professional artists since an amateur artist in one field is a professional in the other. Nor is it easy to distinguish between producer and consumers also, at least not with the traditional meanings of the terms (the producer earns money and the consumer spends money). In the arts, artists who spend money on artistic activities but do not live from them are consumers and not producers, therefore many poor artists could be characterized as happy amateurs and the income figures would differ considerably in those two categories and the myth of the poor and miserable artist can be discounted. Differences between amateur and professional artists are defined more in terms of sociology than in purely financial terms and have more complex variables than the purely economic figures (ibid.: 442).

Jeffri presents interesting arguments regarding *occupation* and *career* in the artistic field. She says (Jeffri 1995: 612f.) that for artists, occupation and career can be different and neither concept is much used by them to identify themselves. She also distinguishes between two categories of artists, those who are *creator oriented*, focusing on the process of creating an artwork and those who are *consumer oriented*, focusing on the consumer rather than themselves (ibid.: 651).

With regard to performing musicians as opposed to other categories of artist (for example visual artists),



Colonna et al. argue that there is an important difference between them, since a visual artist can establish his excellence with one work, whereas the performing artist's income depends on two parameters: the demand for his skills and work and the quantity of engagements. A visual artist's income therefore depends on the scarcity of the product (paintings) and is inversely related to the quantity of reproductions, whereas the performing artist is directly related to them (not the reproductions, but the performances of the same production) (Colonna et al. 1993: 73).

It is interesting to note here that, despite what one may think, there are no universally accepted classifications in categories for artists. Heilbrun & Gray (2001) refer to the particular example of singers in Finland, where they are not classified as performing musicians but are excluded from the musician's category and are divided between two other groups of performing artists. Cases such as these make it difficult to make comparisons for the status of the artists at an international level (ibid.: 313).

### *Creative artists and cultural workers*

Employment policy discovered the cultural sector only in the mid-1990s. In its report *Exploitation and Development of the Job Potential in the Cultural Sector in the Age of Digitalisation* (2001), the European Commission acknowledges that the position of artists and creative workers has changed in a significant way in public discourse. and it defines creative workers as "those workers who spend at least 50 percent of their working time for creative occupations. 'Creative occupations' are all those occupations that focus on the creation of new products and services, not on the administration of existing ones" (European Commission 2001: 42).

Internationally, artistic production and distribution has expanded considerably during the past few years and the number of those who define themselves as

creative artists has risen significantly. Opportunities for art consumption have increased, with amateur arts and crafts attracting millions of practitioners and arts and design to be available for all. However, the social status of creative and performing artists has not risen accordingly (with artists from central and eastern Europe being particularly disadvantaged compared to those in western Europe), and nor have remuneration or social security (European Task Force on Culture and Development 1997: 171). In the age of economics, the creative artist is particularly economically oriented, what *Artworks* calls the "economization of culture" (Artworks 2003: 4) and it seems that with time, differences between work in the artistic sector and the other sectors of employment are disappearing (ibid.). However, what differentiates the arts labour markets from other labour markets is still, as Throsby says (2001: 122), "issues of art-for-art's sake, the inner drive of the creative spirit, art-as-a-way-of-life and other aspects of the non-pecuniary attractions of artistic work".

Like other professions, the artist is constantly changing, especially in modern times with the aid of technological progress. Contemporary artists are therefore acknowledged as "avant-garde consumers" (Boris Groys in European Commission 2001: 59), with the function of art not being only *artistic production*. A new term used to characterize artists is therefore found in cultural policy and employment literature, *cultural worker*. It is interesting but problematic as well, since the term existed in the 1970s but acquired a new meaning in the 1990s. According to Marie-Luise Angerer, a cultural worker "is on average a 25-30-year-old, multiskilled, flexible person, psychologically resilient, independent, single, unattached to a particular location, who jumps at whatever opportunity there is to be had in the field of the art, music or the media" (Angerer in European Commission 2001: 59) and seems to be exactly the type of worker that would fit with the new financial

circumstances in the arts. The term worker in this context can also imply that artists are selling their labour and can be subject to exploitation.

### *Arts as an industry*

#### The culture industry

The term “culture industry” was used for the first time by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, originally published in German in the 1940s. (Negus 1999; Primorac 2006: 45). Adorno and Horkheimer were against all those who thought that the arts were not related to industry and commerce, and using contemporary theories on political economy and business they introduced the term “culture industry” to propose an argument according to which cultural goods were produced in the same way as goods in other industrial sectors. They claimed that cultural goods were produced with a profit-making purpose and en masse, using the same procedures. This led to the concept of “mass culture” without originality and individuality (Negus 1999: 21).

Significant research in the cultural industries sector continued with Miège and other authors in the 1980s, with works in cultural production and cultural industries for UNESCO. In Britain during the time of Margaret Thatcher, Myerscough published a report entitled *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* in 1988, in which cultural industries were “those activities which deal primarily in symbolic goods – goods whose primary economic value is derived from their cultural value” (O’Connor 1999 from Primorac 2006: 45). Apart from Unesco, the importance of the cultural-industry sector was also acknowledged in 1999 in the “Essen Declaration: Ten Axioms for the Culture Industries in Europe” (Primorac 2006: 45). Hesmondhalgh (2002: 11), however, provides one of the most significant

definitions saying that “the cultural industries have usually been thought of as those institutions (mainly profit-making companies, but also state organizations and non-profit organizations) which are most directly involved in the production of social meaning ( ... ) they include: television, radio, cinema, newspaper, magazine and book publishing, the music recording and publishing industries, advertising and the performing arts”.

Cultural industry suggests two different but related processes: firstly the application of processes used in the industrial world to the field of culture that was previously not associated with business and commercial characteristics and secondly the standardisation of the cultural goods by the industry. According to Negus (1999: 21f.), Bernard Miège, another influential figure in the area of cultural industry, argued that “one of the problems with this theory is the assumption that all ‘culture’ is produced in a similar way within a unified field and as a result of a single process. The production of music, radio programmes, novels, painting, films, theatre and television is assumed to manifest the same basic features and processes. In addition, there is no acknowledgement of the residual ‘non-capitalist’ orientation of some artisanal work or state-supported creative practices which are not guided by a strictly commercial logic.”

Bereson, in her study *Arts and Industry* (1999), attempts to link these two different areas. She suggests that the term *arts industry* is an oxymoron and its use is not correct because of the different senses attributed to each word. Art as a term is linked to “something of much greater value within the personal, social, moral and spiritual dimensions of human experience” (Bereson 1999: 172), while *industry* on the other hand has been associated with the principles of mass production, labour and economics. She attributes the term a sense of abuse and a “dehumanizing, standardizing, mechanical agent” (ibid.:

173). *Arts industry* is for Bereson either a political construct, used by the state in order to control and assess art, or a false and imaginary construct since it does not exist as a single entity (ibid.: 174). Nevertheless, there seems to be an alliance between arts and industry, but one which has made the relationship between them more complicated since arts institutions work as charities or not-for-profit organisations. Furthermore, according to the state and purely for funding reasons, the public must think that arts are a profitable industry. Bereson concludes that *arts industry* cannot be used because the term *arts* focuses on the question of why things are such and function in a certain way, while *industry* prioritises how things function and is associated with mass labour and mechanical processes (ibid.: 176).

In the cultural industries, cultural production is about the collaboration of cultural producers, intermediaries and consumers in the everyday life and within consumer culture to create symbolic meaning, which is produced through production and consumption processes. Cultural production is collaborative and involves 3 categories of stakeholders: creators, intermediaries and consumers. In cultural industries, these include cultural producers such as artists, cultural intermediaries (for example art critics and curators) and consumers, either individuals or organizations. The concept of collaboration in not the conventional one, but includes more than share of resource to accomplish certain tasks (Meamber & Venkatesh 1999: 454).

### Creative industries

The term “creative industries” as a broader synonym of “cultural industries” is found in Australia in the 1990s but was given much importance in the UK in the late 1990s when the Department of Culture, Media and Sports set up the Creative Industries Unit

and Task Force. Primorac also cites a very popular definition of cultural industries (Primorac 2006: 45) as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.” One can notice a shift from culture to creativity and inclusion of industries such as for example PR, software and video games production that demonstrate the importance of technology for this sector, as well as the emergence of issues of intellectual property, author’s rights, etc. (ibid).

Those involved in the creative-industries sector in the fields of cultural production, distribution, interpretation and cultural management are cultural workers (Throsby 2003 from Primorac 2006: 46), although some differentiation is made between artists and cultural workers according to the nature of the artistic work (Yúdice 2003 from Primorac 2006: 46).

### Measurement in the arts industry

In the context of cultural economics, measurement is a complex issue as it is difficult for economists to measure the arts sector because of its distinctive characteristics. Questions include the ability to measure quality in the art world using economic methodology and principles, the degree of “good” or “bad” art, or the measurement of amateur artistic activity. Brosio (1994: 18f.) has written on the problematic of measurement in the arts industry and has highlighted four main problems:

1. The definition of what can be considered as art, as the borders between art and non-art are not always clear and no widely accepted borderline is available. However, some characteristics of the arts creation and consumption process are relevant to the economic point of view and this helps to frame art and non-art.

2. Art is an information good, therefore is a message or a set of messages and as such, to be consumed it has to be transmitted which means to be transformed into a medium that can be a material (for example a book) or an immaterial good (for example the aesthetic experience during a concert). These media are varied and produced by completely different industrial sectors, which explains why the arts are not and cannot be viewed as a single sector or a set of homogenous sectors.
3. The arts sector includes two production stages: the first is about the creation of the idea and the second about its transmission. These can merge, as for example in the visual arts. In the case of the performing arts though, the process of creation is not restricted to the first stage but the idea is modified and takes a precise shape during the transmission stage, but these latter cases do not pose problems for measurement.
4. Artistic activities can also take place in areas that are different from the traditionally artistic ones, as for example in industrial design. An important number of artists therefore work in non-artistic sectors but there can be no practical way to include their income or even their numbers in an arts sector evaluation.

Brosio continues to argue that apart from those mentioned above, there are mainly three purely statistical difficulties of measurement in the arts industry due to the lack of information (Brosio 1994: 19f.):

Arts practice has an amateur side apart from the professional one. In almost every arts genre, there are more amateurs than professionals, and it is not easy to measure their importance.

Measurement of the artistic capital stock: the stock and flow variables are applied to arts as in any other sector of the economy but there are no means of estimating

the artistic capital stock or a large proportion of it.

Artistic activities are included both in the secondary sector (production of artistic material for example) and in the third sector (artistic services). Activities that are sold in the market need to be evaluated for their cost but the arts-services contribution to the national gross product can be measured only very vaguely.

Throsby (1990) refers to quality as an important concept for economists in terms of the quality considerations of the consumers, companies and funding bodies as well as the decisions regarding the artistic production and consumption and how they achieve certain goals. Economists researching the arts are interested in quality to the point that it enables them to comprehend choices in artistic issues and the behaviour of decision-makers. They understand that there are aspects of quality that cannot be measured but there are also some that can be determined objectively. Throsby suggests a set of criteria (such as benefits to the audience, benefit to society and benefit to the art form) on which aesthetic judgments may be thought to be based (Throsby 1990: 67). These criteria can take the form, for example, of enhanced aesthetic experience or new artistic works.

Measurement indicators for arts activities is not a simple issue as indicators can differ according to the output and the outcome of the arts activities. The outputs of arts are the products of each artistic production process. They are easy to identify, are measurable in volume and can be related to other parameters to estimate the volume of production or the number of attendances. As output, Pignataro defines “the direct product of the activity of cultural institutions, which is obtained through the combination of the resources available to those institutions” (Pignataro 2003: 367). Pignataro defines outcome as what is “represented by the ultimate goals of arts production, usually in terms of impact on its beneficiaries” (ibid.: 368). Outcomes are not easily

identified as they are associated with the objectives of the artistic production rather than the characteristics of each artistic product and therefore different outcomes can be achieved with the same output. As outcomes are related to qualitative aspects of cultural production, it can be difficult to find measurement indicators for them.

### Opera as an industry: subsidy and managements

Opera organisations mainly work under two systems, the *stagione* and the *repertory*, which determine the status of the artistic personnel (permanent or contracted) and the system of rehearsals and performances. Nicholas Payne (in Cooke 2005: 307) has written on the two systems arguing that the repertory system requires a permanent ensemble of artists (singers, orchestra, chorus, music staff and production staff and almost the same number of technical staff. It is labour-intensive and depends on public subsidy but it contributes to the local economy and tax revenue system). The repertory system is applied in the German-speaking countries and has been the model for other neighbouring countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Denmark, whereas the *stagione* system is applied in Latin countries following the Italian tradition, and the Nordic ones have a combination of these two, with an ensemble and a semi-*stagione* rehearsing productions system (Cooke 2005: 308f.).

In terms of subsidy, opera falls roughly into the two major subsidy traditions of Europe and the United States, with the Pacific Rim countries (for example Japan) in the latter category and the former socialist countries applying a state-owned monopoly system. In the United States, public subsidy is no more than four per cent of the total revenue of performing arts organisations with the other 46 per cent coming from tax-deductible private donations and 50 per cent from

income earned by the opera organisations themselves (Kushner & Pollak 2004: 5 in Cooke 2005: 311). Many non-state owned opera organisations in western Europe enjoy a state subsidy of about 70-80 per cent (in the case of Germany, France and Italy for example) or even 90 per cent (the Netherlands Opera). In the middle we find the UK with about 50 per cent public subsidy, excluding the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where the subsidy declined to 30 per cent from the 50 per cent of the 1960s. Opera organisations in Australia and South Africa have lower subsidies than this but, as Payne notes, “wherever on the spectrum a company finds itself, it today belongs to a mixed economy which increasingly operates across national boundaries” (Cooke 2005: 311).

An opinion shared by many in the opera world but also outside, is that since opera includes all other arts it is thus the most expensive to produce compared to the other live performing arts. It is therefore necessary to have full or almost full houses in order to survive financially, which is why opera seasons are usually short (Heilbrun & Gray 2001: 35). Opera nowadays has not remained a high-culture art form isolated to the non-profit sector but has joined the commercial one, packaged as a commodity. It is also no longer the most expensive of the performing arts, with other art forms existing in the same marketplace (such as music theatre and the film industry for example) aiming to attract audiences. After hundreds of years, opera in modern times is not the greediest of the performing arts, but as Payne again says “it is now an under-resourced pygmy within the wider entertainment industry” (Cooke 2005: 314).

Opera managements nowadays work with business plans several years in advance. Competition, insecure financial circumstances and changing social conditions do not allow them to rely on subsidy alone (which sometimes comes late in the planning period) to secure their artistic and financial planning, as well as employment conditions and artistic

excellence. Directors of opera houses need to be able to foresee income flow, predict audience taste and preferences and come up with alternatives in case of any miscalculations. Opera organisations efforts to reduce costs have led to changes in the status of employees (temporary staff instead of permanent), in repertory (more “safe” productions of standard repertory rather than unknown pieces), in production (putting up for example Baroque operas but with a modern eye on stage direction), even in opera as an art form with fewer commissions or commissions of small-scale opera pieces.

Opera organisations are aiming to increase their revenue from ticket sales and from private donations and to this end they seek ways to build demand. There are cases in which supply exceeds demand, so the business of opera is becoming very competitive. An opera organization needs to be very efficient in cutting costs to remain viable and be able to survive (ibid.: 317). This is the environment in which artists, especially young professionals starting their career, find themselves when they enter the market, and it is under these circumstances that they must find work and build a career.

On artists’ careers in terms of cultural policy, the European Task Force on Culture and Development (1997: 242) says: “The history of most artists’ careers shows that success as judged by employment and material rewards has tended to fall into a limited number of stars who managed to make a ‘break through’ to the attention of larger audiences. It seems that since the late 1970s these rewards have become concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. In some countries – especially where subsidy promotes a different kind of ‘excellence’ from that promoted by the market – an artist has to make two or three breakthroughs before he/ she reaches a mass audience. No doubt the growth of unemployment in most artistic fields in Western Europe in the late 1980s and the 1990s is mainly due to economic stagnation,

but the situation has not been made any easier by the commercial exploitation of a handful of key artists and their work at the expense of other artists.”

## Chapter III.

### Artistic Development: The Stakeholder's Point of View

#### 1. General view and definition

The people approached to conduct the semi-structured interviews were all involved in the artistic development of young singers from their respective positions – they were therefore the stakeholders of the artistic development process. They included directors of young artists' programmes, directors of postgraduate opera courses, teachers in young artists programmes and agents. There was no negative answer from any of those approached to speak about artistic development and there were cases in which interviews lasted much longer than originally scheduled.

The findings suggest that it is difficult to provide a definition of artistic development and it is interesting that even the interviewees themselves had a difficulty in coming up with a definition. One of the interviewees (a director of a young artists' programme) for example says: "I would change the definition if I thought about it more, an instant reply would be the development of the character and experience of the individual. Because as they develop competences they develop skills, they can change their artistic expertise so it will grow in relation to what they find inside themselves, because if you give all your body strength and physical as well as mental strength, the standard of your artistic excellence will grow and accordingly. And it's about being able to identifying yourself, accessing elements of yourself that you would not normally access artistically because of such extreme levels of excellence and the quality of what you expect and that will vary according to your response to the artistic question being

put, whether you're responding to play the Bach, or Shostakovich or Verdi or anything. So that's one way of defining it." The shortest answers to the question of defining artistic development came from two directors of young artists' programmes, the first one in the United States and the second in Europe: artistic development is "the increasing understanding of the meaning of material one is performing" and "the ability to take your own decisions and to become a unique artistic personality. Which means you cannot compare to anybody else."

On the question "how would you define artistic development?" all the interviewees described the term, some of them with significant difficulty, rather than easily providing a concrete definition of it. The interviewees tried to describe it using its qualities and characteristics, as it is difficult both to observe and to measure. The only way to address it in order to understand it appears to be by observing the artists and by describing and analysing the different stages of their artistic and professional career.

According to the findings, a definition of artistic development in the context of this research would be *the individual, ongoing process with which singers reach the top of their own, distinct artistic personality through the development and maturity of their artistic qualities, which occurs after reaching technical mastery.*

Artistic development starts as early as during the postgraduate studies of young opera singers; it is different in speed and form for every singer according to their individual needs and depends on the type of their voices and their personality. It is a combination of technical, dramatic, stylistic skills and artistic excellence. It is also about the ability of the artist to create a unique artistic personality on top of his/ her technical mastery. Artistic development is a continuous process that occurs during the course of the singer's professional and artistic life rather than a single

quality that young singers either have or do not have. It enables young artists to mature and reach the top of their artistry, without this necessarily meaning, however, that they will become successful.

Artistic development is believed to start approximately during, but nevertheless after a young singer has completed a postgraduate opera course. As a term but also as a process it is mostly found in young artists' programmes – in any case not very often in postgraduate opera courses. It is interesting to observe that the organisations involved in it are not only education institutions but organisations associated with the job market, such as opera houses in the case of young singers; young artists' programmes in particular are regarded more as an intermediate level in acquiring professional experience than another level of education, but they are an institution in which artistic development primarily takes place.

## 2. Particular characteristics

### *Technique*

Although the particular characteristics and qualities of artistic development are present in each of its stages, the difference lies in the importance of each one for every stage as well as the means by which it is being developed; that means education in the case of postgraduate opera courses and professional experience in the case of young artists' programmes.

The role of technique is important in artistic development in the sense that all the qualities developed during the process are based on technical mastery. Technical perfection is an indispensable parameter for artistic development as only when singers have secured all technical aspects of singing can they then focus on other elements of their art; this is why technical mastery is taken for granted in the artistic development process. Technique does not develop *during* the process but it forms the basis of

it; technical perfection can occur during the artistic development process but in the form of perfecting minor technical details. The interviewees considered that only when a singer is free from the burden of the technical parameters of his art is he or she able to focus on the artistic ones. According to the interviewees, singers need to start with certain basic skills such as realising their instrument, which is their voice, learning about voice production and concentrating on developing a secure and healthy technique before concentrating to other qualities that an artist should possess.

### *Artistic skills*

All the interviewees agree that artistic development is associated with artistic skills, which are, however, very hard to identify. They say that artistic skills are related to musicality and musical development but also the ability to communicate the text and the emotion of the piece in an efficient manner so as to persuade the audience that they understand completely what they are singing. A basic quality that professional singers aiming for a career in opera should have is, among other things, the ability to pronounce the text clearly; the words, the diction and the way the text should sound in opera should be fully comprehensible. This is not only a matter of technique, as to be able to achieve it singers need to be freed from the thought of whether they are singing correctly. The lack of such quality is particularly visible in French works when sung by singers whose mother tongue is not French.

Singer's voices are divided into categories such as soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, etc. There are cases in which, with time and experience, singers develop a particular sub-type within these categories and therefore specialise in particular roles. However, as composers have written operas for particular singers and particular voice types, there are types of voice that are extremely hard to find in good quality, such



as that of the dramatic mezzo. For example, Verdi wrote the role of Amneris (*Aida*), of Azucena (*Il Trovatore*) or Princess Emboli (*Don Carlos*) for a particular mezzo soprano who could sing comfortably in the high register and had the timbre of a soprano, or vice versa, for a soprano who could be comfortable in the medium-to-lower register of a mezzo (Reverter 2007: 17). Another example of this is Wagner's *Der Fliegende Holländer*, in which the composer invented Hoher Bass, a hybrid of baritone and bass with a voice range of two octaves that did not previously exist (Gonzlés Barrio 2008: 16). Also, when *Tristan und Isolde* was written, in 1859, there were no interpreters good enough to cope with the inconceivable difficulties of the roles, so interpreters were in a sense born with this piece and established with it. Isolde in particular is sung by a dramatic soprano and it is argued that as much as it is a dramatically multifaceted role, it does not take advantage of the full potential of this voice type (with some exceptions in the first act), but nevertheless, there are many singers who have tried to sing it and have accelerated the damage in their voices, as they did not know how to cope with the Wagnerian orchestra (Barrio 2007: 26).

It is a while since the disappearance of certain voice types has become a very obvious concern in the professional opera world, as Gilbert & Shir write (Gilbert & Shir 2003: 671f.): Muti, concerned about the tenor problem, also wondered why the weightier voices had vanished: "Singers in the heavy repertoire are becoming fewer and fewer. Certain timbres, generally the darker voices – tenore drammatico, tenore lirico spinto, soprano drammatico, mezzo-soprano drammatico, baritone verdiano, basso profondo – seem to be disappearing ... Perhaps it's a tendency to sing a greater variety or repertory: artists don't care about their voices in the same way." During the course of their artistic development, young singers need to develop the sort of musical, interpretation and stylis-

tic skills that can cope with the demands of difficult roles. This process cannot be taught at university, as it can take many years and it is part of the individual artistic development of the singer. It is an extremely demanding process as it needs singers who can evolve musically and as personalities to be able to cope with not only the technical but also the musical and interpretational difficulties that they impose.

### *Slow pace*

"I think singers get pushed these days and if you compare the way young singers used to spend ... I mean all those years that Joan Sutherland spent in Covent Garden in the 50s before she was given Lucia, she was there singing small roles and I think that is a good thing. And I think these days a lot of young singers get pushed too soon, a lot of the time managements are blamed for it but I think it's opera companies actually; opera companies who book them too early, they want the next thing too soon." (interviewee).

This opinion of an artists' agent is related to the previous argument about the time it takes for a singer to grow artistically. All the interviewees agree that artistic development happens slowly and takes time. However, the course of a young singer's professional life does not always follow a slow pace. It is quite easy for young, talented singers to make the wrong choices for the sake of money and fame, resulting in harming their voices in the long-term and ending their careers too soon. One of the functions of a young artists' programme is that it keeps young singers in a kind of protective shell to allow them to take time and develop by learning. The following example, from another interviewee from one of the best opera houses in Europe, gives a very clear idea of this and also highlights the idea of the long-term investment that members of these programmes represent for the opera houses: "... we have at the moment an extremely promising young Canadian bass, VERY young, only in his early twenties, with a glori-

ous voice. And there's nothing much else he needs to know about how to sing. What he needs is to be kept safe, just to be kept safe. We are giving him a lot of small roles. He's going to be on stage a great deal, because what he needs more than anything else is to learn stage technique. He needs to learn how to be on stage, he doesn't need to learn how to sing. And indeed we don't teach singing, that's not what we're about, they know how to sing. He's a real natural stage animal, he needs to be in some productions but he doesn't want too much responsibility. He doesn't want to be the person who's absolutely, you know, all eyes are on him, but he just needs to get used to the routines of being in a theatre, so for him a whole lot of small roles. Gorgeous voice, smaller things than he's being doing perhaps and already people harm him offering him Don Giovanni and all those things. And he's done a few of those things but now he needs to sort of take stock, to polish languages, to get used to being – to singing – with star singers, but to be able to sort of relax, realize that he's still young and nobody expects too much of him, let him grow. And by the end of two years we'll know he'll probably be doing big things and we will be booking him for the future as well.”

### *Other skills*

When asked to describe the qualities of artists, one interviewee says that they need to have “utter commitment to and passion for their art form, skill and technique to match it, unwillingness to settle for the mediocre – the capacity to strive; extraordinary communication skills; patience and the capacity for hard work; adaptability; imagination.” A very important category of skills that artistic development also includes, are interpersonal skills and stage experience. Interviewees involved in training young singers agree that artistic development is about experience and about the ability of young singers to “get up on their feet and perform”, according to

one interviewee. They all identify the lack of stage experience of young graduates entering the opera profession, which is attributed to the lack of universities to prepare singers for the real profession and they attribute the lack of interpersonal skills to the little time singers themselves spend while in universities acquiring experience in skills other than those offered to them by the academic institutions. Confidence, for example, is a very important quality that a singer aiming to appear on stage should have, and this is only acquired by experience and on-the-job learning. During the artistic development process, young singers learn to take their own decisions and develop a personality beyond the purely operatic facet. Singers who have a distinct personality are those who have greater chances of a career in the profession.

### Artistic development in an education department

There is another aspect of artistic development practised by opera houses in the work of their education departments, an example of which is the Royal Opera House. This perspective of artistic development is associated with creating morale in the categories of artistic personnel that are permanently employed in the house, such as the orchestra and chorus members. The Royal Opera House does not have a fixed ensemble; singers are therefore contracted for specific productions and are not permanent artistic personnel of the house. The only permanent artistic personnel are the chorus and the orchestra. These have fewer opportunities to develop their artistic skills due to the nature of their work, which can become more of a routine and less of an artistic activity, after some point losing its creative character. Artistic development in this sense is associated with activities that enable these categories of artistic personnel to enhance their creativity, develop their artistic personality through projects that bring them

in contact with the public (either schools or community groups, etc.) and provide them with a sense of appreciation of their work that stems from both themselves and the public.

Soloists (non-ensemble or chorus singers in an opera theatre) can also benefit within the realm of an education department, in a way that is associated with their artistic development. One interviewee, associated with education, argues that “it enables them to see what they do from a slightly different perspective; because when you go and work with a group of say 11-year-old children who may never have come across a professional opera singer or a professional orchestral player before, they have a kind of a freshness and spontaneity, they can be quite disconcerting to start with, but makes you reflect on what you do, it certainly makes you reflect on how you communicate what you do and again it’s this thing of communication we may come back to in a moment; and it simply makes you perhaps realise how valuable the skills you have are, because again you can feel taken for granted ... when you go out into a school and you sing and the kids are amazed by it and are asking you how you got to sing and how do you sing like that without microphones. All that stuff it makes you kind of realise how skilled you are, and it makes you reflect on how your art form and how your particular artistic discipline within that art form is viewed by people from the outside. Because we tend to be in a goldfish bowl so we don’t get an opportunity to interact with the wider community, I think [education work] informs your perspective on what you do which is very refreshing.”

### Artistic development and the development of opera

Interviewees associate artistic development with art-form development, in this case the development and advancement of opera as a form. Developing artists is

interrelated with developing opera itself; presenting new work, presenting existing work in new ways and discovering areas of the repertoire that haven’t been brought to public attention in recent years (as is the case with the renewed interest in baroque works in recent years). Again this is related to what is already said above as by developing artists, one makes the performance of pieces that require specific qualities or particular voice types possible, but also develops opera in quality (many well-equipped singers guarantee quality performances), variety (as each and every singer has their own personality, therefore different interpretations are possible) and perhaps even in quantity, as singers have more chances of engaging the audience and attracting them to the opera house.

Artistic development initiatives are also linked with the opera houses themselves, as one interviewee says: “it wasn’t that long ago that society accepted that the opera house was a place that would open its doors at 6.30 in the evening to a highly moneyed audience, who would come in, watch the opera or ballet and go home again and that was enough. For that the opera house would get lots of public subsidy and would be accepted as an OK thing. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century that is not accepted; if the opera house only opened its doors at 6.30 and just put on the art to the moneyed classes it would be shut down, you know; public subsidy would be withdrawn – not just public subsidy but the kind of public opinion about the opera house would be also negative. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century arts organisations, both large and small, are expected to be community resources to an extent ... they have to share their facilities, their resources, you know artistic resources, with the wider society in order to justify their existence ... every large arts institution now, the expectations of it have changed. And they have to be part of the community which effectively has made them exist in the first place. And clearly a key to that is the artists themselves.” Opera

houses nowadays want to be viewed as important elements in society; that is also a motive for initiatives associated with education and social responsibility (such as community and outreach work for example) in which artists play a fundamental role.

### Artistic development, career development and professional development

An opinion shared by most interviewees is that artistic development is associated with career and professional development, but also that a successful artist and a good artist are two separate things. Artistic development as individual development is about developing oneself; however, artists can grow and develop artistically without this having any impact on their career, but also, artists who do not develop have no chance of having a career at all.

The definition of a career for an opera singer is an important factor also associated with artistic development. According to Polisi (2005: 120) there seem to be two types of musician's career, that of the virtuoso and that of the musician/ craftsman. It is easy to identify operatic virtuosos (although not as early as for other musicians) and they are usually the ones who become successful easier and earlier than their colleagues. It is this type of career that most opera singers wish to achieve regardless of all its difficulties and problems, such as for example the difficult personal life, and not that of the musician/ craftsman, although this is considered of paramount importance as I shall discuss later.

Artistic development occurs in both types of career path, and although most people associate it with the virtuoso type it is not an issue of one path being better than the other in terms of providing more opportunities for artistic development. In fact singers following the "craftsman" career-type can develop into better artists than those choosing the virtuoso path (who usually have to make many compromis-

es to advance their career in order to become successful). After a certain point, however, it is more a matter of circumstances and luck when it comes to which path each singer follows rather than a series of purely conscious choices.

Artistic development, career development and professional development, although different, are all interrelated. Artistic development is about inner work and career development about putting together the material of artistic development in order to improve as a professional. Professional development is about making contacts and raising awareness of oneself such as for example when contacting agencies, participating in auditions, etc. An interesting point of view is mentioned by one interviewee, however, who distinguishes between artistic development and career development by saying: "Frankly, things that are nourishing you as an artist if that's what you do for a living, should be also nourishing you professionally. I think there's more of a distinction between artistic development and career development because in a way, you know that quote 'art for art's sake'? You can be developing as an artist but it doesn't necessarily have any immediate or indeed measurable impact on your career. Art versus career is quite a difficult equation and I would argue that some people may have sacrificed their artistry, their artistic development for career development. In a utopian world, the two would be absolutely hand-in-hand, one's development as an artist would equate with one's career, but I think in reality that sometimes doesn't happen. And sometimes one has to make choices that perhaps means that you're not doing the best artistic work or that you're making really quite severe compromises as an artist because actually career-wise it's going to do you good."

### 3. Artists, artistic development and success

"Artistry is something not necessarily the same as vocalism. I mean, how you use your voice is artistry" (interviewee).

“A real artist is never fully developed; he is always changing and always in a developing process” (interviewee). This opinion is shared by all interviewees; however, not all young singers are going to develop artistically. Their development depends not so much on their talent, as there are plenty of talented young singers, but more on their stamina, discipline and balanced personality.

Singers who develop artistically have more chance of becoming successful at some point in their professional career. The most popular interpretation of success means singing in important opera houses (as one interviewee says very simply “Singing at the Metropolitan in New York is what I would define as a successful career”), being respected by critics, peers and the audience and earning a living from the art one is practising, but there are other interpretations given by the interviewees. There are those who see success as a complex combination of qualities and characteristics that is measured by lot of parameters and not only by a lot of engagements and financial rewards, and there are those who actually perceive artists in a more complex way. Successful artists are also those who have the ability and perception to say no to engagements that are not suitable for them and know how to use their talent for their long-term benefit. Those who get a substantial amount of pleasure from their work are also successful. Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that success does not depend only on artistic, but on non-artistic elements such as discipline, stamina and luck. I will give here two examples that illustrate these arguments in the best way: “It’s not necessarily the most exciting artists who are the most successful, because for me the most exciting bring something immensely personal to a performance and that means that they can be erratic. And I think the most successful people are probably the consistent, the safe-bet; they’re going to do best in terms of the opera profession” (interviewee).

And as another interviewee (director of a young artists’ programme) argues: “There’s much more to a successful career than voice and looks and acting. I would say mentality, stamina, discipline, good humour, a healthy character, a balanced personality. Those factors are least as important as a good voice, a good looks and acting technique and ability and talent. I find that the non-artistic elements, I say the character elements, lack. These character elements play probably a more important role than talent. Because there’s a lot of talent; you see 150 people here, let’s say that about 30, 40, 50 have talent. Of them, five will make a career. And the reason they’ll make a career is because they’re able to organise their life, to get things in line. And sometimes it’s a matter of luck. They’re there the right moment, the right time when the telephone rings. And when I call somebody for something if I direct and that person isn’t at home I call the next person. Because I’m not patient, I want within a day to find an alternative. If somebody gets ill I have to have a replacement. I’m not gonna waste the next day. If you’re not home it’s just bad luck, but if you’re home and you get the part you’re there. So luck plays a much more important role than people want to admit.”

According to the interviewees, no matter how good and talented young singers may be, their artistic development also depends on the opportunities they are given, in the sense of being a member of a postgraduate opera course, of a young artists’ programme, an opera company etc. After a certain point, these depend on factors beyond the singer’s control, such as luck, which translates into being at the right place the right time. There are a lot of young singers who have started their career because they happened to be at the right place when they were supposed to and were offered engagements that changed their life.

Abfalter & Mirski (2005) argue that success can be measured from the point of view of the customer – in this case, the audience. They argue that different

segments of the audience have different criteria that constitute success. Among them they mention personal reputation, which is important in the non-profit sector in which an organisation's reputation is important for their position in the market (Wood & Rentschler 2003 in Abfalter & Mirski 2005: 16) and the same happens with individual singers. They argue that "it has suggested that artistic directors of German Opera Houses can even afford to ignore the audience's taste in order to develop productions that enhance their professional reputation among peers" (Krebs & Pommerehne 1995 in Abfalter & Mirski 2005: 7). Other factors are institutional reputation, quality and satisfaction – even though artistic quality is hard to measure, they argue, there are some aspects of it that can be considered objectively measurable and can be compared, such as the voice of a singer or technical aspects of an instrumentalist. For a cultural institution's success they highlight the quality of the artistic director, of the artists, the programme, the satisfaction of the audience, etc. (Abfalter & Mirski 2005: 11).

As we have entered the age of the audience (which followed the age of the singer, which followed that of the conductor and that of the director), nowadays the audience is so powerful that it can act as the determining factor for the artistic choices of the houses. Opera houses seem to have shifted towards artistic development as a result of their need to find and nurture tomorrow's star who, apart from having the potential to be a good artist, would also be able to satisfy the rapidly changing taste of the audience and fill the house. But successful does not necessarily mean good. Another director of a young artists' programme says that "there are people who – very well-known artists who I've heard colleagues complain about because they're not good colleagues and in a sense they're not good artists, but they're very successful. And it always amuses me because if a member of the general public says 'Oh, I love X,'

a well-known singer, he's nice but, you know, they never done any work, they're always late, they won't rehearse on Tuesdays because they have to have tennis lessons and that sort of thing. And they're not actually – they're not very nice. But they [the audience] don't want to know that, they only want to see them on the stage."

This opinion is shared by other stakeholders, such as an agent (from a well-known artists' agency in the opera world) who argues that "There are a lot of successful artists who are bad actually. It's marketing, recording companies, dumbing down at people's tastes. I don't want to cite particular singers who I think are rubbish but I think you probably know who they are anyway. And they come and they go and they last three or four years and they're marketed to the hilt and their records are sold on high street in Woolworth's. You can't sustain that kind of interest with the general public for more than three or four years and the record companies are very cynical about it, they know that, they are just manufacturers; like in the pop world, like boy bands, there's always another boy band coming through. We're not in the business of those kind of artists; we have integrity and we're serious about the business. We like good singing." Agencies, however, also have a more practical view of success and as another agent says, "A successful artist is surely one, from our point of view, who has a full diary after a certain amount of time, after you've spent time with them, who gets a full diary, who is in demand or important work in important places with important conductors and directors and it's just busy. That's successful I would say; and is earning money for themselves and for us, the one who has a career."

#### 4. Other issues

Two dichotomies are obvious throughout the research and in some points actually overlap: that of government-regulated against non-government-reg-

ulated institutions and that of education against performing opportunities. What is mostly interesting is that artistic development seems to be associated with and practised more in non-government-regulated institutions (the young artists' programmes) rather than in the government-regulated ones (universities and higher education institutions), a possible reason being the freedom of choice in terms of the training offered by the former. As different organisations have different demands, commitments and political obligations, an important issue is whether opera has a role in training singers and to what extent.

It is a common belief in the opera world that good voices are rare, especially some particular voice types. This paragraph from Gilbert & Shir (2003: 671) written almost 10 years ago is revealing: "The shortage of dramatic sopranos continued to plague La Scala late in the decade and by then tenors had also become scarce. *La Stampa* of Turin reported on 21 June 1999 that sixty tenors were auditioned to fill ten vacancies in the Scala chorus, but only three were considered adequate. Critic Sandro Cappelletto was dumbfounded as to the cause of the problem in a land historically associated with the tenor voice. 'Is this another consequence of a male identity crisis', he wondered, 'a mysterious hormonal mutation that reverberates in the male voice, or is it the fault of bad teachers?'"

It is also argued by the majority of the interviewees that universities are only the first step towards the profession but they do not prepare young singers adequately to become professional singers. Conservatory education is considered to be passive, in the sense that young singers do what they are told. As for any government-regulated institution, there are restrictions in terms of what can be offered and to whom. Also, because of time and financial constraints, a conservatory is not always able to offer education and training in all important elements for a singer's career. These two reasons can justify the

common belief among the opera world that training institutions do not produce singers ready for the market, and this is the gap that young artists' programmes aim to bridge.

## 5. Teachers

"There are many talented students. There are very few talented teachers. If both come together not one moment of study is wasted" (Elisabeth Orth in University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna 2002: 65).

Postgraduate opera courses in universities need to fill in a given number of places, with a selection process that must function as a kind of filtering for the large number of graduates applying. It is not an easy task to select who will have an opportunity to learn and become better from a pool of talented young singers, but there are those who think that professional teachers are capable of distinguishing them. Polisi argues (2005: 32) that "although it is impossible to standardize perceptions of quality in music performance, we must admit to ourselves that a moral transgression takes place if an institution admits a student to a Bachelor of Music program, knowing full well that a specific student may not have the potential to have a life as a performing musician after graduation. I have heard the argument that faculty members should not be put in the position of predicting the future, that the admissions process will always have its variables, that educational programs should not be based on the job market. Although I am sensitive to these points, I must respond by suggesting that a professional musician truly knows if an auditioning student has the potential to have a life as a performer".

There are not many young singers who have shifted to teaching from personal choice. Most have tried to make a career on stage, and when they realised that this was not going to be possible they decided to teach. It is hard for an artist who wishes to hear the

audience's applause to be confined to a classroom, and it is believed by many, falsely in my opinion, that teachers are not artists, since the perception of the artist is associated with appearance on stage. It is therefore necessary in terms of cultural policy to find ways to change this perception first and foremost of young artists themselves during their time in education. Good teachers are very few and are most important for the development of an artist, first as teachers of the technical aspects of singing but also as guides and mentors in the profession. Educating opera singers is a very demanding task, because of the complexity of opera and the variety of disciplines that singers need to know before they even set foot on a stage, such as diction, languages, movement, acting, etc. As Polisi says, "the maternal/ paternal relationships that often exist between teacher and student in music deeply influence how the student will live the rest of his or her professional life, complete with attitudes about conductors, modern music, colleagues, managers, and human relations (Polisi 2005: 123f.).

However, everyone in opera seems to agree that higher education music institutions do not prepare their young opera graduates for the profession; they may equip young artists with necessary skills for the artistic profession but they are not related to the real market of opera singers. This is where the director of one of the well-known postgraduate opera courses in the UK identifies the gaps: "It was obvious that none of the colleges were actually producing singers that were, that knew what was expected in the profession. They would come out, they might be offered a small role or understudy or something but they weren't aware how to rehearse, they didn't have the stamina to be able to cope with the rehearsal pattern ... I mean, this [the postgraduate course] is a much more efficient way of actually realising their talents ... My immediate predecessor, the person before him who set up this course, also herself had practised in

the profession quite a lot and she was aware of this deficiency and set this thing up." A different opinion is expressed by another interviewee, again former director of a very famous postgraduate opera programme: "Most colleges and academies want their opera [course] because it's something which – you can have orchestral concerts which are just about the orchestra, but the thing about opera is that it shows off everything. It shows off the orchestra, it shows off the singers, it shows off the fact that you can do a good production because opera is more expensive. It's more than a production".

## 6. Selection

Young artists' programmes were introduced to serve the practical needs of the artists when they graduate from the postgraduate opera programmes. They are, in a sense, professional development tools that enable them to acquire experience of the real situation in the job market for singers, opportunities to test and stretch their limitations and make them aware of and know how to use the right combination of their weaknesses and strengths to become professional artists. They are a way of filling the gap between theory and practicality after higher education, as very few young graduates are ready to enter the profession (one of the interviewees argues that it is actually one or two out of hundreds of singers) and they offer their members the opportunity to be part of the system. They may be considered as cheap labour but this argument is rationalised since the benefits are mutual for both parties, singers and organisations. Selection for the programmes does not resemble the one in the postgraduate courses. As one interviewee (a director of a young artists' programme) says with regard to the selection process in postgraduate courses "And some [voice teachers] are really good, you know, even if they're failed opera singers, because even then they can become good opera teachers. But it's a true fact that they need pupils. And I've nev-



er – and I was part of committees sometimes – I’ve never seen them at selection days saying we found nobody. They always find somebody. But sometimes we find nobody. And we even have only five singers this year because we didn’t find the 6<sup>th</sup> one. Fine, but I’ve never seen that in a conservatory, never ... To select singers without the teachers, to set an independent committee from outside to do the selection. It will not happen. Because the chance that they have no singers, you know, enough singers, to have enough work for all these people, will of course kill their income. So they will find singers, you see. It’s a self-circulating system. It’s very much focused inside and because some of these people have left the business. Most conservatories don’t really try to involve people from the actual opera world, because it’s very complicated. These people do jobs, they have roles, they’re away, they travel so you can’t have them on a regular basis. You must make room for them.”

This difference in selection rationale, though, has an impact in the job market and the careers of the singers since there are more students completing post-graduate courses than the market can absorb. Potter makes an interesting calculation and discusses the long-term implications of this argument, saying that (Potter 2009: 190-191) “If we take the UK as an example, and posit that each of seven conservatories produces only one ‘excellent’ tenor per year, then over the period of a three-year course more than twenty competing tenors will come on to the market. In a ten-year period some seventy tenors would need to be accommodated in the UK alone. We cannot estimate a meaningful figure for the annual international supply of recently graduated tenors, but we can be sure that it is much greater than the opportunities available. The effects of this may take a generation or two to become apparent, but eventually there will be a price to pay for the overproduction of operatic excellence. One likely effect is shorter careers (why pay a huge fee to an established tenor when you can get a

recent graduate or débutant to do virtually the same job for a fraction of the price?). For certain areas of the tenor repertoire this is a particularly alarming prospect: there is a risk that the lyric-to-dramatic progression will dry up, as singers are priced out of the profession before they have a chance to mature; Heldentenors can take half a lifetime to grow into the *Fach*.”

Apart from the rationale for selection, it is a fact that after some point (in which all objective issues such as excellent technique and healthy voice for example are in place), selection is a very subjective and personal choice that depends on taste and individual preferences. It is justified under the concept of talent, which, however, is impossible to measure objectively and very difficult to define, as it means something different to each person. The higher education music universities can provide information about young singers’ abilities but not on their talent, and they cannot be involved in developing talent, which falls under the responsibilities of the young artists’ programmes. Apart from this, though, there are additional qualities that are important for the market and are not taken much into consideration. As the stage director Graham Vick said at the Valencia Conference in 2005:<sup>1</sup> “I was once asked by an Italian interviewer: ‘How do you define talent?’ My answer was ‘the ability to communicate, and having something to say’. All the young Artists programmes which I’ve been involved with put 100% of their effort and emphasis on technique, on the ability-to-communicate side of that equation. I have yet to see a young artists’ programme that develops the necessity of having something to say. But that’s what separates the ordinary working person from the artist. It’s what inspires artistic ambition. It’s what makes someone worth listening to. With that quality, you can go into any arena and speak. Peo-

<sup>1</sup> *New Artists, New Audiences, New Buildings: Opera Europa Conference, March 2005.*

ple will listen if you have something to say. People won't listen if you just talk. But the other skill to be taught in these programmes, throughout an opera house, to every audience and every sponsor, the skill we are in danger of losing and the biggest threat to our own art form, is listening. It's the only door you need to open: how to listen. But I would say 9 out of 10 performances of operas I go to involve most of the singers on stage not listening. Faking it really well."

### Young artists' programmes as gate-keepers of the operatic profession

Gatekeeping has a protective character. The gatekeepers have two main functions: to maintain and renew creative talent and to select the commercially profitable works of art for the markets (European Task Force on Culture and Development 1997: 155). The concept of gatekeeping is common in the music industry, with Negus mentioning the word "doorkeepers" as well (Negus 1999: 177), which refers to all those who make decisions on whether to allow a group of individuals metaphorically to pass through the door and enter the profession. Negus also refers to the term "cultural intermediaries", as also suggested by Bourdieu in *Distinction* to refer to those "spending their time socially engineering a connection and point of identification between the lifestyle of a singer and the habitus of their listeners" (ibid.: 177).

According to a definition by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the late 1940s, "a gate-keeper is an individual in a key position who selects among a number of competing messages and determines those which the receiver (audience) will hear/ see. Their decisions have the potential and power to facilitate (or prevent) social and cultural change through the distribution and flow of certain ideas" (Cliche & Wiesand 2003: 9). The concept of gatekeepers is related to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field as a social

formation that is made of hierarchically organised series of fields, each with its own structure and functions and relations, a field whose structure depends on the relations between positions that its agents have in the field (ibid.: 14). In his work, Bourdieu also discusses the dynamics of the cultural sector, in which professionals interact with those who are part of its symbolic capital, such as critics, academics, art dealers and all those who act as intermediaries, and their colleagues. Bourdieu also argues that artists' perception of themselves is partly formulated by the feedback they receive from agents or gatekeepers of the respective professional fields (ibid.: 15). Apart from institutions, gatekeepers can also be individuals in positions that involve decision-making and who can therefore exercise control in the flow of agents in their field.

Gatekeeping is a term that can refer to both closed and open gates, which according to Cliche & Wiesand depends "upon institutional conditions, economic interests, technical instruments and social processes or frames of reference" (ibid.: 18), as those who act as gatekeepers can act as gate-openers. However, the gate-keeping process tends to be perceived more as gate-closing rather than gate-opening and tends to be exercised by those who hold top positions of power in order to make important decisions or distinctions; it can also be related to discrimination from the point of view of those affected by it (ibid.: 19).

Young artists' programmes are also very much a product of their directors. Their knowledge of the operatic profession and their vision and leadership define the content of the programmes. The potential of a young singer's development is taken into consideration during the selection process but this is measured objectively and is based on each director's knowledge, instinct and experience. Young artists' programmes, but also postgraduate opera courses, can be regarded as gatekeeping agents to opera for young singers, as they provide a filtering mechanism

for singers who are not well-equipped to enter the profession. A gatekeeping role can also be attributed to all those who have the power to define, promote and maintain singers' careers, such as voice teachers, agents and managers, directors of young artists' programmes and critics. Young artists' programmes also act as tools for mentoring and networking of young artists and the integration of the better-equipped ones into the profession.



## Chapter IV. Further Thoughts and Conclusions

### 1. The changing job description and role of the artist

The perception of artists and their position in society is much related to artistic development; it is therefore important to discuss the notion of performing artists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and acknowledge their changing role. Nowadays, performing artists are no longer peculiar figures with an incomprehensible personality and strange demands but down-to-earth and approachable human beings, good communicators and teachers in a wider sense; they have a broader professional agenda than artists of the past but also more responsibility towards their profession and the public. Joseph Polisi, Director of the Julliard School of Music, argues (Polisi 2005: 18) that “the performing artist of the twenty-first century must be a teacher in the purest and most honorable sense of the term. A teacher who internalizes his or her art so completely that its manifestation is part of the persona of the artist. A teacher – who as a leader and communicator – presents an artistic endeavor with an energy that is at once intoxicating and compelling.” Becoming an artist requires will, stamina, dedication and discipline. The job of an artist does not end with performance as it used to; artist should be communicators both of their art and the art of the composer but also communicators of expression. They should also be “open to a broad range of interpretations, especially nowadays” as one of the interviewees said. An artist’s job is more complex than a simple performance and it is not a simple performance that makes them grow artistically.

Performing artists’ position and role in society have changed significantly compared to the past as, among others, they are expected to have a social role and be active members of the society. Instead of going to the theatre, rehearsing, performing and leaving, they are expected to actively participate in the life of the theatre; that is either by doing master classes for the young singers or being present in other activities associated with the production (such as introductions to the piece, pre-performance talks, etc.). Suzanne Capi-au says that “the last century has seen a sea change in the relationship between the artist and society. Even though, in the past, the artist was a sort of creature on the sidelines, a marginal, a troubadour, nowadays he has attained the more customary status of an economic agent: an imaginative creator, certainly, but also a producer of potential riches. Creativity, within the domain of the arts in general, as in other economic sectors, has been an essential asset in the functioning of our societies” (Capi-au in Beckman 2001: 55). This includes singers, who are expected to be involved in the activities of the opera houses they are called to work for. This can also provide a means of developing themselves as artists in a different context than that of a young artists’ programme.

Today’s singers are, or should be, many things at the same time: performers, professionals, good educators and communicators. They need to be able to handle many things at once and be excellent in all if they want to have a career in opera. They must be excellent performers (technically and musically excellent and able to persuade the audience of the role they are performing); they must be good professionals and communicators, always prepared for their role, always on time for auditions, with all the necessary material with them and an attitude that would make prospective employers (opera theatres) to want to employ them. They need to be multitalented and develop more complex skills than in the past. In addition to all these, they must be good educators.

The role of education is discussed in the interviews in this research mostly in one of its facets, and that is its association with the singer's path before entering the professional operatic world. Interviewees view artists as soloists and stage performers and do not seem to take into consideration their role as educators in society and the implications this may have for their careers. This role is nowadays expected from them more than it ever was in the past.

There has been a clear shift to education in the past few years and there are many reports highlighting and discussing the role of artists and of course singers as educators (Beckman: 2001, Staines: 2002, Royal College of Music: 2005). Education has become a buzzword (as audience development was a few years ago), possibly because in these times of global financial hardship any funding and subsidy needs a good justification and a clear result. Education offers a very clear social responsibility purpose with an almost immediate and visible result, especially via all the education programmes of arts organisations aimed at children.

In a report of The European Network for Opera and Dance Education (RESEO) on the professional development opportunities for performing artists in Europe in the domain of opera education, Staines describes the characteristics of an ideal artist involved in opera education, and it is interesting to see that they are all characteristics that an artist should have nowadays in order to pursue a career on stage:

- is open to experience, ideas and people outside the norm (beyond the Artists "comfort zone"), to trying new things
- feels comfortable in a range of environments
- is willing to connect with a range of groups and individuals
- is prepared to take risks (in particular singers who can feel exposed artistically through education work)
- works instinctively – can think on their feet

- is flexible (personally and artistically)
- has excellent communication skills
- is keen to impart information on their work as an artist
- has strong leadership skills (suited to a range of education environments)
- is open to sharing everyday aspects of work as an artist (prepared to come down off the platform)
- acknowledges the technical skills of others in profession
- has respect: for artists from other disciplines and work of non-professionals
- is a good team player, enjoys collaboration
- enjoys sharing good practice
- recognises that education/ outreach activity feeds creative work and artistic development and helps an artist find more resources in themselves
- sees the education field as a site for making art; has an artistic vision of what can be achieved (working with rather than for education/ outreach groups)
- sees how education work enhances their own practice as artists
- possesses artistic credentials (high-level artistic skills)
- creates positive role models for education/ outreach groups
- has maturity and life experience (particular assets include artists who have had another career/ training which brought them into contact with the wider community, e.g. a musician who went to medical school)

(All adapted from Staines 2002: 42).

However, the common view of a singer's career remains the typical one: singers have a career only when they sing on stage and very few of them consciously pursue a career in education, although this has more chance of being steady and better paid than that of a soloist. It is obvious that the stereotypes associated with artists are no longer valid nowadays,

possibly as a result of the change in the notion of art which is now approachable to more people because of education and outreach programmes. This has changed the position of opera singers (among other categories of artist) in contemporary society, according to them the characteristics of any other working individual such as contracted employment, tax payment, etc. Despite the fact that all stakeholders in the operatic world acknowledge the importance and benefits of education for artists themselves, for the audience and the opera houses as well, most young singers prefer not to follow this career path.

It is also interesting to note here how artists see themselves. As Jane Simpson, a visual artist herself, argues (in Beckman 2001: 30) “artists have (had to) become more professional, and better ‘equipped’ for art life. We ask for and expect certain conditions like any other professionals. We have to be our own business managers, or at least know a good one. Commercial is no longer the dirty word it used to be.” This argument is valid for all artists in whichever art genre they belong to. Polisi argues that “to accept steady employment in music without spectacular individual appearances, they consider an abandonment of their higher selves” (Polisi 2005: 120). Artists themselves have stereotypes as to what constitutes an artist and, as these are mostly confined to on-stage performance, very few young opera students decide to devote themselves to teaching from the beginning of their higher education; most of them turn to this path after not having had an opportunity to become soloists. It is a great pity, however, as good teachers are very rare and much sought-after by students. Good teachers may earn more in financial terms than many of their colleagues who appear on stage and their role is fundamental to the development of other artists, not only in terms of teaching them the practical aspects of the profession (such as technique) but also in terms of overall guidance and inspiration, and their work is of no lesser importance or quality because they work backstage.

But even for those on the stage, becoming a performing artist is not an easy task, as one needs a formal education of the highest level together with regular performing opportunities. A performer’s life is very difficult, as apart from all this they need to lead a very modest life in which practice plays a pivotal role, not always to their benefit. To quote Polisi again, “practice begets more practice, based on the belief that the psychological solace of practicing for hours will make one immune to technical mistakes once onstage. The young musician often views technical accuracy as the ultimate goal of a performance, somewhat akin to the perfect gymnastic exercise or ice-skating routine. Sadly, the pristine quest for a perfect technical performance has actually spelled the end of not a few musical careers. The excessive-practice syndrome has also created an untold number of physical maladies, because some musicians have consciously denied physical limitations related to their instruments and bodies in the hope that they will be able to push themselves to new levels of technical accomplishment and artistic interpretation” (Polisi 2005: 121f.).

Even the time in higher education institutions is not easy, as young students find themselves in a very competitive environment, in which they must complete tasks in a certain way. Studies are so intense that students do not have time to absorb necessary information – and they become much more intense at each level of studies. A very small percentage of the musicians entering higher education institutions will eventually have a career as soloists. And as Polisi argues, “soloists must have not only technical ability and artistic vision, but also a temperament that allows them to deal with the rigors of life as a featured musician onstage. There are fine musicians who, perhaps because of the lack of a soloistic temperament, choose to play other musical roles – that of a chamber musician, a member of a symphony orchestra, a teacher, a scholar, an administrator, or a mix

of the above – and wisely they should be advised to do so” (ibid.: 124). The concept of the artist is associated with education as Polisi notes, by saying that it is the education system which forms the young artist (ibid.: 120). Therefore in order to change the long-established and now outdated notion of the artist, the education process needs to be re-evaluated and re-positioned.

### The quality of higher education for young singers

Fuller-Maitland identified a problem with music education back in 1899, when he mentioned “professional wreckers” (with reference to bad singing teachers who destroy their students) in his book (Fuller-Maitland 1899: 24) and more than a century afterwards, not much seems to have been done to solve it. In 1989, Pleasants writes that “the result in recent years has been that young singers, less richly endowed and *technically inferior*,<sup>1</sup> resort to ‘pushing’ in an attempt to emulate those to whom the big sound was either native or acquired by technical mastery. What we hear is a ‘breathy’ vocal production, the breath escaping ahead of the voice, or with the voice, that may sound imposingly in a small room or a small house, but which spreads and is dissipated in a larger auditorium against a large orchestra” (Pleasants 1989: 70). By saying “technically inferior” referring to singers, Pleasants implies a comparison to singers of the past, questioning the adequacy and quality of teaching offered nowadays.

A few years after Pleasants, the 1998 Higher Education Funding Council of England report argues that there are issues regarding the role of postgraduate studies: “Existing postgraduate programmes address an array of objectives. If the performing standard of the first degree is considered to be consistent with entry into the music profession, the fact that

many performers, including the majority of singers, need to continue into postgraduate courses before attempting entry into a professional career, would suggest that the normal four-year length of an undergraduate course is not necessarily appropriate for all performers. What is described as postgraduate study is sometimes, in reality, a continuation of undergraduate study. Singers tend to be a special case which requires very careful scrutiny. There may well be an argument for reviewing the status, financing and length of courses to make the exit point relate more realistically to professional expectations” (HEFCE 1998: 32).

A few years later, Mary King does not describe the situation differently when she says that “despite the fact that a singer today has a very different career outlook, the training in the conservatoires is much the same ... Opportunities are few and far between, and singers put off the time when they have to call themselves ready for employment. Much of the training, however – and this is a personal view – reflects what has been happening in the world at large. Education has become very ‘box-ticking’ in nature. I see students as waiting to do what they are told, being very concerned with what is ‘right’, and with having a very narrow view of their future. They look for a ‘niche’ very early on, understandably concerned with how they are going to earn a living when they leave the safety of the college. They do not, on the whole, appear to be active in their learning, but passive. They are undoubtedly removed from any other community – ostensibly to focus the mind, but I sometimes wonder if we aren’t losing more than we are gaining” (King in Royal College of Music 2005: 30). Later in the same report, King goes further to sum up the characteristics of young graduates of conservatoires. Those are:

- People obsessed by the minutiae of vocal technique, who judge their own performances solely by technical standards (it was good because I got

<sup>1</sup> My italics.



the top A / counted the right number of beats rest / didn't forget the words).

- People who have practised phrases until they become automatic.
- People who are very polished but without heart.
- People who are 'posing' as professional singers – as if that in itself were a role.
- Occasionally, people who are very frightened indeed. Intimidated into dreading everything which might "go wrong", they become covered in a thick defensive shell to protect themselves (King in Royal College of Music 2005: 33).

She argues that singers are not encouraged to follow a career of an educator or even to pursue an education that would enable them to work in education and outreach, giving two possible reasons: on one hand because teachers themselves do not know what the job of someone involved in education and outreach is, and on the other hand because education and outreach are regarded as second rate so not something that young artists would want to associate with and as "an admission that you have no higher aspirations" (King in Royal College of Music 2005: 33). Even in 2008, the same issues are discussed in the summary of a seminar on future singers organised by the National Opera Studio. John McMurray of the English National Opera says that "a wider issue about music colleges is that far too many students are being put through postgraduate course who have no hope in today's climate of having a career in opera. Although there are great financial pressures on music and educational institutions, they are not doing a great service to a number of their students" (National Opera Studio 2008:4).

The role of postgraduate studies in opera is to provide further and more elaborated education to young singers in order to better equip them to enter the profession. It can open doors to the profession through stage performances and legitimisation of the singers' level and quality of studies, but that is not its primary function. Young singers decide to pursue postgraduate studies to learn and improve their skills and they understand that a postgraduate degree in opera does not guarantee a career in it at all. The limits and balance between learning and experience processes are not always clear in a singer's career. They can be identifiable, however, through the role of the higher education music institutions and the opera houses, which is clear and distinct. What each one provides is clear and distinguishable, although sometimes it is possible for them to complement each other.

In view of all the above, it is natural for one to wonder why there is a gap between education and the profession and why the situation remains like this with no solution being found to bridge it for over a century now. My opinion is that this gap will not be bridged completely and it is therefore unrealistic to propose any final solutions in this direction. Education and the professional world can approach each other, perhaps with synergies between stakeholders from the operatic profession and those involved in education (such as teachers and policy-makers for example) so that each sector's needs can be identified and dealt with, but they will never really meet. The reason the gap between them exists is actually their different roles and identity; each is there to serve different purposes and has a different influence on artists. Like all professions nowadays, the operatic profession is changing rapidly in order to meet the needs of the fast-changing taste of its audience, and it will always seek to find the best talent and the finest and prettiest singer of all. The primary role of academic education is to equip young singers, but education cannot control what they do with this equipment, as it can change more slowly than the profession.

## 2. The role of the audience

The role of the audience is very important when discussing artistic development. Nowadays audiences have become very demanding. As one interviewee (director of a young artists' programme) says "the audience will not tolerate stand and deliver performances anymore. You have to look good, you have to sing well and you have to act well. If you don't have these three criteria you are always going to struggle against someone else who does. It's very, very competitive. You only need to look at the way people look these days; singers in operas in comparison with even 10 or 15 years ago and it's a terrible thing to say but if someone really old or really fat or something who is not right for the role comes on, you'll get the audience tittering, making remarks, they won't put up with it unless the voice is so extraordinary and that's quite rare these days, where a voice can transcend everything else. It's a shame because I think it's first and foremost about the voice but young artists these days need the whole package if they're going to get on in the business."

The audience's vocal expectations have changed as well (Pleasants 1989: 68), perhaps as part of the changes technology has brought about to opera. The ability to have access to a variety of interpretations of the same roles and be able to hear first-class opera in our own homes has made the audience more knowledgeable and demanding of young singers, who must be able to come up to the quality expected of them. The taste and decisions of today's audience can be influenced by media as well. The dominance of image in everyday life has imposed certain stereotypes in opera as well, with physical appearance being as important as artistic abilities.

In a contemporary world that is dominated by media, the "stars" among the opera artists are also treated as commercial products. They can be translated into record companies' sales figures and are subject to image

creators and image-making as much as any of their colleagues in pop music, theatre or cinema. The music industry has entered the world of opera as well, offering artists promotion, financial rewards through recording contracts and additional sources of income through commercial publicity (a good example of this is Rolex advertisements with Placido Domingo and Kiri Te Kanawa). The commercialisation of opera has introduced new trends in the otherwise conservative operatic world, which are not necessarily to the benefit of artists, the most important being shorter careers for singers; as long as their marketability is high they are offered more engagements both in opera and concerts, but as soon as they are replaced with the next promising or good-looking singer their career declines significantly.

As Mary King argues, "once upon a time, classical singers were thought to be 'posh'. Indeed they mostly were! They were undoubtedly alien: they wore ball-gowns or dinner suits; they sang in foreign languages. On the one hand, everyone can identify with singing – everyone can do it, it is not determined by money (at least as far as having the instrument in the first place is concerned) on the other hand, singing 'classically' well is very hard indeed. So, it takes a lot of time, and requires patience and strength of character. Much of the time, the young singer is struggling in a mist of half-understandings" (King in Royal College of Music 2005: 32f.). Technology has changed the notion of the artist as a lone creator, this idea of the starving artist struggling all his life, who only becomes known and respected after he or she dies. Simpson argues that "in this age of new fast technology the time period between an artist producing work and achieving some kind of success, is relatively short. Just a few mentions in the media, and success – however temporary – is promised. The idea of being 'alone' is related to the genius creator, that there is no need to look at what any other artists are making. There is something quite arrogant about believing that no communication is

needed. A critical discourse is a vital part of production, and is constructive, not distracting” (Simpson in Beckman 2001: 29).

Audience taste and preferences and the influence and manipulation of these by the media play a significant role in the process of making of an artist. Image-making has entered the previously conservative opera world, transforming opera singers from conservative to modern and sexy. An interviewee from one of the most influential opera houses in the world says, with regards to what is expected from artists nowadays: “now clearly there is a far stronger requirement that people should act and that people should *look* the part and clearly all the issues about very, very fat women have come to the surface a lot. The appearance counts an enormous amount now because people are so used to seeing performance in other media, people are used to seeing film stars, people are used to seeing people in musicals, they are used to seeing people in plays and they are used to them being like the role they are performing. They can no longer make the exception for opera; why should an opera singer be a big fat person, why can't they be thin as well and beautiful. So yes, there are more requirements to meet a kind of accepted idea of what beauty is.” The media also have an impact on a singer's career since “sometimes the difference between being a good artist and a successful artist has to do with marketing and packaging and profile. That actually you can turn a good artist into a successful artist by staff that's not to do with the art actually, to do the way you are managed, the way, you know and also just having a bit of luck, seizing these opportunities the right time and being packaged”, as another interviewee (involved in education) argues.

It is interesting that although this change and transformation brought the artists closer to the audience, it has failed to bring the music closer. Opera has tried to approach the audience via the artists and not the music itself, and this is perhaps one of the dif-

ferences that it has with opera in the past, where the audience was attending also to be entertained and amused, and not only to watch the stars performing.

### 3. Conclusions

The epistemological dimension of artistic development is related to competence development and the acquisition and development of practical abilities. It is also associated with social processes such as mentoring and networking. The primary research findings and previous discussion raise other important issues regarding artistic development, as for example the question of the lack of young professional singers, which led to the creation of the young artists' programmes. An answer to that is possible if we see the development of singers from a historical perspective. In the older times, young singers used to develop with the repertoire, as composers were writing works specifically for them. The collaboration between the composer and performer of an opera was a development tool for both, but particularly for singers in our case. Young singers were developing together with the composers but also with the repertoire, which is not the case today, as the composing tradition has changed and as a result very few works are written for specific singers. As Pleasants (1989: 68) argues, “a random selection of twenty of the foremost female singers born in the half-century between 1860 and 1910 yields an average age of 20 for a debut in a leading role in a reputable house ... A similar random selection of thirty of the foremost male singers born in the same period yields an average debut age of 21. The list *does* include some males who made their debuts at 18 or 19.” He goes further to argue that the pace of maturation has changed, especially among young female singers (*ibid.*: 70). I believe this is true, but it is also the case for both sexes, as nowadays female singers make their debut in leading roles at about 28 and male singers a couple of years later.

Pleasants also attributes much of the slow pace of professional development to education (*ibid.*). It is true that the notion of education has changed, at least in the domain of operatic singing. In the past, singers were born, not created. They came from musical families, grew up and spent their whole life in the theatre, so their education was musical, vocal and dramatic; they would also receive lessons from singers of the time. They could pursue a professional career without having to have a degree or any kind of formal certification to legitimise them as singers. In our day, the education tradition has changed dramatically. As Pleasants (1989: 70) writes, “today’s singers in their teens and early twenties have much else on their minds and in their curriculum, most prominently the prospect of a secured future as a tenured teacher in the event of professional failure or decline – or at least failure to achieve professional stardom – as can be expected in at least 90 per cent of the individual cases. And so, having invested eight precious years in securing at least an MA, they embark on a professional career not too early, but too late”.

On the question of whether artistic development is an abstract concept easily used and abused by institutions for their own purposes and whether it is a cultural, ideological and political term, it is important to see the institutionalisation of education. Institutionalised instruction became available in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, around the time Fuller-Maitland’s book on artistic development was written. This perhaps answers the question of why such a prominent figure as Fuller-Maitland wrote a book on artistic development since the term was invented much earlier and it was not a novelty. It may be that artistic development is a product of the changing notion and the formalisation of education that arose around that time and was re-invented to describe processes that became more obvious with this institutionalisation.

The interesting question is why the term is used more by the young artists’ programmes rather than

by postgraduate opera courses. A possible answer is again associated with institutionalisation processes. The curricula of postgraduate opera courses are very concrete and what they offer and how is very specific; young Artists programmes are not part of formal education institutions with set curricula and so are free to include any disciplines they think are necessary and fit for their purpose. Because they are not parts of formal education institutions, though, young artists’ programmes do not receive public funds and therefore need to seek financial contribution from private sources (as already discussed, all of them are almost exclusively funded by individual patrons and organisations). In order to do this, they need to market their work in an attractive and sophisticated way that would describe the vision as well as the content of the programme. Under this interpretation, formal education is still involved in developing talent but in a different way and with different means than the young artists’ programmes.

If something does not exist we have to invent it; this is how opera houses seem to be operating in introducing young artists’ programmes. Although they are extremely expensive to maintain, young artists’ programmes are better value for money; they invest at a stage when it is easier to make predictions for a singer’s career and therefore the investment entails less risk. They are also looking after their long-term benefit as they stand a good chance of finding high-level professional artists they can choose from when they need them. But why are young artists’ programmes not yet regulated? This is an interesting question that I hope further research will be able to answer thoroughly. The answer is related to the role of educational and of cultural policy, since postgraduate opera courses fall into the realm of educational policy whereas young artists’ programmes into that of cultural policy. My assumption is that there is no need for them to be regulated, as what they offer is far and beyond what is expected of formal education

within its theoretical context and role, and what it can offer in a practical or financial context.

Perhaps the most important finding of this research is the identification of a gap between education and the profession for young opera singers, between academic training and professional competence. It is therefore necessary to try and answer why this is so. It is obvious that the liberal state can regulate academic education but does not regulate the jobs market, whose needs are changing rapidly in order to please this audience and to survive financially in most unstable times. The needs of the jobs market nowadays change very quickly and the level of professional services required is very high. This is a result of a combination of factors, one of which is the audience taste, which has become more sophisticated especially with the aid of technology; everyone can have a great recording of an opera, which might be studio-refined, and expect the same level of performance from the singers on the live stage. The audience structure has also changed compared to a couple of decades ago, as all these young students who are very well-educated have become part of it, and of course their expectations are different from those of audiences in the past.

It is neither easy, nor perhaps feasible for practical reasons (mainly financial since the work of young artists' programme is extremely expensive, but also different to government policies) for the state to follow the rapid pace with which the job market requirements for professional singers are changing, and this is why I believe this gap first emerged. Young artists' programmes fill the gaps in the formal education system, and in this sense they are necessary for the market. However, criticism may be easily applied as to why private resources should be needed (in fact it seems from the research that they have become absolutely necessary) to fill the gaps in education policy. It is not easy to come up with a possible realistic solution to this, but I can only suggest that an evaluation

of the relationship between university education and training for the actual needs of the operatic profession is necessary. Where possible, changes should be made at least to minimise the gap between formal training and the actual artistic labour market. These could, for example, include the introduction of intensive language courses, as all the interviewees located a great deal of singers' deficiency in diction and comprehension of the text.

Performing artists are changing and so should the concept of education and learning. Mitchell writes about "a new kind of relationship between work and education: education is not considered as linear, from the primary school to university or academia, but as a continuous mixture of work and education, a lifelong education. The new cultural worker, especially as an entrepreneur, shapes the education system by demanding training in new skills, and a major issue is how the academies and universities are able to respond to this challenge and to the call for non-linear, life-long education" (Mitchell in Ellmeier & Ratzenböck 1999: 14).

#### 4. Epilogue

"Artistic expressions have impact on and reflect the broad way of life (which would be covered by the broad anthropological concept of culture), and are crucial in how we define and develop our identities. Moreover, the world of arts is a significant and decisive segment of specific human communication in all societies. Here deeply felt feelings are expressed. It includes all forms of communication that have an aesthetic aspect; expressed in film, theatre, music, dance, opera, musicals (...) and all different derived forms; exhibited in many distinguished genres; making noise or inviting silent reflection; produced and distributed on small or a large scale; attracting and entertaining massive audiences and buyers or only modest groups or devotees; embodied in material, audiovisual or digital substances; ritualized, secularized, or commercialized" (Smiers 2004: 5).

Opera is the most complex of art forms, it therefore allows much space for creativity and expression. This justifies the presentation of works from different periods, the interpretation of Baroque pieces in a modern context. Heilbrun and Grey (2001: 391) argue that new works that will fascinate audiences need to be developed in order for one to be optimistic about the future of opera. I believe that opera also has a future through its young professionals, as they are the ones, with their artistic mastery and development as interpreters of operatic work, who will interest and excite audiences and so bring them into the opera houses.

This has been a first attempt to discuss a much-used term from the point of view of cultural management and cultural institutions studies, and as such it is not possible to elaborate on all issues that arose during the research. In fact it seems that almost every section of this work can be an object for further investigation and elaboration, which was not possible for practical reasons. One of my aims was to introduce this subject to scientific discourse in the field of cultural management and cultural institutions studies; I hope this work has provided enough material for further research and discourse to be carried out in future.

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- Reeve, Paul: Director of Education Department in Royal Opera House Covent Garden, London, 21/09/2005
- Rosenberg, Lenore: Director of Lindemann Young Artists Programme, Metropolitan Opera New York, 02/09/2005 (by e-mail)
- Russell, Peter: Director of Opera Colorado, formerly Director of the Metropolitan Opera Young Artists programme, 28/09/2005 (by e-mail)
- Skuja, Maris: Director of the Opernhaus Graz Opernstudio (by e-mail)
- Timms, Clive: Director of Opera Studies, The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, 21/09/2005



# Institute for Music Sociology

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The Institute for Music Sociology at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna was founded in 1965 on the initiative of Kurt Blaukopf.

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The institute sees its mission as the

- o historically aware,
- o topical and
- o forward-looking

scientific opening up of the arts for teaching and cultural policy.

It is in the Austrian tradition of empirical art and cultural research and feels obliged to the following principles:

- o integral combination of research and teaching
- o an interdisciplinary way of working

- o the cultivation of a close relationship to artistic practice
- o the relevance of its research activities to musical, cultural and social policy
- o international cooperation

In the context of **research** its claim is

- o to observe and document current developments in musical life
- o to analyse against the background of historical developments
- o to develop the bases for cultural and musical policy decisions

Particular attention is due to the analysis of the rapid technological, economic, legal, social; cultural and political changes that musical life is currently subject to – that is, the “digital mediamorphosis”.

The institute’s focus of work is on:

- o the analysis of the cultural labour market (above all the music labour market)
- o reception research
- o investigation of gender-specific aspects of music production and reception
- o analysis of media, culture and music policy

The institute publishes two **series** – “Musik und Gesellschaft” and “Extempore” – and organises regular scientific events.

In the framework of **teaching** the focus is on the provision and deepening of current scientific knowledge for the musical-artistic and music-pedagogic practice.

Students are taught not only basic knowledge but also research skills with the aim of bringing artistic practice and science closer together.

The institute mentors final degree works – including doctoral works – in the disciplines of music sociology, cultural sociology and cultural management.

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