

***Time for Radical
Thinking: What can and
should opera be and how
might we build it
together?***

**An Open Space event
Hosted by Royal Opera House and Improbable
Held online 7th July 2020**

Collected Reports

Improbable



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Overview

On Tuesday 7th July 2020, Royal Opera House and Improbable hosted a free online Open Space conversation for the UK opera sector. The event took place in the midst of the (currently ongoing) COVID-19 pandemic and served as an open forum to explore responses to the present situation and possibilities for the future.

More information about the demographics of the attendees can be found at the end of this document.

The agenda was set by the participants as a group at the start of the event. Four main themes emerged across the sessions called:

Sustainability, resilience and mutual support

- How do big people and small people support each other?
- How can we embrace change rather than fear it?
- How do we make the independent opera sector more sustainable
- How do we make Large Institutions more flexible?
- Come Back Better - how can we hold Opera orgs/companies accountable to embrace this moment to make real change
- Why doesn't opera realise that its education departments have all the answers already?
- Why is opera so bad at a collective voice?
- How can we avoid losing a generation of talent to COVID-19?

Creativity and collaboration

- How can composers facilitate opera projects in lockdown?
- How can the Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales work together in the Arts more easily
- Where is the space to make mistakes, be vulnerable and playful in opera?
- Training singers for screen work online. Online charisma!
- Cyberspace Opera: What does a digital-native opera look/sound etc. like (let's get radical - but which utopia)?
- What is at the essence of live art? How does zoom support or not support this.
- East Meets West: opportunities and pitfalls
- What do we love about opera?
- any possible solutions to the Covid crisis? Visors, etc.
- Building opera together for the audience who aren't here/alive yet.

Access and inclusion

- How can opera & the industry play a key role in diversity, Black Lives Matter, LGBT+, & the Climate Crisis?
- Opportunities for young people in opera
- How do we engender a more diverse audience into opera
- How can we change the broader public's aversion to / perception of opera?
- How do we change opera's aversion to the broader public?
- Gender Diversity in Opera

- OUTREACH - in this crisis, and in the future
- MUSIC - how do we make instrumentalists feel included in the creative space.
- How can we make the opera stage more inclusive?

The economic and political landscape

- Don't forget Brexit
- How can we stay meaningfully connected to/as artists who have to leave the profession for e.g. economic reasons, or who have already?
- What are the obstacles (perceived or otherwise) to radical change?
- Let's talk about money - how much of the pie can opera command?
- Why are we hanging on to HISTORY all the time. Out with the old models
- What are the power structures in opera and how can we change them?

This document contains the reports from this event – the reports have not been edited or curated in any way and are presented as they were at 12pm on 9th July 2020. We hope that these ideas, provocations, themes and questions may be picked up by participants at (or organisers of) future events.

For information about future Royal Opera House and Improbable events, please visit www.roh.org.uk or www.improbable.co.uk.

Contents

How do big people and small people support each other?.....	6
How can composers facilitate opera projects in lockdown?	7
Don't forget Brexit.....	8
How do we engender a more diverse audience into opera?	8
How can opera & the industry play a key role in diversity, Black Lives Matter, LGBT+, & the Climate Crisis?	11
How can the Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales work together in the Arts more easily.....	14
Where is the space to make mistakes, be vulnerable and playful in opera?	14
How can we embrace change not fear it?	15
Opportunities for young people.....	16
How do we make the independent opera sector more sustainable?.....	17
How do we make large institutions more flexible?	21
Training singers for screen work online. Online charisma!.....	21
How can we change the broader audience's aversion to / perception of opera?	23
How can we stay meaningfully connected to/as artists who have to leave the profession for e.g. economic reasons, or have already?	24
What obstacles (perceived or otherwise) prevent radical change?	24
Let's talk about money	25
How do we change opera's aversion to the broader public?.....	26
Gender Diversity in Opera	29
Cyberspace Opera: What does a digital-native opera look/sound etc. like (let's get radical - but which utopia)?.....	30
Why are we hanging on to HISTORY all the time. Out with the old models.....	33

What is the Essence of Live Art? How can Zoom support this.	33
East Meets West - opportunities and pitfalls	34
Come back better: how can we hold org/houses accountable to come back better?..	37
What do we love about opera?.....	39
What are the power structures in opera and how can we change them?	40
What if the big opera houses all went bust and had to start again from scratch.....	41
Why doesn't opera realise that its education departments have all the answers already?	41
Any possible solutions to the Covid crisis? Visors, etc.	43
OUTREACH - in this crisis, and in the future	43
How do we make musicians feel included in the creative space.....	43
Why is opera so bad at a collective voice?	44
How can we make the opera stage more inclusive?	44
How can we avoid losing a generation of talent to COVID-19?	45
Building opera together for the audience who aren't here/alive yet.....	46

How do big people and small people support each other?

Session Convener: Alex Etchart (Sex Worker's Opera)

A request for more platforms where people can come to find things - not just every theatre have their programme for that season - but somewhere where we can see what's going on across the industry, a platform where we can share easily in
A newsletter - an insider?

How do we connect between the big and the little - you make a new show a new opera and it's hard to know how it gets to the big stage in the big opera houses

The Linbury at ROH should be the place where we can connect the big and the small

Question from small company in Wales about apartheid

Onus should be on 'big people' to find ways to amplify the work of smaller people

Who you invite can make a big difference e.g. of small opera being invited to Royal Albert Hall

Practical ways big companies can help is social media - sharing things online, putting people's videos on their insta account for example

Can we make a list of key things that individuals and small organisations need that can be shared with the big companies so they can offer it

Can the big institutions make a list of support-in-kind things they can offer

More chances to learn what you're doing to do - not just sitting in on rehearsals, but fellowships, people from small organisations to see how large organisations work

Perspective of ENO around having innovative programmes that are then cut as soon as there's a cash crisis

Beginnings of a list of what's most useful

Small can give to big: innovation, risk taking, talent development, developing new audiences in new places...

Big can give to small: funding, resources, mentoring, rehearsal space, staff on charity boards

Please add your ideas

Small to big requests:

- support to share and test material online - connecting with digital audiences using the social media followers that big co.s have.

I'd be interested to know what big companies NEED from smaller unknown projects to commit to support e.g. proof of quality, proof of a potential audience, additional financial support?^[P]_[SEP]

workshop/studio space to build (small) sets/props for smaller productions

Can we have more support operas - support acts, support bands

I'd be interested to know what big companies NEED from smaller unknown projects to commit to support e.g. proof of quality, proof of a potential audience, additional financial support?

How are we educating the next generation?

Using social media - it can add to what we are already doing. It doesn't need to have the same form as main opera. Artists make things themselves, then bigger companies amplify.

Look at how the theatre and book industry works. e.g. Finding an audience first, building from the bottom, plays transferring to the West End.

Being transparent about priorities about what the big companies are looking for and what they will share on social media

Small companies being better at communicating what they want and researching better the realistic ways a big company can help.

It was noted towards the end of the session that there is more commonality of goals and a more collaborative culture in the sector now than there has been in the past but we still need to find ways of working together. Co-producing between small and larger companies may be one way. It does happen now but there should be a more effective marketplace.

It was also noted that many small companies don't need the 'validation' of being in big company buildings. There is important work going on in other spaces and with other communities and this crisis may be an opportunity to develop that to the benefit of the whole sector.

How can composers facilitate opera projects in lockdown?

Session Convener: Anna Appleby

Participant names: Anna Appleby, Toby Young, David Cote, Cecilia Livingston, Robert Coren

Feel free to take notes below.

More time to work on dramaturgical questions, more collaboration due to Zoom making it easy to meet, accepting the slowing-down and deepening the collaboration

Appetite for lockdown collaboration

Idea of radical change - embrace change due to restriction

How do composers help performers right now? Maybe just practical concerns are more important for performers at this immediate moment - money, context, commissions

Commissioning worries and Covid-19 - will the landscape change next year? Too much risk in commissioning? Need to make money!

Also need to make something out of the wreckage and the ashes

Co-production in the community after Covid and funding

Choosing operas to platform because of the socially-redeeming value

Commissioning choices, avant-garde, trendy - does it become old too quickly?

Don't forget Brexit

Session Convener: Mimi Doulton

The notes in this space were for the session below.

How do we engender a more diverse audience into opera?

Session Convener: Keel Watson

Participant names: Keel, Mimi, Leo, Anna, Christina, Becca, Sarah, Gweneth, John, Anthony

Notes were taken from about 10 minutes into meeting...

Keel: what happens to kids between us doing outreach when they're 10, and them becoming adults who could buy opera tickets?

Anna: core problem with audiences is opera isn't inherently part of English culture

Leo: in the jazz age, opera was part of British culture in vaudeville halls etc.

Mimi: are the venues off-putting? Birmingham Opera Company has asked this question

Keel: this is what Graham is trying to explore - get into the space and experience opera, then make your own mind up. The problem then is everything after that regresses. How do we stop the regression? There is young blood coming into opera but from a very narrow field.

There are now four schools coming into opera: Cheethams, Menhuin, Purcell and Wells Music education has been narrowed to a point where there is no opera going on in schools.

Mimi: audition fees are so inaccessible

Leo: I didn't have to pay them as a writer though - only for singers

Anna: do they exist for Juniors?

Leo: last time I looked into it, much easier if someone will pay your fees

Mimi: isn't there also a barrier that there's no funding for living costs, even if the education is free?

Anna: for any degree, every family has to sub. living costs in some way

Keel: the question poses more questions than answers

Anna: did you know that the ACE have just re-defined their Creativity Case and are no longer looking at BAME, LGBTI - now looking at 'what was the job of your main household wage-earner when you were 14?' This is about access to money - what socio-economic grouping are you from? Hi Heloise from ACE here. Just to clarify, the Creative Case for Diversity still focusses on all protected characteristics of the Equalities Act so we do continue to ask NPOs questions in their annual returns about their staff,

artists and freelancers and their gender, sexuality, ethnicity and disability but yes we are also asking this question of NPOs in their annual survey. You can find out more here <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-creativity-and-culture/diversity>

Keel: I think that's fair, those are good parameters. From what I've seen, that parameter then goes into the education area. Without music education, you're not going to get the next generation of musicians. We as musicians need to go into that area and show them how to educate the next generation. Back in the day, we had singers who couldn't read music and yet they were world-famous. You've got to be able to read music now. I've been back to my old comprehensive school and the piano has been destroyed. The music room is now for applied science. There are some instruments in a cupboard. I asked the school why music had stopped and they said they had to concentrate on STEM - all about league tables. I need an audience.

Mimi: do we lobby the DofE, or do opera companies put the budget into working with schools?

Anna: Brexit, Covid19 - financial challenges. I think the guerilla approach is better.

Leo: if we're ruling out DofE change till the next election, it becomes about what can we do. If we keep lobbying we can hope. But the outreach I've been involved in with big organisations is dipping a toe in, it needs to be a central mission of all opera companies. If you are programming Puccini and Verdi and the people you want to be there aren't there, you are getting something then. I don't know why we're programming work from 100 years ago, and expecting it to resonate with a completely different group of people.

Mimi: it's an NPO target for organisations to do education work.

Charlotte: knowing how important education work is to Snape Maltings and ROH, it underpins everything we do. But it's a postcode lottery - if you're not based near a cultural organisation then you immediately miss out.

Anna: in King's Cross where we do a lot of our work, we talked to a new primary school - they said we've got companies throwing projects down our neck cause we're in N1.

Mimi: now we're working online, there's nothing stopping us working with kids anywhere in the country - people don't have to live down the road.

Charlotte: when I was at school teachers would shut things like this down - we need to make sure teachers are open to conversations are like this.

Anna: I used to sell tours for a ballet company, sometimes it's really hard.

Leo: it occurs to me that we should maybe try and merge rooms with the broader public's aversion to opera?

Brexit:

- 1) what are we doing about it
- 2) can anything positive come?
- 3) Festival of Brexit
- 4) Creative responses to it
- 5) survival

Keel: this worries me. We're one of the countries that has one of the 5 grand prix opera houses (ROH). The only analogy I can put on this is we are a nuclear nation with nuclear weapons and we have decided to give them up. You can't let go of something as powerful as that - I don't get it. The ROH can currently attract the top end of performers - with Brexit and the way politicians are dealing with performers, that will stop. What's going to happen? You will not see someone like Anna Netrebko - who are we going to see on stage?

Mimi: this ties in with the fact that we aren't training anyone here.

Diverse audiences:

Keel summary: we need to get them back into the theatre. How do we do it? 1) going out to places that don't seem to have opera 2) address young 3) diverse communities

Ways of doing it: 1) new works - someone born in 1989 doesn't have an affinity to La Boheme or Orfeo. We need to go down the road of new works to attract new audiences. What's the subject going to be?

Claudia: the story is so important. That's what speaks to the audience you're trying to reach. If you can find a key to talk to people you'll reach other audiences.

Leo: when I talk to a lot of composers, a lot say they want to make work for everyone - but they aren't influenced by popular music. There is a gulf between new opera and popular art forms.

Sarah: is part of the problem that commissioners are of a certain age? This leads onto the question of getting different people into management. Who are the gatekeepers of opera?

Mimi: it's not just about young audiences - also people in 30s, 40s and 50s

Sarah: also diversity - people who run opera companies mostly look like me. Very struck by a comment the other day that casting panels aren't diverse. I've worked quite hard to change things but I can't change what I look like or how I am.

Keel: you are young in mind though Sarah. - you are flexible and can see beyond the practical archetypal ideas.

Sarah: change is incredibly important. We need to look out and bring in new people and new ideas - that's what all art is about.

Keel: how do we move opera forward without cynicism?

Sarah: I think a problem stems from the cost of opera and mainscale opera. The audiences fund that and they want to hear the traditional works. Most won't pay to hear what we want to put on.

Mimi: could the ROH have been braver with what they streamed?

Leo: the NT streamed less mainstream shows - it was quite a deliberate decision. Was that a conscious choice?

Sarah: it seems to me that they have an opportunity in re-opening the Linbury and using that for interesting work.

Gwen: the Linbury works that way anyway. RE subject matter and topic - it has to be relevant to what affects people today. Opera is about huge emotions and people can connect to that but people need to be introduced to it. The only example I can give now is 4.48 was about mental health, which is so relevant NOW.

Anna: also it wasn't in ROH - that was a plus for it.

Mimi: isn't 4.48 on the GCSE drama syllabus? That's a huge entry point? Why isn't opera on the music GCSE syllabus?

Gwen: my goddaughter was studying it at school and then that opened a door. We had lots of conversations about it - conversations have to happen that can reach people anywhere. It has to be stories of today or anything pertinent from recent years. If you go to Opera North, everybody goes when they are visiting town.

Leo: as an extension of the point on 4.48 - it's a new text. One of the jobs I've done for Tete a Tete before is filing operas. Because of copyright people tend to adapt old texts. Would new opera be more relevant if we could get adaptation rights to contemporary plays more easily?

Anna: from TaT experience, getting the rights is random. Some will say yes, others get their lawyers involved. Just ask, you never know.

Leo: is it worth making the system less chaotic?

Keel: at the end of the day, will it get through to the audience?

Anna: adaptations are a good way in. You have a good narrative and people already know they like the story.

Sarah: I'm not sure I entirely agree, but it can be a tag to get people in. I'd agree more on a fringe opera level than mainscale. It's a good way of giving the audience something familiar.

Keel: case in point - Handmaid's Tale.

Anthony: if adaptations don't work it's more a problem of text adaptation. Opera examines moments in depth so you have to cut out a lot of material to make it a success (and the right length!) You're going to have to mess with the story.

Leo: you have to know why it's got to be an opera. If it doesn't have the big feelings, it doesn't need to be an opera.

Mimi: why aren't we adapting TV series into opera?

Leo: the most high profile adaptation in recent years was the Exterminating Angel, which has been on at the Met and ROH.

Becca: why isn't opera on the TV any more?

Keel: it seems to be that TV commissioners see opera as niche. They don't want to put niche things on that make people turn off.

Sarah: I think cinema screening has put people off too. In the start of my career I worked on a lot of TV opera. The minute live-streaming from mainstages started, TV opera stopped.

Mimi: now opera houses have stopped performing, isn't this the perfect moment to start TV opera again?

Sarah: cause they're all streaming it online. There's not the money for this in TV any more.

Seating and accessibility - wanting to have the freedom to leave

Pegasus Opera Company will be shortly launching a new agency for BAME artists and creatives. Here's a tweet about it. Please contact Pegasus Opera to find out more about finding BAME

artists. <https://twitter.com/pegasusopera/status/1278334408202780672?s=21> Let's get more BAME artists on the stages also.

Ana Inés-I think creating a new opera video format can also help massively in reaching new audiences .

[How can opera & the industry play a key role in diversity, Black Lives Matter, LGBT+, & the Climate Crisis?](#)

Session Convener: Jonathan Man

Who are we making opera for and with?

Who feels they are able to consume opera to an extent?

Produced by diverse group of makers...

Workshop - starting with Education... so performances and audiences of the future.

Secondary school- not having the economics to pursue musical education. Difficult to change things.

Open our buildings and organisations up and making them inclusive. How we're making work, who we see represented onstage and backstage. How do we make real change?

What stories do we tell? New work is importance. How can we make a REAL CHANGE?

Where are the new contexts and spaces that we can take operas to?

New context and new stages that can really open the art form.

The diversity of the gatekeepers- if the top doesn't change we're up against a brick wall. We see these questions and mid-scale and small-scale. How can we push push push?

Boards for the Exec teams - e.g. youth panels. to advise... making sure those people are paid.

CULTURE RE-SET & Sour Lemons The Big Squeeze (programme about diverse leadership in the arts). 2 year programme about radical long-term systematic change in organisations.

<https://sourlemons.co.uk/enabling-environments/>

Lucy Bradley- started group for Making Change in opera. Feels there is a lot of talking, real sense of excitement and momentum. If anyone interested in joining please get in touch with Lucy Bradley.

Should leadership at the top be tenured?

Who are the advocates? National campaign for the Arts etc.

How Measure Diversity?

Artists working with, the art- production. each of the NPO's is rated each year. larger organisations need to be rated as 'strong'. Holding organisations to account. Annual diversity reports each year.

Boards have a lot to do... more diversity on boards. & serving the communities in which they're based. Local representation, to get the buy in from audiences.

The Boards challenging the organisations to account around that.

[Roundhouse Youth Boards]

Budgets- and WHERE the money is being spent. X% of our budget to positive action.

ROH audience labs- looking at using technology as a way to bring in new voices.

(GUAP) <https://quap.co.uk/>

Composer- Aesthetics of opera, and how plays into equality and diversity. Could widening the definition of what opera is open up real diversity - changing the sound of opera, changing the aesthetics, opening it up. Why would new audiences want to come to an opera if they don't believe it is about them, by them, for them, from them, with them, to them...?

America has 'Theatre Conversation Book'.

At the moment there is no place for being challenged. Young people on boards!
Unconscious bias.

Casting - diversity, and talent pools. Radically overhaul who is available- we need strategies, we need people to come through, voices of the future.

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ACTION POINTS:

- OMTF Jonathan Man-
- Jonathan can you add your action points in? my internet went- sorry!!

MTW- initiating a programme, BAME artistic associate, commission 3 works from diverse artists. Promote change within company, composers, writers and digital makers. Now is time to move any money for live performance to create new programmes for CHANGE. Invest in what we need to do now and in the future.

- Continue to be willing to have uncomfortable conversations. Highlight what doesn't look OK. How it can be received.
- Question why asked to join board... question to ask to boards- how many people on boards

<https://davidhoule.com/webinars>

<https://thisspaceshipearth.org/> <https://finiteearthconomy.com/>

If anyone wants to help compile a database of living black british composers I would love some help and advice, I've compiled 43 names so far and sent it to organisations privately to ask them for more names so that we can raise the profile of how many black composers are working in the UK, please email me at applebycomposer@gmail.com if you have ideas or want to run it with me

www.Juliesbicycle.com a sector support organisation for climate action for Creative Industries

<https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/article/trapped-status-quo?fbclid=IwAR3AwPwflcl80resa3uGNxonkrAenbV1btHa-cC2VB7NUeDdIsnPQS42Hg>

Clear, pragmatic response to Black Lives Matter and live plan by Sheffield's SITE gallery - looking outside of our sector for examples...<https://www.sitegallery.org/news/blacklivesmatter/>

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How can the Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales work together in the Arts more easily

Session Convener: Ailie Robertson

Other than the Beyond Borders there is very little to support cross border collaboration

Nothing exists for individuals or small organisations at present - a real need for our arts councils to allow more cross-border work.

Brain-drain to London

How do we as a wider nation find more opportunities to link up? Why aren't the companies talking more together about things like Artist Development and working together. Joining up the dots more.

Start looking at co-commissioning more

Touring landscape - is there space now considering Brexit and Covid to reinvigorate more UK-wide touring. Touring is about developing meaningful connections...help put meaningful relationships in place.

ENOA network (led by Aix en Provence Festival)

Is there a UK equivalent to Opera Europa? There is OMTF...

Rural networks, local audiences,

Environmental sustainability - can we justify touring outside of the UK and the flights etc involved if we haven't fully exploited opportunities in the UK. Can still learn a huge amount from more local exchanges.

Where is the space to make mistakes, be vulnerable and playful in opera?

Session Convener: Josie Dexter

Participant names: Emily Gottlieb, Li-E Chen

Risk is part of the process of any theatre making. Risk is also a part of how a singer creates a role/communicates etc. Very important to create space for risk.

R and D.

For many of the R&D spaces there seems to be a pressure to create new forms or achieve a new goal. Actually, would love space to goof around, just explore, test, make mistakes – more playful space

Is there a space for this in new / smaller companies? – often formed by people that want to set up and show their own work – therefore limited options for others to have opportunities

Sharing – how do we share? How good are we at doing this? Our process? The creation? How can we include audiences? Open it up to audience – break down the distance

What do we think of the idea of a National R&D programme? How might this work?

Swapping 'experience' how can we create opportunities across all creatives and performers in opera to work with people with more experience / a range of experience? E.G Experienced singers working with less experienced directors or composers who want to learn more about voice?/ Experienced directors working with younger singers to support them to understand what a rehearsal can be? Etc...

Structures of rehearsals – can we change this to allow more space for exploration? Is this a cost issue? Or does it just need different thinking?

During COVID what can we do to support artists to use their time for creativity and exploration? Find the artists in the places they are at and support them. Take resources to the place of urgency.

How can we embrace change not fear it?

There's no-one here but me! Clearly people are more fearful than I thought.

Session Convener: Elfyn Jones Sonopera

Participant names: Elfyn

How to give innovation the value it deserves?

In the lockdown everyone has become equal. At this time, imagination and resourcefulness are more important than established repertoire, corporate identity and traditional practices.

Is it a matter of money? Resourcing? Or just attitude?

Sixteen years ago I moved to Devon from London. I gave up my job at ENO Baylis. It wasn't my choice and I felt isolated.

Eleven years ago I created an opera with what ended up being a difficult production process and I ended up being severely limited by a number of factors in that process, some personal, some artistic.

Eight years ago I started work on a new opera which I never finished. It was supported by the Royal Opera House but only 5 minutes of it was shown at The Linbury. Subsequently 45 minutes were shown at Tête à Tête but it was never finished.

Six years ago I decided to find a new way to create opera through a PhD project at Goldsmiths. I ended up focusing on the integration of sound design into opera, as a new layer in the narrative and simultaneously as a new texture in the music.

Five years ago I recorded as many sounds as I could find on Dartmoor. All of a sudden isolation was becoming an advantage - I had access to a huge soundscape.

Three years ago I wrote a new opera, Her Face was of Flowers, based on a Welsh myth, using those sounds weaved into a live piece.

Two years ago I wrote another new opera, Vicky and Albert, using field recordings made in London. It felt good to be a tourist! That year, Vicky and Albert played in Dartington, Exeter and at RADA Studios as part of Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival. I received my best ever review.

A year ago Her Face Was of Flowers was produced at Tête à Tête. I founded the company Sonopera as a CIC. Vicky and Albert went to Ireland.

This year, we planned to put on The Trilobite at Tête à Tête. Then, Covid-19. But we were ready for change. It has not been difficult to adapt their work, and it has not been difficult to re-imagine the piece for the coronavirus era. They are already used to unorthodox ways of working and were keen to try the new plan. I've never been happier.

My feeling is that Covid-19 has brought the artistic and cultural community down to the level of those, like me, who have been living at its margins for years, struggling to make their voices heard. All of a sudden, I (for once) feel myself to be in a position of strength, not weakness. So if you want to know how to embrace change and not fear it, email me at elfynjonescomposer@gmail.com and we can have a chat.

If you want to know more about The Trilobite, go to <https://www.tete-a-tete.org.uk/event/the-trilobite-or-the-fall-of-mr-williams/> and if you want to support new work in general, go here: <https://vimeo.com/teteateteopera> and give generously.

Elfyn Jones, composer, librettist, sound designer, director, producer, opera maker.

Opportunities for young people

Session Convener: Katherine NSOS

Participant names: Katherine Rees, Tom Floyd, John savournin, Dougie Boyd, Saffron

Portfolio careers being important - including teaching
On teaching - refreshing approach to engaging teachers from the industry, and enabling them to remain in the industry.

What is the future for the Chorus?

Can companies take on young artists during this time?

What does the future of young artist schemes look like?

How do we make the independent opera sector more sustainable?

Session Convener: Omar, composer

Michael & James - we put so much effort into a project (R&D, production, but everything feels disconnected, go to LONDON)

Fiona - could bigger organisations 'take on' associate companies that they would nurture?

Providing mentoring, space, time, development assistance on a regional level. Then other theatres could take on smaller companies as well.

Michael - Bigger houses are less flexible than the smaller companies that can produce quickly.

Nadie - Aldeburgh does that a bit, even ENO.

Part of it is mindset - understanding what you do as an independent opera person and what value you're going to give to who you work with, what skills you have, what skills you want to require. Then the relationships are exciting and there's something in it for everyone.

Roxanne - I've found a brewery that will put on my shows. Could we have a collective to share resources?

Zhuo - what are the opportunities internationally? Working with Chinese artists in residence, and by looking at resources in different disciplines (music, art, film, design) - perhaps that might be the best way of pooling resources.

Artists are suffering, but children are missing on learning opportunities. Education is massively in demand. You may not pay for an extra drink, but you will definitely pay for your children's education. With the right platform, this could provide a good opportunity.

Genevieve - we've recently launched a song cycle with children, giving young people a space to talk and turn it into songs for September. The opportunity is there, but it comes down to money with which to deliver the project. Some of the 'audience' don't have the money or the interest necessarily.

We need to future proof the sector. Smaller organisations can give to bigger ones. We can pool knowledge of who the audiences are. We can share resources.

Michael - local vs international tension? We're talking more about climate change and our impact. We haven't necessarily nurtured local talent. There's a large task ahead in training the next generation of artists. We need to build local talent.

Zhuo - the internet can facilitate the travel and reduce impact. Perhaps then we can find places that NEED the skills and have the demand.

Heidi - I've left a stable institution and am new to the independent sector, making projects that could be taken on by houses. I have more questions than answers.

Toria - there's no independent sector! It's not a thing. I can SAY I'm director of a company, but I don't earn a living. I have to 'give up on earning a living'. It doesn't need

to be more sustainable, it needs to be SUSTAINABLE IN ANY WAY AT ALL. By forming a company, that validates the work irrespective of the person. We'd love to have a show in the Linbury, but one space can't be the space for all of us. The thing we've been aiming to do is to make a space for opera in the independent theatre sector. That feels more realistic for us.

Roxanne - I'm trying to work with anyone in the arts world, including galleries etc.

Michael - austerity has affected us. Things were better 15-20 years before. The viewpoint of what opera is and what opera can be affects things.

Rhian - I would categorise us as the community arts sector, we do participatory opera from staged shows to lullaby singing. I couldn't survive just making operas. There are so many issues - such as contracting etc. Commissioning takes years and years of work. There's a lot of volunteer time put into making the work happen. Core funding would be great to enable other people to deliver work.

Toria - check out Fat Lady Opera.

James - some positive experiences. Young singers, a few years out of the conservatoire, are keen to be involved in new work and realistic about the funding constraints. With a Leeds-based project (working with South Asian culture) - making a series of live-streamed performances using some pre-recorded material. We reached a vastly larger audience than we expected.

Fatima - Portuguese composer. I was really tired of having to invent every opportunity from scratch. I'm part of a collective. We are organising an opera festival on one day with a few premieres. It would be impossible without the collective. We have to be careful with our resources and energy. I always wanted to have a regular event, like a festival, or just an event, just to have regularity and agreement and a concept.

Heidi - people who are tied to buildings should be careful about the stories they tell. People who are NOT tied to buildings can be freer.

Omar - I'm tired of waiting for permission from big orgs to do my work. I want to find a way to make it without them.

Kit - the international contemporary ensemble NY (<https://www.iceorg.org/>)- a model for a collective of collectives. They are not building based, they successfully walk the line between big orgs and their own ethos. They've been resident at Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart festival for several years.

ICE is an example of an independent ensemble with a collective ethos and sustainable operating model which has established a platform for the work of dozens of emerging and established composers in a wide variety of contexts - including operatic ones (except not in opera houses... yet).

ICELab (2010-2014) -open call for emerging composers every year for four years. Everybody R&Dd, kept in touch, having work in progress showings. A model for

establishing a very active collective of collectives (works by 27 composers and 48 world premieres developed and performed over the course of 4 years with a range of multidisciplinary partners. New works were developed in close collaboration with the musicians in a former karate studio overlooking a motorway in Brooklyn after which ICE performed these and other works by ICELab composers at Lincoln Center and other NYC venues including the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Park Avenue Armory, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Roulette and National Sawdust. The relationships ICE built with ICELab composers didn't stop there - ICE went on to perform their works internationally at Huddersfield, Acht Brücken Festival Cologne, ZeitGenuss Karlsruhe, Banff, the Montreal New Music Festival, Iceland, Greenland, Mexico, Brazil, Tokyo, etc.).

ICE has developed a strong relationship with opera composer George Lewis, composer and teacher at Columbia, making work that happens in different contexts. His 2015 opera Afterword was performed by ICE in Brooklyn, Chicago and the Ojai Festival in California. Lewis' music had been firmly established in ICE's repertoire for several years by then (<https://www.newfocusrecordings.com/catalogue/george-lewis-and-ice-the-will-to-adorn/>).

Funding for ICELab: Core multi-year funding for ICELab came from the Mellon Foundation (\$340,000 over 4 years). Relationship with the Foundation had been built over a few years previously, then proposal was developed in consultation with the Foundation in line with Mellon's existing activities and commitment to addressing the challenges facing classical music orchestras. (<https://mellon.org/grants/grants-database/grants/international-contemporary-ensemble-foundation-inc/41000660/>)

Additional grants were secured later, for example from New Music USA (program description/ published section of grant proposal & report: <https://www.newmusicusa.org/projects/icelab/>).

Operas and collaborations with opera companies performed by/developed with/commissioned by ICE in the years since:

De Materie by Louis Andriessen at the Park Avenue Armory:http://www.armoryonpark.org/mobile/event_detail/de_materie
Afterword by George Lewis at Roulette Brooklyn/Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago/Ojai Festival: <https://mcachicago.org/Calendar/2015/10/George-Lewis-Catherine-Sullivan-And-Sean-Griffin-Afterword>
Hagoromo by Nathan Davis and Brendan Pelsue at BAM
Harvey:https://www.bam.org/dance/2015/hagoromo?qclid=CjwKEAjwK6wBRCCoK_tiOT-zFASJAC7RARigHfoU5WieHLb5WDjKHPcSqDeyNevZkLqcz-DSZFdwBoCLwPw_wcB
the whisper opera by David Lang on international tour:<https://mcachicago.org/Calendar/2013/05/ICE-International-Contemporary-Ensemble-David-Lang-The-Whisper-Opera>
La Passione de Simone by Kaija Saariaho at Ojai and Mannes School of Music:<https://www.icareifyoulisten.com/2016/06/2016-ojai-saariaho-passion-de-simone/>
Proving Up by Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek at Washington National Opera, Opera Omaha, and Miller Theatre at Columbia University:<https://www.icareifyoulisten.com/2018/04/mazzoli-vavrek-proving-up-opera-omaha-one-festival/>

Warka Vase by Rick Burkhardt at JACK/Flea Theater
NYC: <https://www.iceorg.org/events/2019/2/16/ice-with-experiments-in-opera-off-the-ground>

The Echo Drift by Mikael Karlsson, Elle Kunnos de Voss & Kathryn Walat, Beth Morrison Projects at Prototype: <https://www.bethmorrisonprojects.org/echodrift>
Railroad #VirtualOperaOmaha: <https://www.iceorg.org/virtual-opera-omaha>

Sign up for ICE-initiated New Music Virtual Town Hall Meetings
here: <https://www.iceorg.org/new-music-virtual-town-hall-meetings>

Omar -

Ailie - collectives in England don't come to Scotland. In Scotland, we're discouraged from partnering with international partners. Cross border work could help, getting it out on tour. We can better use the resources we have in the UK.

Alex - you have to have money to make money. Pooling each others' experiences and resources means that, even if we have a small project at the beginning, we do less admin. You could have support acts for each other.

There's a war going on, and the ACE Let's Create Strategy is for us. Bigger houses are unable to adapt. If we can put supporting our peers into our DNA, we have a way to build this sector.

Let's Write an Opera - skills sharing, production making, all kinds of skills that we can teach each other!

Rachel - diversity can mean so much. Bringing the teams together - education, audience development, artist development - as ONE TEAM.

Toria - the most sustaining part of being in a collective is ideas bouncing, and also doing stuff for each other. We don't want TIME SUCK.

Ailie - There must be better ways to share information - a centralised platform where we can share info about travel companies,

Anthony - before the internet, it was all in the same book! With the internet, the information has dispersed.

Rhian - some facebook groups can be that platform.

Kit - a collective of 33 musicians, 10 were part of a core team who would help to bring things to the table for the rest. Piere Audi - the contemporary chamber ensemble - was a resident ensemble, but just a group of individuals having an ongoing dialogue. A residency helps

How do we make large institutions more flexible?

Session Convener: Paula Suozzi - email: [redacted]

Participant names: Paula, Phelim, Heidi, John, Debra

How do we make larger institutions more flexible so they can handle crises and continue to thrive?

Flexibility with regards to planning, hiring, finances. What is actually required? Do we look at the institution as the sum of smaller parts rather than as a whole giant behemoth in order to really investigate what it does well and what it can improve upon?

In a large institution, can one person actually make meaningful change if that person is not the leader of the institution?

What are the fundamental obstacles towards change in the institution?

Different institutions in different countries face unique issues with inflexibility.

Leader holding space for people to be able to change and be nimble

Can one do many small productions or events instead of only large events?

How do you hold the company together AND keep producing something, anything?

How do you do that financially?

Keep reminding people of what the core experience is. And allow people to have that narrative - this is a live thing that can change people in extraordinary ways.

If large institutions are showing free zooms, they also need to allow for freelancers to do online pieces AND charge \$\$ to be able to earn. Can large institutions do fewer FREE streams and then also LINK to freelancers' work - think of the short films that are shown in previews before big first run movies.

How do we convince the BBC, PBS and other broadcasters that they need to help sustain the live arts by filming them?

How does VR come into play?

Training singers for screen work online. Online charisma!

Session Convener: Michael Harper

Participant names: Jane Shuttleworth - Samling Institute

Linda Caller - Opera Prelude, Helios Collective

Joel Veenstra - University of California, Irvine

Saffron van Zwanenberg - Jackdaws Music Ed Trust

Julie Osman, freelance opera/theatre director

Lore doesn't think it will take that much time to incorporate it. Perhaps make-up sessions.

Ana Ines - Designer - from the point
Royal Conservatory of Scotland

Online opera and theatre

Will share a document about how to set up the camera and voice recorders. Which microphones and cameras?

Linda Caller - Skills direct live performance are very different from the skills to direct film. It shows with movies that have been made on line from theatres. It doesn't work. This is for the long term. The world's been moving online for many years. Require the melding of what have been quite separate disciplines. Guildhall have drama and opera also have film.

Will require technical know how. We may have tip the whole thing out and say that in the arts that it may never be one or the other ever again. It will all work together.

Michael - How will we train singers for the stage if they are working online all the time. Will it be different?

Jane - online auditions -

Lore - Mental preparation to performing to a camera and a computer. Adapting technicalities - where to put equipment - trained to appreciate what other people around them do. Important that the technicalities adjust to the situation rather than the voices adjusting to the technicalities.

Julie Osman - Trained in theatre. Had a year-long process starting out to adapt what she did in theatre with opera singers.

Great education. Two issues: Technical and acting.

Did an online video working with an actor

Skill sharing - Places that have other courses - sharing a zoom session on how to do a self-tape (recording).

Ask the singers - what kind of acting training they had and if it was useful.

How do we manage equity in a system that is already not equitable to make sure that everybody has good information and equipment

Saffron: Planning on running a course for singers on this at Jackdaws!

Guildhall tested all of the main online conferencing platforms, and concluded Zoom with original sound on (ie off on screen) was best for latency, but still not good enough

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000kmyx>

Also music matters prog from last Sat had interesting research convo on it, hopefully research on singing which will give some answers being published in weeks rather than months.

Everything is the same except the frame

Singer brain is dominant - give the acting more brain time

What they are is enough

Florian Mueck _ Improving your online charisma

Saffron : Watch the videos with no sound

Lore: encourage humankind to open their mind to what is beautiful to see

Tradition and expectation regulate gesture -

<https://www.florianmueck.com/>. Boosting your online charisma

Online can be like creating your audition technique

Joel a unique for collaboration - Accessibility - We're all talking about it in unique ways and it's really exciting.

Charlotte Hoather - because having to send in prelim audition tapes - it would be beneficial for students to learn about working online

Lore - teaching a class on extended vocal technique - trying to work out how to make it a satisfying experience.

Linda Caller - echoes what Charlotte says. This is going to be part of future not just a thing for Covid - performers producers directors - this is going to be part of our lives from now on.

Interesting to hear about what the skills are that students will need so that we can prepare them, This conversation confirms some of things we have been thinking.

Michael will find out about inexpensive microphones. and attach it. to the chat.

(Julie:) interesting to hear from Michael about issues of equal access for students with crowded home backgrounds, or economic issues regarding costs of computers or mics - can conservatoires actively survey their students to ensure their needs are met and disadvantage is reduced? Shouldn't be the responsibility of individual tutors, but more strategic. Also can conservatoires collaborate on "acting for camera" sessions (tutors from acting courses?), and maybe even making a scheme for grants for equipment?

[How can we change the broader audience's aversion to / perception of opera?](#)

Session Convener: Claudia Woolgar

Participant names: Anthony Ingle, Becca Marriott, Sarah Playfair, Leo Doulton, John Savournin, Gweneth Rand - we then moved to another group with Keel Watson, Anna Cregg and others.

The key wonderful things I will take away were our discussions about the importance of (relevant to the audience) and strength of stories, the accessibility of language, opera as entertainment (perhaps don't call it opera!), make the libretto fit the production, and the power of expanding the moment (not necessarily just the moment of death!). Also the need for a change at the top and in those who commission and make opera - young at heart is essential, but let's bring new blood in! Thanks to everyone for their generosity to me as a non opera person. I learnt a lot and really appreciate you sharing your experience and observations.

How can we stay meaningfully connected to/as artists who have to leave the profession for e.g. economic reasons, or have already?

Session Convener: Toria Banks

Participant names: Toria Banks, Li-E Chen

Just me for now. So just taking note of the fact that this is something I would like to think about, and perhaps for HERA to think about as a company. Former professionals or people who wanted to be in the 'industry' but now aren't can feel like they don't count as the 'authentic public' with participatory work, but also can feel that they don't count as artists. There will be more people in this category inevitably as a result of COVID.

There seemed like a positive response to calling the session, but no one has come. I wonder if that is because we don't like to think about leaving the profession, and that our own fear can make it harder to be supportive of people who (have to) make that choice? What can we do about that?

I'm going to join another conversation. But if you come to this session after me. Please carry on these notes. I'd love to know what you think. TB

Hi Toria, I joined the session because I feel I am one of the artists who have been considering for a while that it is better to leave the business of 'industry.' I feel making art and opera that does not essentially need to be kept in the business. I can create my own which will speak for its own. Spending time or wasting time for years, I had always been hoping yes, one day eventually I would get there, time passed, then I realised this is not right. It doesn't matter to me anymore, where I am in or out, I am very comfortable with what I am doing with the work that I want to make as an artist. I can come and go as I like.

Thank you for the invitation of your session. LC THR 07:22

What obstacles (perceived or otherwise) prevent radical change?

Session Convener: Brad Caleb Lee

Participant names: Bill Bankes-Jones, JeanMary

Perceived power structures and hierarchy
Perception of more as "music" than "theatre"

Engineered Change - OperaAmerica creating an American canon

We have to decide where we want to go. What really is radical?

Money
Buildings cost money!

Should we call it a Criquet Tournament to get around rules?

Is opera really good? Should it continue? Maybe we need a different art form.

There needs to be more confidence that the work can speak to a variety of audiences. Its too simplistic to say let the big boys fail. We need to be clearer with larger companies how they can facilitate the independant sector.

How can we have 2 massive opera companies next door to each other but 300 miles away as closest offering?

An opera company in its own right can be its own burden - perhaps a project by project basis is better.

Technology driven changes throughout history.

Access to producing cinema production values are limited. You need the full support of a film studio to map it out.

Will cinema requirements begin to dictate casting choices. The industry still sorting how to transfer the art form.

LEAPS OF FAITH! Leave the flap of the tent open for people to come in!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nv5Q-co3WUc>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/teteateteopera/sets/72157669475485774/>

Difficult to forge the relationships - not being helicopter enough with the issues.

Artists answerable to admin who is answerable to money

No dedicated voice for opera!

[Let's talk about money](#)

Session Convener: Jean Nicholson

No notes

How do we change opera's aversion to the broader public?

Session Convener: Hannah Griffiths

Participant names: Hannah, TimothyFrancisBurke, Rhian Hutchings, Zillah Watson, Isabelle Kettle, Ruth Paton, Freddie Crossley, Edward Lambert, Beth Higham-Edwards, Toby Young, Poppy, Dougie Boyd, Michael Duffy, Charlotte Hartley, Anna Appleby, MissyMazzoli, Zhuo Chen, Liz G2, Angelique M, Henry Little, Jeremy Young, Katherine Rees, Bill Bankes-Jones, Lindsey Glen, Brad Lee, Tom Floyd, Antony F, JeanMary, Ella2, Jean Mary, Lydia Bassett, Genevieve Raghu, Kit Baker

I was inspired to call this session by Claudia's session "how do we change the broader public's aversion to opera?"

The below notes are a patchy snapshot of what was a really stimulating, wide-ranging and non-linear conversation. The note-taker was ultimately more interested in listening and speaking than jotting everything down. She's sort of sorry. But the notes are something.

Stepping into new role at big institution - a shock to see how the system works
A big obstacle is the fact that a lot of people at the top level don't want to change the audiences at all, opera thrives on elitism, the appeal to many people is the fact it's elite. Cultural superiority - if you understand it, you're part of something special.
What is shocking? The way that money is tied into hierarchy. The behaviours that people are allowed to get away with. Money is power, means people are less accountable to professional standards! Certain behaviours get tolerated by talent. It's a problem.

L&P as an excuse for not engaging in radical change.

You take opera out into different settings & people DO love opera. There isn't an aversion to opera. The more we open it out, the more we gain. Why do people want to keep it so closeted?

Reassuring to hear this - have had similar thoughts but not been able to connect them up. How much are these problems driven by a desire for perfection? If perfection is the thing audiences value, strive for & pay for above all else, where does that leave the work that (L&P teams and making great art with professionals & amateurs) we do? Particularly in relation to some of the salaries & the justification being that they are "the best". Where does that leave the rest of us?

The perfection & quality of the voice is often used to stop any change from happening.

Also the thing that perpetuates the exclusivity of opera. In order to know if something's the best, if it's based on that kind of knowledge, it excludes anyone who says they don't profess to know what the best is.

An art experience is a personal, emotional experience. It's different for everyone, not about geekiness about particular opinions about voice. It's not about the art!

What is opera's aversion to the general public? What are we afraid of? What are we averse to?

Zillah's working on a crazy "digital-ish" opera based on Trump's tweets.

How do you bring the audience with you?

The big companies - tied to buildings. Paying for seats to put money back into the system. Huge juggernauts - can't stop them!

Covid is an opportunity to innovate. Better opp to design stuff for smaller audiences, easier to go to different spaces. Touring.

Don't agree with this narrative we're fed of the big organisations being huge juggernauts/ocean liners & we can't change tack. Have heard that my whole career - now have a sense that it's an excuse for not trying new approaches, embracing change etc. It is possible, we've seen it happen when it suits particular agendas!

Does the broader public sense that there's an aversion to *them*?
Is there a class system or caste system in the audience? Some of us go to the opera expecting to be made uncomfortable by other audience members!

Buildings, other audience members... So opulent, security guards, say they're open spaces but the way the buildings look put people off, they're encountered in a way that's threatening.

What to do? The Kangaroo Vision

1. Get out of the buildings, but with the same artistic ambition that you have on the main stage
2. Abolish L&P depts
3. Look at the artistic output of the L&P work and the social impact of the "core"/main stagework

Can an opera org be like a publishing house? Different genres for different groups of readers. Taken by idea of teen opera... we don't think that every book has to be for everybody. Why not apply that to opera?

NT Pericles - did a really good job of putting community cast on Olivier Stage.

Young female composer who was being interviewed in the context of L&P work and concluded the meeting by asking about a "real" commission... Frustrating. Also, what does this say about the routes in to composing, especially for female composers?

Audience research - what do we know? So often undertaken in a spirit of achieving a certain outcome, to get funding. Research commissioned to validate what people do/want to do anyway.

The Art of Relevance. Santa Fe Museum. Look up.

Positioning & space. "Outreach" - ugh! What does the language we use - especially in relation to positioning & space - say about what we see as central, about our values? The language we use to talk about the work. Language halts us. Do we need to start changing our language to change the tropes?

Language & labels, e.g. country house opera. If you get people early enough, kids, before they have preconceived ideas about what's cool, what's not, opera can change lives. "The Silver Birch" as an example. Not a jolly singalong! I don't think anyone's averse to opera if you get them early enough.

Is it ok to delegate the democratic aspects of opera companies work to education/L&P departments?

Is there value in turning that question on its head? Are we excluding people who have a broader idea of what opera could be?

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/teteateteopera/sets/72157669475485774/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nv5Q-co3WUc>

Is there a distinction between the way we in our organisations think & talk about opera and the way a broader public thinks & talks about opera? We think about people coming to see shows in theatres/a space. Hearing arias on the radio, or seeing Andrea Bocelli in concert, or taking part in a village hall in an operatic group is also engaging with opera. There are lots of different ideas of opera that are floating around & we are only talking about one version.

Nothing intrinsically wrong with L&P work! It is a problem when that is where the social/democratic responsibility of the whole organisation sits.

"But also an element of freedom/innovation which needs to feed into the main stage work from learning and participation work"

<http://www.creativeworkslondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/27-May-Opera-Audiences-and-Cultural-Value.pdf>

The lack of connection between education and the main house is an entrenched problem in so many opera companies. Talking about it in colonialist terms is interesting

Yes, I get so uncomfortable in conversations about "diversity". The assumption that this is an amazing thing that everyone *ought* to be interested in, it's total colonisation.

If we're only going to present one version of what opera is, we're not going to change who it's for.

Sinead O'Neill report on opera audiences - 25 superfans interviewed deeply. The thing the audience is really interested in is not the staging, production, stars, orchestra. It's the audience. The lesson of that is there's something about the rituals of opera, it's very precious and it's very excluding.

We experience that people are put off by audience around them. Some people find the "pin drop" atmosphere crucial to the experience, others find it unnerving. Interrupting rituals.

At this point, unfortunately, the notetaker lost contact with Qiqo Chat.

Gender Diversity in Opera

Session Convener: Sophie Gilpin

Working hours - early mornings, late nights, weekend works. Complicated for anyone with caring responsibilities or other commitments.

Saturday rehearsals now don't happen at e.g. National Theatre outside of tech rehearsals. Can we learn from theatre world?

Job shares - importance of communication to ensure smooth running

WOW forum - women being made comfortable to ask for what they need and employers: "What can we do to make this an environment in which you are most comfortable to do your work?" Must ask this question. Cultural shift.

Working from home. Benefit from lockdown productivity from home? Learn from other industries where this is more common.

"Most people cannot fit into the standard working hours" Encouragement of flexi-working. New culture of "exceptions being the rule".

Lateral thinking for rehearsal structures.

Queer and trans representation in opera. How do we share non-gender conforming voices? Logistics of vocal challenges for transgender artists on hormones and the gendered language used around fachs - exclusionary.

The male gaze on stage - costume, hair, sexualised women. Opera uphold gender norms. Theatre seems to have moved slightly further away from this, more so than opera.

How to we engage with people who don't identify with "women"? I.e. LGBTQ+ inclusivity. - Identify & invite specific groups to demonstrate intention.

Question on quotas versus pledges. Uncomfortable for people at the beginning, but perhaps a necessary evil. Effective way of making long term change.

Looking at how to be proactive in searching for diversity.

Accountability for statements made by organisations. Perhaps shorter lead times will help make changes now.

Is opera less collectively powerful than theatre? Theatre world protests failings more than opera community. i.e. NT pledge for 50:50 playwrights then programming something like 70:30 male:female received significant criticism. Are we scared to hold companies to account?

Conversation around innovation - connection between on stage and in the pit. We need to redress this.

Cyberspace Opera: What does a digital-native opera look/sound etc. like (let's get radical - but which utopia)?

Session Convener: Leo Douulton

Participant names: Leo, Zillah, Joel Veenstra, Sam King, Anna Appleby, Lore Lixenberg, Brian Condon, Haili Ma, Zillah

Zillah: Former BBC VR, currently working on a fully digital opera - using virtual production to rethink how we create opera at Satori Studios

Leo: Artistic Director of Virtually Opera, experimenting with good ways to make digital-native opera

Zillah: how to use digital techniques to reinvent opera for new audiences; audience-focused

Leo: Not a bolt-old to the old thing

Sam King: Senior producer at audience labs, ROH, bringing together opera artists and ballet to experiment with immersive experiences.

Sam: Initiative came out of Open Up, technology as a new stage for performance - new forms, new voices. Exploring R&Ds, salons, labs, how to approach development of these new experiences via partnership & collaboration.

Taking big epic traditions and marrying them with hyper-modern technology - who's involved? Commit to diversity, immersive opera lab with diverse teams, both from opera network and outside.

Crossover collaboration between young opera creator and hiphop producer. Fusion of sounds. Afro-futuristic re. climate change. Monkination. Engage young people in climate change struggle; bring in new opera creators.

Pragmatic and possible routes to diversifying the artform.

Strands led by UK research and development; industrial strategy - creating first opera in hyper-reality (VR with multisensory input).

Leo: Working on TTRPG-inspired opera. But immersive tech is expensive.

Sam: ran various game-based labs in museums; game-based is interesting as the total work. And can be low-fi.

Zillah: Stories work across mediums. Can take your imagination to a place in a really interesting way - challenges are cost and distribution. Will take time for something to settle in e.g. location-based, headset-based both have been abandoned.

Sam: Lots of talk in immersive sector re. location-based experience and how viable they'll be - small bubbles can work.

Zillah: Immersive is interesting, but will be a while before it can bring in large audiences. But does allow reinvention.

Haili Ma: Based at Leeds, trained in Chinese opera and digital technologies - associate professor in mixed artforms; focused on reinterpreting opera with digital forms - connecting working class in China, set in a textile mill; using gaming & video & immersive technology to link the audiences.

Sam: One interesting thing with using digital tools - can use tech to transform historic artforms - allow us to create work in an ecosystem. Develop a production, and it can be lighter/more experimental. - allows you to iterate and pivot in response to new situations. Impact of COVID-19 situation is hard to determine - but with digital, can create assets that can pivot.

Personally interested in creating digital work that can be part of creative process for physical work as a sandbox towards a larger performance piece.

Leo: Is 'real connection' an issue? For digital natives it's part of life.

Avi Green: Makes YouTube videos trying to connect people with opera; you can connect via online forms. Social media/digital sector give you a closer connection to the creators. You are directly linked to them and can ask questions - can have conversations in the chat with the creators about a livestream of an opera; very real experience, even if different to going to a live show.

Sam: Expands reach and playspace. Creates shared spaces on the internet e.g. The Nite Hotel - a Dutch theatre, a wireframe space where you can go into it digitally. A model for how you can use different contexts to have shared experience.

www.nitehotel.nl/

Leo: Hypertextuality is an option - can link to other things to expand the world.

Lore: Can be forms in themselves for opera. Make it into something that will possibly engage more widely because it's a more contemporary framework.

Zillah: Using mobile virtual reality headsets in public libraries - choral piece by Anna Meredith - got very good reception with teens - people who wouldn't have engaged with contemporary choral music; accessible piece that spoke across generations.

With right content, can reach the right people and reach them.

Publicity was framed by libraries publicising locally - emphasised content, not technology. Used it to bring in communities to see something exciting. Initially associated with Remembrance weekend.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/internet/entries/49bb6be1-8989-4c90-a4a6-f0ed73c24d28>

Ana Ines: Why are screened theatre shows not working quite correctly? Things that work are video clips/films - so why not create new genre of films for opera?

An opera that can be put on a screen.

Matthew Sharp: Enjoying making work in my own garage; live-digital relationship is powerful and exciting and fun to play with. Making new work for that environment.

There is a future within our current parameters. Move beyond the screen and through the screen.

Anthony: Sounds more arcadian than utopian - it's just having fun.

Avi: It's about how opera's filmed. The filming of something meant to be onstage is very different to the initial idea is to be filmed. If it's structured for the medium that might work.

Leo: Some operas written for screen - though few filmed twice except Owen Wingrave. YouTube clip length?

Ana: That might help.

Sam: Exploring 15-minute opera experience for audience. Where you are experiencing it/the context is important. Can you experience it in a shopping centre/nightclub?

Interactivity and embodiment is a possibility. Can embody it/take it to the next level - have a direct impact on the environment, and co-create the work.

Anthony: Won't that need a really good real-time connection; are we there yet?

Sam: Yes. There's lots of options - tethered or mobile devices.

Issue with equipment is it is a barrier - so cloud etc. is an option. Hardware must be taken into account.

Development platforms - Unity/Unreal are important; game development engines.

Matthew: trying to do gigs that embrace the latency. Can find beauty/strangeness in latency-embracing performance, reaching the whole world. Hanging on to each other by a thread. Used Cleanfeed - a podcast platform. Gives enough of a sense of being in the space together to allow a musical conversation.

75 minute show made for the stage - chopped up into bite-size episodes, playing with camera to make something that was more for the camera.

Serialised opera.

Leo: YouTube webseries.

Sam: Hard to adapt existing work into the new space - need to start anew; new context/framework for interaction. Needs a different creative process for it. Hard to adapt.

Avi: Depends on which opera you do - Mozart operas will never work due to recit/aria structure, whereas Turn of the Screw is using more film-based structure. Can commission work for online when not selling tickets. Not yet thinking about financial model - but many online ways to raise money. But need to get monetised first - but a production gets monetised faster - need 1000 subscribers, and 4000 watch hours within 12 months.

Matthew: With Cleanfeed adds a paypal button.

Leo: How do you deal with resource question? Does still use resources.

Sam: But it does use less - e.g. less on set, travel. Have been able to continue work on hyperreality opera - the future of new digital literacy. Lots of digital gatherings/events. Pros and cons.

Zillah: Digital techniques can solve problems around performance - can beautifully augment performances. Can film self and put yourself in a beautiful area, show an AR swan flying around a 'cello. If you have an intimate performance with social distancing, then can enhance stream to add something for audience at home.

Sam: Can create work in a way that is then totally different as an experience with digital tools, and it can tour and tour and tour.

Zillah: With climate change, have to think of not only what you're not building, and waste created by visiting the opera house - e.g. unsustainable materials. The general carbon footprint is smaller.

Links

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3HsOjjiZ7TV9_si_27ZWLQ
<https://www.leodoulton.com>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MsVivsGreen>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnmz4PhNduZsS3FbTbpEGDQ/videos>

This is the Swan demo from Satore Studio Zillah

mentioned <https://vimeo.com/427091350/2b16abcbee>. It's a tech demo video to show how a number of cutting edge virtual production techniques could be used to enhance live performances - we were thinking in particular of ways to make a streamed concert more spectacular. These techniques included broadcast AR (in this case the swan - which is flown with an Xbox controller) and use of LED screens and green screens.

It's also worth mentioning that it's relatively simple in a game engine to make objects/lights/particles react to music. A couple of weeks ago we created a virtual DJ set (the DJ was filmed against a green screen) <https://vimeo.com/431418863/9778687918> Making of Virtual DJ

set <https://vimeo.com/431418863/9778687918> And much simpler (this only took an hour to make) - here the smoke is responding to the music (it was filmed on a iPhone in my kitchen against a piece of green cloth) <https://vimeo.com/431419763/1d544cad75>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5xcxlS05oc&feature=youtu.be>

Anthony Ingle, MD, Impropera anthony.ingle@mac.com

New show - The Strong One - (rehearsed remotely), being filmed at the moment - I'll send you a preview when there's some material ready

Brilliant discussion, thank you. Set + Costume designer carriannstein@hotmail.com

Composer: fatimafonte.com

Why are we hanging on to HISTORY all the time. Out with the old models

Session Convener: Michael Music Theatre Wales

No notes

What is the Essence of Live Art? How can Zoom support this.

Session Convener: Anne Hege

What do I love about live performance?

- Vulnerability
- Risk
- Being in the same room with people - bodies in the room
- The energy of a crowd
- The sound of a space - the acoustics of live sound
- The risk of live sound and the frailty of human bodies
- The imperfections
- The physical energy between performers
- Time together - sharing of time and space
- Physical contact
- Sonic contact - the ways that sound and bodies influence each other in real time in a live space
- Taking a journey together/having an experience together
- Change of perspective - the ability to guide my own view - change where I am looking
- Change how I am listening - make my own mix by moving my body - at a live show, I can choose how close to stand or how far away, whether I am dancing, - I think of attunement mentioned by Mark Leman that was possible through movement and the heightened sense of togetherness.
- Feeling moved and changed - my own vulnerability
 - Digging in more to this - what helps me open to a performance
 - A feeling of safety and trust
 - A feeling of surprise
 - Beauty -

- Modeling something - performers model a way of being that I attune to, I feel their grace through my body
- Invitation - a sense that the performers want to share something with me
- Nuance -
 - nuance in movement, sound, light,
- Quality of audio/video - live sound - I love that this is a collaboration of architecture and bodies and light.
- Ritual - a repeated experience and a deepening through repetition

•
 What does online "live" art offer?

- inclusion - lack of geographic barriers
- inclusion - usually less expensive to participate - lowering of economic barriers although online access and time are necessary
- time together - a feeling of shared space and time - although there may be ways to make this a fuller sharing by creation of "online space"
- offers something instead of nothing - to both audiences and performers/creators (although I am seeing some interesting small and distanced live performances in outdoor spaces)
- beauty
- surprise
- invitation
- journey
- safety
- risk -but sometimes at the cost of quality in audio/video content
-
- Many of the above list can be offered, but have to be thoughtfully created.

Behaviors that the screen invites -

- Leaning into the screen
- Losing a sense of real space
- Losing a sense of one's body

East Meets West - opportunities and pitfalls

Session Convener: Heidi Hollis

Heidi Hollis - freelance writer/dramaturg in Bristol -- writerwithboots@gmail.com
 -- working on a new piece that brings western opera and middle eastern traditional singing/Persian stories together

Participant names:

Zhuo Chen -- creates creative communities in China, Europe, Int'l;
 Jonathan Man -- Director/Producer; Mosaic Opera Collective (for diversity);
 Katherine Rees -- freelance directing/producing; Haili (Leeds Uni, researcher producer);
 Ruth -- composer;
 Simon -- writer.
 Charlotte Hartley -- producer at ROH

16:37:02 From Jonathan Man : info@jonathanman.co.uk
16:43:09 From KatherineRees : <https://www.facebook.com/kathelenrees>
16:43:28 From KatherineRees : Email: katherinerees@Be-Extra.co.uk
16:53:25 From Heidi Hollis : Heidi writerwithboots@gmail.com
16:54:07 From zhuo chen : zenarts2020@gmail.com facebook: Zhuo lucy chen

Let's discuss -- questions around east meets west -- how do we create meaningful theatre experiences?

Heidi: I'm interested in stories that can translate across cultures and how those can be told through opera. Wondering where are my blindspots.

Zhuo -- emphasize what we have in common. Has worked on project virtually for a while - connecting artists across countries ... Global Creative for Happy Kids Education Platform. Works in large arts centre in China. Another project works with dance movement meditation -- Ecstatic Dance -- musicians invited to join in with the live music; visual artists invited to create during the event. FB group: Ecstatic Eance Asia.

- Musicians tend to get samples from the east that aren't representative -- sampling of oriental music encourage national artists to claim their own cultural work. The problem of cultural appropriation -- when the culture is disadvantaged the danger of colonial issues is present.
-
- When cultures meet, this means you have a lot to learn from each other. This makes you look at your own culture differently. eg. I've learned more about Taoism and Buddhism while in UK than in China -- author Alan Watts -- writes in ways that both easterners and westerners can understand.

Katherine: recently directing Matilda and teaching in Shanghai -- School of Excellence -- looking for eastern Opera resources/works/ contacts.

Zhuo - will connect Katherine with some Shanghai contacts and musical influences from 8th C -- many religions in that region. Other contents

Jonathan -- getting a librettist who is conversant in the set culture is really important. Working currently as dramaturg on a Japanese American musical -- finding an east-Asian librettist was essential.

- Scale - start small, then build -- cast of 5 to start; then 6-cast for touring; later scale to 10 with live band. (eg Hamilton, Joseph)
-
- With a team of 5 do an Arts Council R&D bid. Locations/artists based outside of London go down well.
-
- Learned from reimagining of Turandot in the time of Marco Polo as an LGBT piece with Kung Shoo opera elements.

Haili Ma -- researching digital tech at Leeds Uni. Using digital tech / cyber space with Chinese opera/music as a way to link Chinese/UK audience through gaming -- setting is based at post-industrial site -- former textile site -- Chinese workingclass women - **M50**. (referred to here:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/50 Moganshan Road](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/50_Moganshan_Road))

Questions: how to breach the linguistic gap -- translating language for poetic / aesthetic purposes.

Zhuo: project in which the singers sang in Chinese -- felt authentic. Another project didn't work -- not enough research done ... good experiments but done in haste. Take enough time to develop work properly.

Haili -- lots of experiments have been done as early as 1998 ... rarely capture the essence and aesthetics and translate into a successful portrayal or universal language. How can music bridge the gap?

Jonathan: dramaturgs can help with crossing the cultural barriers. Peter Brook did lots of intercultural theatre experiments ... learning is there.

Ruth -- saw Monkey in 2007 and knew musicians. They tried to do new things but it didn't get as deep into Chinese culture as they could have. Getting a good composer is important -- as a composer who can work from two cultural viewpoints it can be difficult to get work if culturally pigeonholed. Has learned a lot about Chinese orchestration ... nothing like Western ... I bridge across these -- hard to blend them. Damon Albarn did another opera at M'cr Int'l Festival. Eg. parents don't tolerate western styles.

Zhuo recommends Dawanggang.

Charlotte -- producer at Lyndbury ROH. Have worked with British Chinese opera creatives before.

What works are worth seeing where music transcends linguistic barriers. Works to see: Akhnaten(sorry for spelling!) with Phillip Glass; Satyagraha as well -- aria sung in language of the audience.

Haili: aesthetics are a personal taste -- innovative voices are lacking. It takes BLM to point out inequalities for others as well -- east-oriental voices are invisible/unnoticed. We need new work.

Ruth -- It's invisible! A lot of non-white work is about cultural trauma. Simon and I creating a Chinese story for opera. Chances of commission are slim in UK.

Jonathan -- middle east voice just gets stuck with 9/11. -- Iranian librettist found on google[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niloufar Talebi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niloufar_Talebi)

Haili -- eastern voice needs to be brought out!

Simon -- big difference b/w 1st gen and 2nd gen immigrant experience. 1st Gen are looking for the roots. Brought up to integrate but you know you are different. You might reject your own culture to integrate, but when you grow older you want to cherish culture of origin and look at parents stories. I grew up in Hong Kong so I don't have the experienc of discrimination, but face similar issues. Here in UK you think about the

differences .. start to think more about Chinese, which wasn't an issue in Hong Kong. Talking about problems/issues, then others seem to push you into a cultural pocket.

Ruth - that Eastern stories can be just as universal and complex as Western stories, and not necessarily just about communism (China) or oriental aesthetics

Heidi: cross pollinating what Joanne R-A said in the closing circle: Equality of access leads to diversity and that leads to inclusion :-)

Come back better: how can we hold org/houses accountable to come back better?

Session converner: Lucy Bradley

Participant names: Paula Suozzi (MET) Charlotte (Ass Producer Linbury ROH), Lucy Bradley, Annemiek van Elst, Linda Caller, K McK (Kara), Isabelle Kettle , Keel Watson joined later by Lindsey Glen (ROH Policy)

Paula is creating a paid internship for Black Americans (predominantly) to be trained within the industry, and using this COVID time to have this program ready to go once the house re-opens. The big issue is money - this is an internship so it only pays a small amount and for that the expectation is that the person undertaking it is only present for 20 hours a week - obviously this means that they aren't really getting a chance to learn fully on the job because they are missing things. People come out of college and have to pay of student loans, this is holding artist back mostly. Having a living wage salary will make people able to grow within in the industry + pay for their living costs.

Lucy; Theatre in the UK is much further ahead than opera in making inroads in diversity. Theatre boards, ambassadors, casts, leaders - they're much more diverse. Look at the Young Vic and the Bush Theatre.

Paula: to make it. a real internship you have to make it full time and it has to be paid. The MET is on board. with this project but the reality of it is another question.

Linda Caller is advising small opera companies and individual artist (Opera Prelude for example) on business and strategy.

Interested in the perceived "superiority" of the venue's --> the top ROH/MET/SCALA, and then down the levels right to the smaller companies. What is interesting with COVID is that it has thrown all of this up in the air.

The film direction of MET is very strong and interesting and perhaps surprising to some that it is so enjoyable

ENO Drive-in = trying something different

What I would like to see come out of this is a sort of shake down on venue. More flexibility in terms of where investment is made by the bigger organisations.

From a financial point of view: how might the big houses perhaps orientate some of investments into different types of venue and opera experiences that would reach different audiences, both live and online as well as LGBTQ+ BLM projects (like the Linbury)

Kara: Splits her time between working for Slunglow and Opera North as a dramaturg. Slunglow have been changed their working practice throughout the

pandemic, becoming a food bank, a community hub, a helping hand for isolated community members. Slunglow (Holbeck, Leeds <https://www.slunglow.org/>) are better at sharing than organisations with a lot more money. When Rash Dash lost their funding, Slung Low gave them a commission - they didn't want to be making work in an arts scene that didn't have Rash dash in it. Slung Low is working in a poor part of Leeds, and while the education arm of Opera North is doing great things with community, it remains far removed from these areas. The outreach work should take more prominence in their work, should be the heart of what they do and not a side-branch. Looking at Opera North Funding structure; 50% ACE, and a lot of philanthropy, sponsors who also have a say in the work that is performed! Some are progressive but some like the old style. Opera has to be for so many different audiences: new, young, diverse - but also the money bringers, the philanthropist, the people who like the classical conventional opera.

The age of ecosystems not isolation

Opera being disadvantaged by the need of buildings for the funding and orchestra and choruses that it is committed to.

Keel Watson - Birmingham opera company: set on from the outset to not perform in a normal building. The downside is you can play for a max of 300 people. But the upside is that you can let the orchestra grow, and expand the stage in different ways. The Theatre is in the mind. It can be outdoor, and your imagination can build the building.

Charlotte: the cost for buildings to then also run another space

Making outreach the HEART of opera companies / organisations / houses.

You have to use houses because they have the expertise.

Those who do not have a house, should find the specialist to make a new place where they can invite the community in.

If you then want to see opera on a Grand scale you direct them to the house.

Royal Court taking over shops around Elephant & Castle / Peckham.

Birmingham Opera company put an opera on in the Bullring
Working in shopping centres? How about the sales from the shops around? They won't do it for the art - the need to earn money. There was some resistance at the Bullring - shop owners who didn't want to hear singing while they're doing their job.

Baseless Fabric (Joe Turner's company)

Put an reduced version of the Fledermaus on in [Wimbledon Merton borough...] and actually might well have helped local sales by putting some scenes in/outside the bar/pub where people could also get a drink

The subject matter of operas: for young people things like 'Boheme' or 'Traviata' doesn't exist.

Have a combinations of old repertoire that we refresh, and new work that attracts a new audience.

Like 'Matrix the Opera'

How do we hold houses accountable?

- Louisa Muller: finding private funders who are also interested in the cause.
- Lindsey Glen (ROH): in a larger organisation we want to continually diversify funding streams and, with a mixed funding model, can to some extent bring funders along with our agenda's. In the end: it's the board and the leadership who decide where the money goes

Lucy: What if you were to strip back money from one ROH production and invest it in young and/or diverse makers

Sarah Crabtree - this scares me as the Linbury sets also need to be appealing to audiences.

Keel Watson: It has been done, one off, an opera in a black room

How can we be more generous and share budgets

- a body for opera?
- companies in residency in bigger houses; in-kind support / financial support?

Paula: Large companies are doing free streaming, freelancers are trying to make money by putting things online that cost money.

The MET streaming just 2x a week and the putting up links to freelance or smaller companies

What about Sustainability? How can we make houses/orgs/companies more accountable for their record on the environment?

As an artist going into houses, I can say - these are the things I expect, but how is what you are doing being communicated, how is it made to be the priority?

Ana Ines Desinger: In Oslo they've started to recycle sets.

If you were to recycle sets from other designers - some designers might have issues with that (copyright) but I have been offered to use stuff that hasn't been used in 50 years.

Upcycling designs

Lindsey Glen: responsibility for sustainability should be shared between CEO's and individual artists.

__> Sarah Crabtree: producers should take responsibility for that to link the artists

My email is: paulasuozzi@gmail.com if anyone wants to contact me. Thanks for hosting!

Likewise - if anyone wants to continue the conversation - I'm here on lucybradley7@gmail.com

[What do we love about opera?](#)

Session Converner: Michael Betteridge

No notes

What are the power structures in opera and how can we change them?

Session Convener: Olivia Fuchs

Power is where the money is

- different use of money allocated to opera

old model based on 19th century

- some summer seasons desperate to do too much work
- less money going into the conventional larger scale opera houses, and perhaps closing one or two. and redistributing a fair amount of that money into research and development training.
- looking at what opera should be in the 20th century.
- diversity: creators, artists, staff, and audiences- opera in its current model can't cope.
- It needs to be allowed to reinvent itself. A big shift- and the power balance changes...
- moving the money around!!

HOW CAN THIS HAPPEN?

- Freelancers and small companies organising
- Thinking about the audiences.
- There is room for small, medium and big.
- the right people in the right roles
- People coming into the opera world in the same way... people in leading roles, working their way up... lots to be changed going forward. there is room for every, size, shape and form.
- How can we work more collaboratively as a sector?
- How do we understand what the ecosystem is and how it can be navigated jointly and collectively.
- the competition exists between the funded and the not funded.
- single place where the SECTOR TALKS (within the UK) - we can travel much further... talking together!
- NOS fronting an initiative at the moment, if we can find a way to become a sector- would be GREAT
- Better COMMUNICATION
- How do we represent the system... sphere of influence directly...
- Diverse boards.
- We as artists say we're not going to work like this anymore!
- how are we recruiting for Boards?
- How can smaller companies work with larger companies?
- arts council change maker programme.
- Placing deaf, disabled, BAME creatives right at the top of the big organisations
- Improbable...
- Artistic Directors of the Future- in theatre. minority ethnic artists, placed and see how different boards work.
- Diverse boards AND Exec teams...
- power structures can be the PIECES. the Canon.
- REMODEL the funding of opera
- Location of where we put opera on
- Transparency in commissioning... open systems.

- Companies at the top- they're working together (co-commissions)- internationally.
- Pegasus Opera Company will be shortly launching a new agency for BAME artists and creatives. Here's a tweet about it. Please contact Pegasus Opera to find out more about hiring BAME artists. <https://twitter.com/pegasusopera/status/1278334408202780672?s=21>

ACTION POINTS:

- sharing producers, sharing resources
- no use of term MAESTRO
- power structures in rehearsal rooms!
- behaviour in rehearsal rooms
- audition process!

Smaller companies are flexible and open to new ideas - maybe they can lead the way

The emphasis surely has to be on empowering creators to make new work and to respond to their needs. Instead, what has happened is that structures have been put in place that impede creativity and prevent opera makers from working in new ways. If larger opera companies could be genuinely responsive to the people striving to make new work, perhaps eventually we could get somewhere but until that time we are left with a number of very cumbersome relics that are no longer fit for purpose.

[What if the big opera houses all went bust and had to start again from scratch](#)

Session Converner: Isabelle Kettle

Participant names: Toria Banks

Hi. I came here because it seemed like a joyful, radical way into the question of power and structures, and what we actually want. Or maybe I was just shy of the discussion with everyone in.

[Why doesn't opera realise that its education departments have all the answers already?](#)

Session Convener: Omar Sharyar

Orientating an arts organisation entirely around the communities you are trying to serve

Seeing the audience as the community, rather than trying to get the community to see themselves as an audience!

Having a committee where the audience can have a say in programming etc

Entrenched ways of doing things - Chineke has changed the way that people do concerts now. Birmingham does that, Chineke as well.

Dress codes and exclusion, other concert practices e.g. clapping/making noise

Q: but would audiences be happy with becoming a community?

A: Glyndebourne have done.

Education departments need to apply for money to do these projects. Glyndebourne have their audiences and patrons, whilst the education dept. is ACE funded in general. We have to accept that patrons want a certain kind of thing going. Education depts are funded by public money. But even private money should represent/integrate with a public art.

Ownership - patrons BUY ownership and feel that they own the works. We need to find a way to help people understand that they own them, that they belong.

In the USA there's a multiplicity of funding like that. If there's a concern that education depts are too monolithic in terms of funding, you find someone who's passionate about education. Anthony Daufais, donating a collection to the Tate, had a touring rooms. There are passionate advocates for education.

Michael, there's a lot of history of philanthropy in the US, but in the UK it's rarer. Building up allies in Britain, advocates, is more important. We have a higher amount of private giving in Europe.

Community engagement results in passion, that could result in financial investment.

The USA post-depression work garnered that finance. Germany has a package that could stimulate this community engagement. Boulder Opera has successfully done work with LatineX communities and then expanded their work. Find the sweet spot of where the needs are and then make the case to the funding bodies.

Creating opera around communities happens. But democratisation of the project is key. Performers as contributors, co-creators of the work, of the performance.

It's difficult for people on the ground to do the work to connect with communities.

Frustration with the structure of organisations - the democratisation of the work is outsourced to the education department, not a core organisational value.

We want people to engage with the Magic Flute, but more we want for the environment to be able to make the next Magic Flute.

Composers in residence touching everything, including education, could be the bridge.

Some of the artists need to reconsider whether the MAINSTAGE is the end goal. Mainstage is not the ONLY main stage. There is a political value of the main stage that needs to be kept, but diverse voices need to be put on it.

Any possible solutions to the Covid crisis? Visors, etc.

Session Convener: Edward Lambert

No-one knows how long this crisis will last, so I wanted to find out whether anyone had tried live singing using visors, as well as distancing, etc. Joined Keel and co in the Main Space and had an enjoyable discussion. The feeling was that visors are problematic, particularly with lighting. Microphones may also follow, and are the beginning of a slippery slope! Notwithstanding, we're about to make an operatic film and will have to try visors - fortunately appropriate to the setting.

OUTREACH - in this crisis, and in the future

Session Convener: John Savournin

No notes

How do we make musicians feel included in the creative space

Session Convener: Alice Farnham

Participant names: Alice Farnham

Traditionally orchestras have been stuck in pits with very little interaction with the stage. They rely on the conductor providing that bridge.

Right now an orchestra pit seems like a very dangerous place to be, and instrumentalists will probably need to come up top. They are likely smaller and actually on the stage somewhere. Also, if we are performing in site-specific venues, then a pit isn't even an option.

Can I ask any directors out there, what creative things they'd like to do with this opportunity.

As a conductor I've done productions where the instrumentalists are included in the drama and it normally works very well. The instrumentalists feel part of the drama, full of admiration for the singers, and many of those prejudices and cynicisms disappear.

I encourage all directors to go out of their way to include the instrumentalists in the creative process. I realise there is a cost issue here. .

CONDUCTOR

Reach out to us please. I'm disappointed not to see many conductors here.

I fear it speaks volumes that under 'Who are you?' I seemed to be the only dot that called myself a 'musician'. There are loads of composers there, so not sure why they don't consider themselves musicians. and there's no 'Conductor' category. The conductor has quite an important job in putting on an opera surely? Are you not interested in what they have to say?

There does seem to be an assumption that all the creative ideas come from directors and singers. I have loved working with directors, and have lots of ideas. I'm sure I'm

not the only conductor who is interested in this. They can be a difficult bunch, so maybe it's up to the directors to reach out to them.

Why is opera so bad at a collective voice?

Session Convener: Jean

No notes

How can we make the opera stage more inclusive?

Session Convener: Joanne Roughton-Arnold

- We are all enthralled by the athleticism, skill, talent and human heart shown by paralympic athletes - no one thinks that a paralympic athlete is somehow less of an athlete than their non disabled colleagues. It's time for the arts world to catch up and start seeing the extraordinary talent, artistry and skill that artists who happen to have a disability can offer, and stop thinking they are somehow less skilled. Why on earth would we want to miss out on seeing and hearing all that talent?
- We need to encourage aspiration
 - Cast & creatives need to better reflect the diversity of the public in order to encourage a more diverse audience and therefore encourage aspiration in people from a wider range of backgrounds, including marginalised groups
- Blind auditions
 - Could the first round of auditions be held behind a screen, so that shortlisting is purely on vocal ability, removing unconscious bias? Then the second round could focus more on acting skills and ascertaining which singer could embody the character the best.
- Ensure the stage and backstage area is physically accessible
- Flexible working practices where possible to allow for individuals' access needs
- How do we hold organisations to account on diversity and accessibility, both from within and across companies and organisations?
 - Better (more diverse) board representation, change will only really happen if it is led from the top, from within, and not just from freelancers.
 - Joining the dots between departments in large organisations so that one unified voice is calling for better diversity instead of several smaller voices.
- Use the momentum of the BLM movement to move diversity forward more widely

- There is a great deal of intersectionality of experience and goals among the different marginalised groups
- Panels and programmers need to be more diverse - could there be positions for artistic advisors from diverse backgrounds? The burden for diversity mustn't fall on one person in an organisation just because they happen to be the person of mixed race or disability. The white male able-bodied people in power should take more responsibility and be equally accountable.
 - Invest in diversity training for all leaders
- A diverse audience brings in more ££££ - economically it makes sense to be more diverse.
 - As the sector reopens, we must ensure that people who have multiple disabilities or are immune compromised are not left behind. It is up to arts organisations to put in measures to ensure that everybody feels safe, not just the non-disabled. It isn't up to disabled people vulnerable to COVID-19 to somehow be more brave.
- Companies working regularly with disabled artists habitually ask about personal access requirements. If all companies asked this question of everyone who works with them between contracting and starting work it would become the norm and disabled artists would feel less marginalised. The questionnaire could be expanded to ask about caring responsibilities, allergies, dietary needs etc and hey presto, we've created something that was targeted at disabled people that now benefits EVERYBODY! This is known as the [curb cut effect](#).
- Equality of access leads to diversity, and that leads to inclusion, which leads to equality of access, which leads to diversity... If we create the right environment, and the arts sector becomes truly inclusive, we will reap the rewards.

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[How can we avoid losing a generation of talent to COVID-19?](#)

Session Convener: Jeremy Young

The reason that I called this session is that I am concerned that there are lots of young singers, musicians, directors, stage managers etc who have lost opportunities in opera, and may be lost to us because they find they have to go and do something else to live. How can they be nurtured and helped?

Building opera together for the audience who aren't here/alive yet.

Session Convener: Li-E Chen

Participant names: Li-E Chen

16:27 LC I forgot about time

16:33 LC How can I record the session without me in it? And just a chair without audience. Can people leave their seats, and go somewhere else while the opera is happening? I remember in Asian culture, opera can be performed to the emptied seats "invisible" / "death" / "ghost".

But I am interested in the idea that they aren't here yet. It is not because they are death, but the new lifes - performing to the audience who are here yet. It is like building the kind of opera that is not expecting "they" are going to be there, but we are building it anyway no-matter what the circumstance are.

THU 06:34

LC: My response to the invitation

"Time for Radical Thinking:

What can and should opera be and how might we build it together?"

LC: **I felt speechless on the day of our garthering, but instead I would like to start by thinking to make opera for the audience that aren't here and alive yet.** In other words, I would like to think how we can build opera together for the audience who will be in our 30 years or 40 years time. I am now just turning my 40s, so I am making the opera now that will be for the audience when I am going to be 70s and 80s. I think this is an interesting way of thinking about it when I go about my work now. I should not feel disappointed by that there aren't "we" in what I have been doing and working on for years. The idea of opera "we" will come and become when time comes. For now, I am accepting the opera I am making or have been making just "I" am building it. Would there anyone in this open space be willing to build this kind of work?

In our garthering of this event, I wondered around different gardens that the Open Space. I really enjoyed the discovery of different breath and climates of gardens from different countries.

Changpuhe Park - China

I am here.

Topic 1: I am at Changpuhe Park garden now from China, hello to everyone - time for radical thinking about opera today

Peterhof Lower Garden - Russia

I am here.

Topic 2: I am at Peterhof Lower Garden from Russia, hello to everyone - time for radical thinking about opera today. The breath of climate is very different here. I can smell it, breath of the air - blending the different climates, is this called: opera?

Butchart Gardens - Canada

I am here.

Topic 3: It is nice to think about opera from different kinds of climates and breath. I like it.

I think about opera is all about breath. I enjoy the different climates of different gardens.

END

LC THR 6:46