

Specialist forum update

Human Resources

Opera Europa's Human Resources forum was welcomed by De Nationale Opera in Amsterdam early April. The forum's main topic was Change Management. An external speaker delivered the theoretical frame and colleagues from various opera companies presented some practical cases, which included: Joke Manson from De Nationale Opera, Hanna Fontana from Finnish National Opera and Ballet, Jane Crowther from Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Pierre Fenet from Opéra de Lille.

Participants had the opportunity to tour the theatre and to attend the new production of Berg's *Wozzeck* staged by Krzysztof Warlikowski.

The next forum meeting will be at La Monnaie/De Munt in Brussels on 9-11 November. The forum further decided to join a few other forums for a multiple forum gathering in Sofia on 22-24 March 2018.



Marketing & Communications

The Marketing & Communications Forum took place in Helsinki in April with the purpose of exploring the Customer Journey.

Over 50 professionals from 16 different countries took part in the sessions that were led by the steering group.

After a welcome speech by Liisa Riekk, Finnish National Opera, the first and second session explained how the Finnish National Opera and Malmö Opera deal with customer path and young audience. On Friday, participants split into small groups and worked on various areas of the Customer Journey for three distinct target groups: young adults, 18-25 years, heavy users (season card-holders and frequent visitors) and tourists. Online tools appeared to be the most used and different strategies were applied to address different segments of the audience. Young people are easily reached on social media, heavy users by emails and tourists need to be paid special attention to as they will become ambassadors of the brand in their own countries.

An interesting chat also took place with Finnish teenagers about the perception of opera nowadays among young people.

Besides the working sessions, participants could enjoy a visit to the Lutheran church of the Rock, designed by architects and brothers Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen and built directly into solid rock, and a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, directed by Marco Arturo Marelli and starring Joseph Wagner as Eugene Onegin and Elena Stikhina as Tatyana.

The next Marketing & Communications forum meeting will be in Parma during our Autumn conference on 12-14 October and then in Sofia on 22-24 March 2018 for a joint meeting.

Costume, Make-up & Wig

This May the group were invited to Malmö for their yearly meeting. Over 60 heads of Costume, Make-up and Wigs shared their experience and knowledge over the three days.

The highlight of this year's meeting was a working session led by Markus Maas (Saarländische Staatstheater) in which the participants were broken up into groups of 6 to discuss leadership values and what they could do to strengthen their teams within their organisations.

An emphasis this year was also given to the growing Digital aspect of the job. Aline Chif (Opera Europa) explained why digital media was so important for houses to achieve their goals of promoting the brand, selling tickets and reaching new audiences and the some Wigs and Make-up heads gave an indepth demonstration into how to adapt transformations to HD cameras.

For their solo sessions, both the Costume group and their Make-up peers adopted the "show and tell" format in which participants are invited to share experiences of new products, explain a particular challenge or demonstrate a process.

Dates for next meeting will be announced in the Autumn.



Audio-visual & Digital media

The Audio-visual & Digital media forum (AVDM) gathered in Helsinki in April. The meeting was attended by 41 participants from 14 countries. These participants included staff from the audio-visual departments from opera houses, which regularly film productions, and other members of staff who combine audio-visual projects with other responsibilities. So Finnish National Opera & Ballet hosted finance managers, education and outreach personnel, alongside a-v producers, lawyers, and production managers – all sharing good practice in digital initiatives.

Finnish National Opera and Ballet (FNOB)'s recently installed flexible fixed-rig installation for performance capture was a draw. The a-v production team, led by Mikko Hannuksela, FNOB's Digital Media Producer, were happy to talk about their experience of fitting out the auditorium and to debate the pros and cons of fixed and manned cameras. Sharing the opening presentation with Mikko, Anita Prusila, FNOB's General Counsel, offered her experience of negotiating rights agreement with soloists, chorus and orchestra which has enabled this house to capture and stream its performances regularly. The collective success of these negotiations has done much to allow FNOB, as a national company on the southern tip of large (or, at least, long) country, to fulfil its national remit by extending its reach (northwards and internationally) by digital means.

Presentations by Petteri Laukkanen and Lari Angervo from FNOB's technical team and Jo Nicolai Head of Audio-visual at La Monnaie touched with authority on digital media archival and distribution systems, and new technology which offers low latency conductor monitors.

The meeting on Day One broke for a performance of Kaija Saariaho's *Only the Sound Remains*, directed by Peter Sellars and conducted by André de Ridder. All credit to FNOB's digital outreach and musical education; the run of performances was sold out and the composer that night received a standing ovation at the curtain call.

Day Two of the forum focused on capturing and creating digital content. Fresh from filming *Only the Sound Remains* at Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam, Frederik Furnee shared his experience and treated us to priceless footage of Peters Sellars moonlighting as multi-camera director of this production. Hedda Høgåsen-Hallesby, dramaturge at the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, offered insights into making appealing short-form contextual videos with the help of a trusted collaborator and freelance film-maker, T M Rives, who beamed into our meeting from New Zealand via Skype. (Very a-v).

Through this forum and The Opera Platform (TOP), Opera Europa is keen to develop the skill of its members to find in-house solutions to their digital ambitions. In the final session, Rainer Simon recounted his experience of offering first night live premieres online from the Komische Oper Berlin with only the help of TOP and KOB's own streaming site. Being independent does not, however, mean working in insolation. Miikka Maunula, Executive Producer Culture at YLE (Finnish National Broadcaster) and Francesca Kemp, Executive Producer Classical Music at the BBC, reached out to the opera companies present and offered their perspectives on the changing roles of broadcasters.

With a glass raised to the success of the EC application for the next stage of TOP, the group dispersed – each participant encouraged to develop new strategic digital partnerships and, at the same time, resolved to stay in control of his/her own organisation's digital destiny.

Opera Europa has brokered a relationship with IMZ, offering our members a discounted rate to attend the IMZ Academy in Prague on 28-29 September. This will be an excellent opportunity for the less experienced opera companies to find their way in the ever-evolving but accessible audio-visual landscape.

And talking of destiny, here are the names of those elected to serve on the AVDM steering group, set up to guide the work of this forum in the future. To stay informed about our events, sign up the avdm listserv by simple request to luke@opera-europa.org.

AVDM steering group

- **Maria Basora** Audio-visual Production Manager, Gran Teatre del Liceu
- **Frederik Furnée** Deputy Head of the Audio, Video and Media Department, Dutch National Opera and Ballet
- **Pierre Fenet** Administrative and financial Director, Opéra de Lille
- **Mikko Hannuksela** Digital Media and Event Producer, Finnish National Opera and Ballet
- **Daina Markova** Member of the Board, Latvian National Opera and Ballet
- **David Massey** Digital Producer, Welsh National Opera
- **Jo Nicolai** Head of Sound and Video Department, La Monnaie De Munt
- **Christos Tsakiridis** Audio-Visual Technical Advisor, Greek National Opera

Technical & Production and launch of an Artistic Administration forum

Opera Europa's Technical & Production forum was welcomed by La Monnaie De Munt in Brussels in March. The meeting's programme encouraged Production and Planning departments to attend and discuss common issues, including artistic and technical production management.

Participants had the opportunity to visit the Brussels opera's temporary venue MM Palace, before attending a performance of *Foxie! Cunning Little Vixen* staged by Christophe Coppens.



During the meeting's conclusions, it was decided to launch a separate Artistic Administration forum, to put forward topics such as artistic planning, artistic production management/producing, casting, artists relations...

Volunteers for its steering group include Jessica Fjelkegård, Production and Planning Director at GöteborgsOperan, Terri-Jayne Griffin, Producing Director at English National Opera and Christophe Bezzone, Artistic Planning and Production Director at La Monnaie (Brussels).

The Artistic Administration forum is planning to organise a meeting in the autumn, details to be confirmed.

Please contact gerald@opera-europa.org to be kept informed.



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