

Research paper

Exploring partnering as a tool for developing European opera audiences

Submitted in 2, March 2018

Accepted in 12, June 2018

Evaluated by a double blind review system

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Abstract

Purpose: The paper explores partnering as a tool for developing European opera audiences.

Methodology: The methodology employed in this study is based on a qualitative analysis, which relies on two techniques: content analysis and in-depth interviews. Concretely, the research has been conducted in two different stages: (1) a broad content analysis at European level; (2) an in-depth analysis at national and local level, interviewing both relevant artistic directors and opera-goers.

Findings: The study reveals that in European opera companies, most collaborations aimed at developing audiences occur when companies seek to diversify audiences, but they seem to be underused when the goal is to broaden and deepen participation.

Research limitations: Only 10 in-depth interviews have been conducted so as to capture the voice of opera goers and they are made in a restrictive context. Therefore, this paper should be considered as an exploratory research that could inspire cultural managers in their practice or that could be the seed for an advanced research.

Practical implications: Although implementation of partnerships with opera houses may have practical difficulties due to the complex programming process involved in the coordination of an opera season, collaboration should not be dismissed as a method for developing opera audiences.

Originality/value: Even though opera houses collaborate frequently in the creative process by running co-productions, partnerships are not that common when it comes to develop audiences. This paper approaches the field of opera management from an innovative perspective by reflecting on collaborations with the purpose of developing opera audiences.

Keywords: audience development, opera, partnerships

1. Introduction

Audience development has been a topic of research for more than a decade in certain countries, including the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Australia, but it has not been so

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extensively studied in others, such as Spain. However, since the creation of the Creative Europe 2014-2020 program, audience-development fever has spread all across Europe. As Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth from 2010 to 2014, stated, “Engaging the public with European culture is a paramount priority for the European Commission, and it is why we have decided to focus on audience development in the proposal for the Creative Europe Programme” (European Commission, 2012:1).

Moreover, the financial crisis has contributed to the challenges to the sustainability of cultural organizations. Traditional funding sources, such as grants and donations, have been shrinking dramatically in recent years, and the audience has emerged as a key driver of sustainability. In the case of opera, the situation is even more extreme because it is the most expensive of the performing art genres (Towse, 2011) and also attracts a small, and mostly older, audience (Agid and Tarondeau, 2010, 2011). Thus, it is not surprising that opera houses have become concerned with reducing costs, and therefore partnerships have been promoted in the form of co-productions. As Agid and Tarondeau (2010) explain, co-productions are an increasing and, currently, the most important form of collaborative cooperation among operas.

However, in addition to reducing costs, companies are trying to increase revenues via the box office. If partnerships work well in the creative process of designing and running co-productions (Luonila and Johansson, 2016), why should they not be an option when attempting to cultivate opera audiences? In the U.S., partnerships to diversify, broaden and deepen participation were first developed in the 1990s (Walker et al., 1999), and, although research findings indicate that partnering is not a universal remedy to expand audiences, it should be considered one of several possible methods to achieve the desired aim (Ostrower, 2003, 2005). For instance, Andrew (2017) considers partnerships an appropriate tool for those arts organizations looking to serve rural communities. However, in Europe, and, more specifically, in the opera domain, collaborations for the purpose of developing audiences are not that common.

The present paper addresses a very relevant issue for the cultural sector, and specifically for opera houses: audience development. Moreover, the approach is innovative as it reflects on it in the light of partnerships and collaborations, a management area that has been recently pointed out as strategic by audience development experts (Bollo et al., 2017). Concretely, the analysis is focused on how European opera houses use collaboration schemes to develop their audiences. The study was based on a content analysis of information published in connection with the 2010-2011 season of 15 European opera companies, 3 in-depth interviews with relevant artistic directors and 10 in-depth interviews with opera-goers who participated in an opera course organized through a partnership between the University of Deusto and ABAO²

2. Partnerships to develop audiences

McCarthy et al. (2004) developed a model that shows how participation as an audience member is an ongoing process and how patterns of participation change over time. The model recognizes that there are several separate stages embedded in an individual’s decision-making process and that different factors affect each stage. As a first step, before individuals actually consider participating in a specific arts event, they must first

² ABAO is the Bilbao Association of Friends of the Opera. It is the organization responsible for programming the opera season in Bilbao (Spain).

be inclined to participate. At this stage, background factors and early experiences with the arts are relevant because they shape an individual's perceptions of the arts and therefore his or her inclination to participate. Once an individual has developed an inclination for the arts, his or her decision to take advantage of opportunities to participate depends mainly on practical factors, such as scheduling, price, and opportunity costs. After participating, and, depending on the individual's reaction to the actual experience, he or she will decide whether to participate again. If at some point the individual becomes a frequent participant, the decision-making process no longer includes the decision about whether to participate but, instead, how and when to participate.

From the cultural organizations' point of view, McCarthy and Jinnett (2001) explain that organizations can build participation in three ways: (1) diversifying participation by attracting different types of people from those whom they already attract (disinclined population), (2) broadening participation by attracting more people (inclined population), and (3) deepening participation by increasing their current participants' levels of involvement. Bearing in mind the previously described participation model, organizations aiming to diversify their audiences should act primarily at the perceptual level, whereas organizations aiming to broaden their audiences should consider managing practical factors and those aiming to deepen participation should regard as more relevant the experience factors.

Brown and Ratzkin (2011:21) encourage organizations seeking to enhance the audience experience to ask themselves the following question: "What might you do to help people remember your programs and increase the length of the impact echo?" To help organizations answer this question, these authors propose the concept of the Arc of Engagement as a good starting point in thinking holistically about how to shape the audience experience. The Arc of Engagement illustrates the five stages of engagement through which audience members pass: 1) Build-up, 2) Intense Preparation, 3) The Artistic Exchange, 4) Post-Processing, and 5) Impact Echo. Brown and Ratzkin (2011) recognize that not all audience members pass through all five stages, but they maintain that each stage represents a unique set of opportunities to deepen understanding of and enrich the experience.

Partnerships can be a tool to improve the audience experience by influencing any of the stages of the Arc of Engagement. For example, Brown and Ratzkin (2011) present the case of the San Francisco Opera, with its program "Opera on the Couch." This post-performance initiative is the result of collaboration among the opera house, a nearby bookstore and the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis. At the event, which takes place at the bookstore immediately after an opera performance, the opera is discussed from a psychological perspective in a familiar atmosphere. The discussion is free and open to the public, and audience members are encouraged to share their thoughts and interact. Brown and Ratzkin (2011) note that much of the success of this event is due to its casual setting.

Walker-Kuhne (2005) says that if a company wants a diverse audience, then its programming must also be diverse, and partnerships can help achieve this aim. In particular, collaboration with communities can be useful to foster engagement with the entire institution and not merely a single production. Consistent with this idea, in 1998 the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds launched Community Partnerships for Cultural Participation (CPCP) to encourage community foundations to help art, culture, and other organizations in their communities broaden, deepen, and diversify participation (Walker et al., 1999).

Some years later, Ostrower (2003, 2005) analyzed the impact of this initiative and, after studying several partnerships, calls for more realistic expectations regarding the benefits and limitations of partnerships. The findings of this study showed that funders and grantees recognized that partnering is useful for building organizational capacity, enlarging audiences, expanding networks, and mounting programs that are beyond the capacity of a single organization to do on its own. However, crucial differences emerged. On one hand, funders argued that partnerships increased efficiency by avoiding duplication, although grantees were less likely to embrace this idea and many noted that partnering was time consuming and costly. On the other hand, many grantees recognized that they would not have formed their partnerships in the absence of a grant, and, in fact, once funding ended, so did most of the partnerships. Ostrower (2005) concludes that foundations may be overusing partnerships and that more attention must be paid to when and how to use them. In this sense, partnerships seem to be a poor strategy for reducing costs—yet a valuable one when an objective can be achieved only through collective action, the partnership is mutually beneficial and the partners are truly committed to the objective.

In the European context, a recently published study by the European Cultural Commission acknowledges that “the capacity to reach new audiences, to target properly specific segments and communities lies also in the ability to develop networks, partnerships and collaborations with a wide range of potential stakeholders and “enablers” - NGOs, community facilitators, education players, artists, private companies and the media” (Bollo et al., 2017: 40). Moreover, this study states that partnerships can also be built to empower the audience development staff competences or to exchange good practices. In other words, alliances can help organizations to develop their organizational capability. A review of the mentioned study was recently undertaken by Hadley (2017).

In the UK context, partnerships emerge as a key aspect in the Creative People and Places program, which aims to provide investment in parts of the country where people’s involvement in the arts is significantly below the national average, with the aim of increasing the likelihood of participation. Ecorys (2016), a research agency that was commissioned to create the overarching evaluation for the first three years of this national program, states that partnerships are valued because they provide opportunities for mutual learning, improved access to communities at grassroots level and additional complementary expertise and assets. They point out that: “The best partnerships are locally relevant, flexible and responsive. However, ongoing challenges include making sufficient time and effort to make partnerships work successfully and managing differing expectations” (Ecorys, 2016:5).

Several authors have studied the benefits and challenges of cultural partnerships and proposed key drivers of success. Preece (2004) highlights the need to form meaningful organizational collaborations, and Ropo and Sauer (2003) emphasize the importance of a shared vision and shared leadership. In the same vein, Walker (2004) concludes that partnerships can benefit both parties if the benefits are mutual and consistent with their respective missions and the potential risks and costs are anticipated and addressed. Finally, Wolf and Antoni (2012) identify 3 major ideas that contribute to the success and long-term sustainability of collaborations: authenticity, flexibility and quality. First, authenticity should be fostered at both the institutional level, by not promising more from a collaboration than what it can reasonably achieve, and the individual level, by acknowledging what each of the partners does well, what they are trained to do, and what others can do better. Second, flexibility to adapt and change is an important

attribute that will contribute to sustainability. Finally, although the quality of programming should be based on some standards of proficiency, it is more important that it “includes goals relating to enjoyment, fulfillment, confidence, the acquisition of life skills and other non-artistic elements” (Wolf and Antoni, 2012:87).

3. Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is based on a qualitative analysis, which relies on two techniques: content analysis and in-depth interviews. Concretely, the research has been conducted in two different stages: (1) a broad content analysis at European level; (2) an in-depth analysis at a national and local level, interviewing both relevant artistic directors and opera-goers.

The content analysis was applied to 15 European opera companies, from which the published information (e.g., websites and annual reports) for the 2010-2011 season was analyzed in a systematic coding process, as proposed by Krippendorff (2013). We used judgmental sampling (Weathington, Cunningham and Pittenger, 2010), and the selection of entities was based on the types of policies that these organizations were following. We proceeded to contact those most active in endeavoring to develop their audiences. An additional goal was to capture the diversity of the European context by considering opera houses from different countries. The final sample consisted of the following companies: Wiener Staatsoper (Vienna, Austria), La Monnaie/De Munt (Brussels, Belgium), Royal Danish Opera (Copenhagen, Denmark), Finnish National Opera (Helsinki, Finland), Opéra National de Paris (Paris, France), Opéra National de Lyon (Lyon, France), Staatsoper Hamburg (Hamburg, Germany), Teatro alla Scala (Milan, Italy), De Nederlandse Opera (Amsterdam, Netherlands), ABAO (Bilbao, Spain), Teatro Real de Madrid (Madrid, Spain), Gran Teatre del Liceu (Barcelona, Spain), Opernhaus Zürich (Zurich, Switzerland), Opera North (Leeds, UK), and Royal Opera House (London, UK).

In-depth interviews were conducted with two groups: artistic directors and opera-goers. The artistic directors of the Spanish opera companies from the previous sample were selected for interviews based on accessibility criteria. In 2011, the artistic directors of Teatro Real de Madrid, Gran Teatre del Liceu and ABAO were Gerard Mortier (1943-2014), Joan Matabosch and Jon Paul Laka, respectively. The three were at that moment recognized personalities in the opera world. Regarding the opera-goers, the sample consisted of 10 frequent opera-goers who, in 2013, participated in an opera course organized through the partnership between the University of Deusto and ABAO. This sample was used specifically to analyze partnerships toward deepening participation.

4. Findings

4.1 Partnerships to diversify participation

According to McCarthy and Jinnett (2001), diversifying participation means seeking to attract people not inclined to participate, and the most difficult challenge here is to overcome perceptual barriers and change attitudes toward the arts. In the case of opera, the barriers are higher than for other genres because during the nineteenth century opera was marginalized as a social activity and became a very elitist cultural form not accessible to everyone (Storey, 2003, 2006; McConachie, 1988; DiMaggio, 1982). Although opera is now much more accessible to citizens than in the nineteenth century,

perceptual barriers remain high for many segments of the population, and thus raising awareness about the genre itself is relevant for opera houses. However, the impact of awareness-raising activities in terms of audience numbers is difficult to assess because the results are typically not evident in the short term. Therefore, partnerships with other cultural organizations seem to be an appropriate tool for undertaking such initiatives.

To this end, European opera houses, with the support of Opera Europa and the European Network for Opera and Dance Education (RESEO), created in 2007 European Opera Days, an international event that takes place each year on the weekend closest to May 9 (Europe Day). The aim of the event is to help bring opera into the cultural mainstream and enhance its appreciation in today's society (European Opera Days, 2018). On this day, opera houses in Europe and elsewhere open their doors to new and existing audiences and organize free activities such as creative workshops, guided tours, debates and lectures, open rehearsals, special performances and other events. In these cases, collaboration takes place over distance because most cities have no more than one opera house; however, participating companies benefit from the global nature of the initiative in the form of a higher probability of media coverage, apart from other practical aspects, such as having a common website or deriving inspiration through dialog with other partners.

Another common method of acting at the perceptual level, in this case to target specific groups, is educational programming. Although there are collaborations between opera houses and higher education institutions, the most common partnerships are with schools. Opera houses arrange a variety of activities for children and teens, from programming productions tailored to this segment to developing arts education projects. In this regard, the close collaboration needed between teachers and opera house staff to implement a school opera project is remarkable. In Spain's LÓVA project (Proyecto Lóva, 2018), the classroom is turned into an opera company, which must create its own production from scratch over an entire school year. In this partnership, both parties win. The school creates an environment where learning is meaningful, important and exciting for every student in the class, and the opera house benefits from participants who discover opera in a special and creative way, with much more impact than through normal introductory opera sessions.

4.2 Partnerships to broaden participation

The key to increasing participation among the population inclined to participate but not currently doing so (broaden participation) is to overcome the existing practical barriers, such as lack of information about an organization's programs, high prices, lack of access to program venues and difficulties arranging childcare (McCarthy and Jinnett, 2001: 33).

In the case of opera, regarding lack of information and high prices, we found in our sample different collaborations among cultural organizations in the same city. For example, in Hamburg, the opera house, the Thalia theater and the Schauspielhaus offer a joint family card that entitles holders to discounts and advance ticket purchase at those venues. Austria has a similar initiative, by partners that are subsidiaries of the Bundestheater-Holding: Burgtheater, Wiener Staatsoper, Volksoper Wien and Theaterservicegesellschaft. The 4 have created a cultural website that offers a comprehensive overview of all the performances in the various theaters and the opportunity to purchase tickets online. There is a joint card (bundestheater.at-CARD) used to accumulate points through ticket purchases that can later be redeemed for

discounts. At the European level, the European Opera Passport (Opass) seeks to encourage the development of young opera lovers. Anyone under 31 can pay only 90€ to see 5 opera performances at any of the associated opera companies, giving young people the opportunity to attend opera performances while traveling around Europe.

The previous collaboration examples seem easy to undertake because each organization has its own program that is not affected by the partnership. Each partner continues operating in the same way, and they join forces only to create a tool (e.g., website or card) that aggregates the offers and fosters consumption. However, collaborations can go further and serve additional purposes to enrich and complement the opera house's season, thus affecting the opera experience. For example, Opéra National de Paris offers a culture checkbook that contains invitations to private evenings at major museums and a selection of cultural events relating to Paris Opera programs. The artistic directors interviewed considered collaboration with other institutions an interesting tool for audience development, especially if the partnership involves cultural organizations with which it shares a similar type of audience. However, they also recognized that working together is not always easy. Joan Matabosch described the challenges of collaboration:

It seems to me that a strategy of attracting new opera audiences involves establishing links with other forms of cultural consumption. (...) Sometimes it works to make collaborations. But in fact, it costs more than it should. I think there should be a greater coordination effort...

For opera, there is an additional difficulty in promoting such collaborations affecting programming, namely the horizon of planning. Joan Matabosch explained that, in general, an opera season is planned 4 years in advance, whereas other types of institutions plan for the shorter term. Consequently, if an opera house collaborates with another cultural organization, such as a museum, it may seem that the dominant partner is always the opera house because its programming may already be set, which can deter this type of partnership. It may be due to this difficulty that we did not find many examples of these partnerships. One successful example, however, is the series of events arranged by the Finnish National Opera to celebrate its centenary. For example, the opera organized the exhibition *The Finnish National Opera in Finnish Society* in collaboration with the Helsinki Post Museum. In the city of Bilbao, within the framework of the cultural program *Tutto Verdi*, ABAO organized an exhibition in collaboration with the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum. However, these initiatives were isolated projects that did not take place on a regular basis.

With respect to childcare difficulties, the only initiative that we identified, "Les ateliers du dimanche," is that of the opera house of Lyon. This service is organized only for certain Sunday performances and is aimed at children aged 5 to 12 years. While parents attend the opera performance, their children amuse themselves in a different room of the theater, taking part in a workshop related in some way to the topic of the opera. This innovative offer is the result of a collaboration between Opéra de Lyon and an organization of cultural mediators called slash/atelier.

4.3 Partnerships to deepen participation

To increase the level of involvement of current participants (deepen participation), the elements that must be managed are those related to the audience experience. Therefore, it is useful to bear in mind the Arc of Engagement model proposed by Brown and

Ratzkin (2011) regarding the different stages of the experience that can be affected, which can be grouped into three periods of time: before, during and after the performance. La Monnaie opera house of Brussels provides a good example. The organization's "A Night at the Opera" program aims to bring the opera closer to people under 26 years of age. The program offers not only less expensive tickets for an opera performance but different phases of the experience on the same day. First, the opera house welcomes the young men and women with an original speech as an introduction to the opera work, along with a light snack. Then the group attends the performance, after which they participate in a lecture with an artist from the production (usually a singer who has played a leading role) and a popular artist of the moment with whom the young people can identify. Although the experience is temporally limited to one day, it is extraordinarily well prepared, and it is more than likely that the participants will leave the theater with an indelible memory of the experience. In this case, the responsibility for the initiative falls directly on the opera house, and the collaboration is limited to the participation of the popular artist.

In Bilbao, a collaboration between the local opera company (ABAO) and the University of Deusto aims to increase the enjoyment of the opera experience of its participants, who are mainly older adults. The university offers 4 training sessions per opera performance and the possibility of sharing the experience with classmates, and the opera company offers tickets for the dress rehearsal that are normally not available to the public. The interviews conducted with 10 of the participants show that attending the course enhanced their opera experience due to an increase in their reception capability that led to greater enjoyment.

Three important elements contributed to this improvement. The first is the fact that a greater understanding of the work, the author and other contextual aspects increases the level of appreciation by the individual. Inés, when comparing her current opera experiences with those before participating in the university program, said, "Before, I was a passive spectator; I just sat back and watched the show, and now I have more knowledge and I enjoy more." The second element is the greater motivation for attending the opera performance that is generated by the preparation. Izaskun explained that the professor "makes us enjoy the opera and generates a sense of wanting to go, and that keeps you hooked." The final aspect concerns the importance of sharing the experience with others—the classroom facilitates the exchange of views between the students and also between the students and the professor, turning the class into a post-performance colloquium.

Gerard Mortier was also convinced of the importance of obtaining guidance about the programmed opera to enjoy a much deeper and richer experience:

I think we should program new cycles and not always Madama Butterfly... But we must also help people to discover these works. For me it's the same thing as when I read a poem; I like to have an explanation by literary experts. Education and guidance are important.

5. Managerial implications

The results have been presented grouped by audience development aim: diversifying, broadening and deepening participation. From a global perspective, we can conclude

that most of the collaborations occur when companies seek to diversify the opera audience by programming awareness-raising events and working closely with schools to bring opera to children and teens. Approximately 50% of the analyzed opera houses regularly take part in the European Opera Days initiative, and 100% undertake partnerships with schools. Therefore, the managerial implications presented below will mainly concentrate at collaborations to broaden and deepen participation.

When collaboration is aimed at creating a joint offer, it may be beneficial to attract people who are interested in culture but are not (yet) opera fans. For this segment, a varied subscription that encompasses several types of performances in different cultural venues in the city may be appropriate. This idea is supported by the fact that arts audiences overlap (Fisher and Preece, 2002). Although subscriptions seem to be in a phase of decline (Bouder-Pailler, 2007; Doublet, 2003; Kolb, 2001; Kotler and Scheff, 2004), one of the main advantages of this system is that it enables the audience to discover lesser-known artistic works or even genres, as may be the case with the proposed varied subscription. However, to overcome the main disadvantage of subscriptions, this tool should be flexible enough to permit date changes. The challenge of this initiative would probably be managing the practical aspects of the collaboration, for instance, generating the membership cards and maintaining the Internet site. City councils could play a key role in facilitating collaboration among local cultural organizations. The risk associated with the initiative would be low because these issues are merely ones of management and would not affect artistic goals.

A varied subscription could be designed in several ways. One possibility is to leave it open so that the consumer selects the performances that he or she would like to attend. This option would be convenient for someone already familiar with the opera world but could be problematic for a newcomer trying to make these decisions. For novices, an already-fixed program might be more suitable. According to Jon Paul Laka, an important aspect to take into account when seeking to attract new opera audiences is the selection of opera works appropriate for a first opera experience:

There are paintings and operas which are widely accessible and others that do not move you so much, unless you have a base, have experience... Perhaps there is a component of intellectual analysis that ends up moving to the emotional part, without a doubt, but for that to occur you need training. You cannot get anyone who has never been to the opera to see, I do not know... for example, a *Pelleas et Melisande* by Debussy. Come on, I doubt that a newcomer sees that and leaves the opera house excited by the experience... But, of course, yes, if you program a good production of *Turandot* or *Traviata*, things change...

Another type of subscription scheme could be a thematic offer in which each of the city's organizations contributes by programming a piece of work related to the chosen theme. Thus, a person interested in that topic could attend the various complementary activities programmed, enjoying a much more complete experience and perhaps discovering new genres. However, compared with the previous proposal, the risk associated with this initiative would be higher because it would impact artistic decisions. This type of initiative could serve to both broaden and deepen participation, depending on the profile of the participants. When endeavoring to deepen participation, one relevant aspect that organizations should take into account in pursuing collaborations is the value that they bring to the configuration of the audience

experience. Does the partnership contribute to improving preparation for the opera experience? Does it make the experience more intense? Or does it enhance the assimilation and remembrance of the experience, for example, through post-performance workshops or other activities that promote the exchange of experiences?

Finally, apart from thinking about how to design more intense experiences, we should not overlook the practical aspects that may help to overcome barriers to attendance, such as childcare difficulties. Opéra de Lyon demonstrates that an organization does not need to be one of the largest ones to devise creative solutions that may be the key to attracting certain segments of the population.

6. Discussion and conclusions

This paper approaches the field of opera management from an innovative perspective by reflecting on collaborations with the purpose of developing opera audiences. The main limitation is that only 10 in-depth interviews have been conducted so as to capture the voice of opera goers and they are made in a restrictive context. Therefore, this paper should be considered as an exploratory research that could inspire cultural managers in their practice or that could be the seed for an advanced research. Bearing in mind this limitation, our research reveals that, while foundations may be overusing partnerships in the U.S. (Ostrower, 2005), this is not the case in the European opera domain.

When distinguishing among collaborations aiming to diversify, broaden or deepen participation, the audience development aims pointed out by McCarthy and Jinnett (2001), it seems that most of the collaborations take place in the field of awareness-raising events and partnerships with schools, that is trying to diversify opera audiences. However, collaborations seeking to broaden or deepen participation are not as common. Apart from the audience development aim, another aspect that should be considered when planning collaboration is the stage of engagement according to Brown and Ratzkin (2011). Without being conclusive, it seems that most partnerships in the opera domain are oriented to underpin the contextualization phase and that the post-processing and impact echo stages are less considered.

We have presented some examples, but they represent isolated cases rather than widespread patterns of behavior. This opens a future line of research that could be more rigorous and go beyond an exploratory approach by combining qualitative and quantitative methods to capture collaborations to diversify, broaden and deepen participation. Moreover, future research could also focus on studying the barriers that hinder collaborations for audience development in the opera domain. Indeed, much of the problem is probably related to the complexity inherent in opera programming, which seems to be an additional issue to those challenges identified in the cultural sector in general (Ecorys, 2016; Wolf and Antoni, 2012).

In a nutshell, opera companies should consider partnerships as an additional tool to develop audiences, beyond the coordination of awareness-raising events or collaborations with schools. Partnerships should be planned bearing in mind both the objective of the audience-development initiative (i.e., diversifying, broadening or deepening participation) and the process of the audience experience itself (before, during and after the performance). Moreover, the risk involved should be taken into account, especially how the collaboration will affect the artistic goals of the organization. Although the implementation of partnerships with opera houses may involve practical difficulties and should not be invoked as a panacea, it seems to be

underused in the European opera domain when companies seek to broaden or deepen participation.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge funding from the Gangoiti Foundation in Bilbao. I thank my informants for sharing with me a part of their lives and I also thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors of this journal for their constructive criticism. I assume full responsibility for the claims made in the manuscript.

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