Why Opera Education? Five case studies of views in a European context

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, Opera Houses across Europe have started education programmes; some encouraged by national governments, others on their own initiative, emphasizing that the artform should be accessible to everyone. But although Opera Education is now a widely practised activity in most Opera Companies the field is almost unresearched. Only recently, from the late 1990s onwards, has Opera Education been treated as a separate practice in research on education in arts organisations. Studies, writings and reports started to focus on Opera Education in order to give an overview of 'best practice' within the field and concentrate on concrete educational activities looked at from the students', teachers' or artists' point of view. This is the first piece of qualitative research that compares Opera Education practitioners' thinking on Opera Education in an in-depth investigation. The study has explored, through a representative sample of Opera Education practitioners in Europe, the complex interaction of personal, social and cultural factors that give rise to their answers to the question *Why Opera Education?*

To reveal views, ideas and beliefs a methodology was developed offering enough space to the participants in the research to express their thoughts as freely as possible within the context of their professional work. The overall question, *Why Opera Education?,* was explored via four sub-questions focusing on what opera education practitioners in an opera house/company understand opera education to be, why they are engaged in it, how they see it within the opera house/company and the wider cultural setting and what the possible influences are to their perspectives. Through the case study approach, using the narrative as a semi-structured interview technique, it has been possible to address these questions and to set the stories of the practitioners in a comparative framework. The results are valuable not only to opera education professionals but also to other arts education professionals, arts marketing professionals, policy makers and people working in opera, because they offer a unique way of exploring the audience – institution relationship in today's society.

The in-depth focus offered insight into the complex and rich field of audience-related activities in an opera house/company. The daily challenges the practitioners are confronted with are broader than just opening up the artform to a wider audience and are an integral part of the audience-related activities in the opera house or company. By looking for the reasons behind opera education, lines of thinking that at first sight seemed to be quite predictable, were revealed to be more complex and challenging than if one had only looked at 'what' opera education is/might be. What emerged from the study was that the personal and cultural background of the practitioners is crucial to their thinking. Through the European framework of the research it was possible to identify the importance, the richness and the complexity of the diverse cultural contexts that shape the beliefs of the practitioners. The thesis argues that only through a rich contextual excavation of beliefs situated within personal, social, cultural and professional narratives the diversity of meanings about opera education in the 21st century can be realised. As such this research raises new questions about the 'role of opera' today, and about the impact of opera education and audience-related activities on the artform. These are questions that hopefully will be explored through further qualitative research in the future.

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Contents

Abbreviations

As.Li.Co.	Associazione Lirica Concertistica Italiana
ACE	Arts Council England
CLL	Circuiti Lirici Lombardo
OMTF	Opera and Music Theatre Forum
ONP	Opera National de Paris
RESEO	European Network of Education Departments in Opera Houses/ Réseau Européenne des Services Educatifs à l'Opéra
ROH	Royal Opera House, London
RTLF	Réseau des Théâtres Lyriques de France
TRM/KMS	Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie/ Koninklijke Muntschouwburg, Brussel
TSC	Teatro Sociale di Como
WNO	Welsh National Opera, Cardiff

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Introduction

Since the 1980s, opera houses across Europe have started education programmes, some encouraged by national governments, others on their own initative, emphasizing that all artforms should be accessible to everyone. But although opera education is now a widely practised activity in most opera companies, the field is almost unresearched. Reflection on opera education in Europe began to show about 1997 and the European Network of Education Departments in Opera Houses (RESEO) has been a major player in that sense. Over the last 10 years the network has provided a forum for reflection and the exchange of ideas and started to commission research into specific aspects of opera education. In 2000 the network received three years' funding for the project *Why/how Opera Education…today*? within the European Communities Culture 2000 programme. The work conducted for the Culture 2000 project functioned as a pilot study for this piece of research and will therefore be referred to as such throughout this study. I was involved in this part of the process first as the network's co-ordinator and later as a researcher for the University of Leeds. Thus this preliminary work has been a very important foundation for the focus of this PhD.

Before focussing on the question 'Why?' a working group within RESEO consisting of representatives from Göteborgs Operan, Opera North, Glyndebourne Festival, the University of Leeds, a working group leader and myself started to map education activities conducted by its members. A questionnaire was developed and e-mailed to all members of RESEO in April 2002. Most of the questionnaires were filled out at the RESEO conference at the Hungarian State Opera at the end of that month and some were e-mailed back in the course of the following month. Finally 25 questionnaires, involving 11 different countries, were analysed by the working group with the assistance of the University of Leeds. This questionnaire revealed how complex the field is: there are a lot of similarities as well as important differences between the departments taking part in the questionnaire. Although at first sight 80% of the departments seem to have a similar profile and focus on the same projects (see

appendix A), the questionnaire revealed that there is not one word to define the work. The titles of the departments (service éducatif, jeune public, educatieve dienst, education & access, education & community, junge oper, El petit Liceu, Balys programme, Scottish Opera for All, service d'action pédagogique, animation et jeune public, Oop!, Opera_Explorer, WNO Max, Formazione e ricerca, Opera Domani,…) reflect the range of work and potential clientele they are working with. The label 'education department' does not cover the practice of most of the interviewees since education is often seen as the work done with educational institutions, but their work is orientated to the general public in different settings. The different titles suggest that educational personnel within a company engage with an audience that is not immediately related to the 'typical' public, although part of their activities might also address the usual audience (Tee and Tomlinson 2002).

Starting from the survey-results, the working group in collaboration with the University, developed a pilot study to get a more in-depth look into the reasons behind opera education in general, by interviewing the practitioners using a semi-structured interview technique offering the respondent as much freedom as possible to express him/herself. 21 opera education practitioners in 7 different countries and 6 different languages were interviewed on their views about the work they were doing. The study confirmed the complexity of the matter and the difficulty for practitioners to give their 'own' views on the matter (Laenen 2003). The provisional results of the interviews, which were not published but were the subject of a presentation by the RESEO working group during a RESEO conference in Barcelona in 2003 showed that there was '*a rich source of material reflecting the wealth of both complementary and conflicting reasons for undertaking Opera Education. The range of responses suggests a multi-layering of justifications for Opera Education with some broad areas of agreement with original and unusual ideas'* according to the RESEO working group (Tee and WG RESEO 2003). The study showed the need for further research such as looking at the link with school/college, the work with freelance artists, studying the creation of operas for a young audience, looking closer at the outreach work and the link of the department with the artists and the company

while working in a community, and understanding more deeply the view of opera education held by the opera education practitioner working in an opera company. I decided to concentrate on the latter and focus on the views and beliefs of opera education practitioners active in opera companies, not in the least because of my personal experiences.

As someone who values opera and has worked quite extensively in opera education, I was passionate about the work I was doing, but never had the time and the chance to reflect on 'why' I did 'what' I was doing and why I was so driven by it. At present, through the study of colleagues' views on opera education this reflection is possible. Since a case study approach with a personal perspective will be right at the heart of this study, I will introduce here my response to opera education. I did not grow up in a musical family, but we were encouraged as youngsters to follow music education lessons after school. Music and singing were always around. I have been a member of different choirs and was trained as a singer while studying at university. I remember my first visit to a music theatre performance as part of our family holidays in Austria. I was about 12 years old and we attended '*Die Vögelhandler*' by Hans Zeller on the lake in Bregenz. The setting was overwhelming and the experience certainly stimulated my interest in music theatre at large. Later, as a student in arts and theatre science, opera became more prominent in my life. I would go to the opera on my own and enjoy works of Mozart, Wagner, Verdi and others. When a subject for my masters degree had to be chosen I knew I absolutely wanted to work on Richard Wagner's *Total Concept of the Arts (Gesamtkunstwerk Gedanke)*. The combined arts aspect was what fascinated me in opera so I explored his writings to learn how Wagner saw it in the 19th century and I applied it to the centenary anniversary version of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* by Patrice Chéreau and his team. The work for my masters degree led into an apprenticeship at the dramaturgy department of La Monnaie/DeMunt. My love of opera and my desire to pass this experience on to other people encouraged me to accept the challenge to develop the Flemish branch of the education department in the same theatre between 1994 and 1999. Extending the possibility to everyone who wanted to discover the artform in one way or another was very important to me. At the start my work was pretty much

school-focused, later on all age ranges were part of the projects. In fact the work extended to all groups wanting to know more about the 'genre' but never having been able to get in touch with the medium. Through the education department, they now had the opportunity to come to dress rehearsals, to have guided tours, to attend lectures and talks. Opera became more accessible. Reactions varied, but at least participants now knew what it was about. In the early 1990s the socio-cultural aspect of the work became more prominent. The educational projects developed within this aspect are especially designed for a specific group of people. This part of the work tries to find links between the company and the different communities surrounding it and thus enlarging the accessibility to the opera house. Since La Monnaie/De Munt was one of the first houses to develop an education department in Belgium (the most active partners in the field back then were the museums), we felt the need to look across the borders and see how our colleagues elsewhere in Europe were doing. What first started as an informal meeting became a network in 1998. At the end of 1999 I became the manager of RESEO, because I believed exchange of experience, thoughts and reflections about Opera Education across Europe were and still are important. What intrigued me a lot at that time and which led into this research were the questions of how especially practitioners in an opera company think about their work, since they have a key position in the development of the programme, and see whether there are similarities and differences in thinking across Europe, why they are engaged in it and what might influence their perspectives. This is why the present study specifically focuses on the question 'Why Opera Education?' as the overall field of research underpinned by the following sub-questions:

- What do the opera education practitioners working in an opera house/company understand opera education to be?
- Why are they engaged in it?
- How do they see opera education within the opera company and within the wider cultural setting?
- What are the cultural, personal, historical and political influences bringing them to this perspective?

I am aware that looking at purposes and beliefs may pose various challenges, since on the one hand it seems to be difficult for people to express such a meaning (Elliot 2005) and on the other hand, opera education is a purposeful activity, thus understanding an activity centrally includes understanding the purposes of those involved in the action (Taylor 1964). The activity itself is therefore to be seen as a strategy or means towards an end or goal, so that understanding a person's action involves not only being aware of their purposes, but also of their strategic resources and understanding (Miller, Galanter & Pribram 1961; Anderson 2000). This is why I want to analyse their views in relation to their personal, social, cultural and professional context.

Before considering the reasoning behind opera education, I will define a framework and the methodology used in this research. The literature review will develop a background to opera, arts education and opera education. Before focussing on opera educational aspects I will briefly indicate the historical origins and the developments of opera (I.1.1), its place within culture (I.1.2) and its current position in society (I.1.3). The final part of this section will deal with cultural choice and access to opera (I.1.4).

The next section of the general framework then covers education and its link with the arts in general. Issues in arts education are considered first (I.2) prior to the issues on arts in arts organisations and studies on arts education in arts organisations. After having looked at the broader field of arts education in arts organisations, the following section of this chapter will zoom in on opera education (I.3) as a distinctive discipline within arts education. An overview of the literature about available examples of opera education practices is given with a consideration of the educational aims and strategies identified within these writings. Three research studies on opera education are then presented followed by a consideration of their aims and strategies, which leads into a discussion of the possible ways forward (I.4) for research in opera education, the challenges for this study and the positioning of this research project.

In Chapter II, the methodology of the current research will be defined. In order to be able to concentrate on the views and rationales of opera education personnel in Europe concerning opera education, the case study approach is used as overall methodology in order to set the context for each participant. This approach offers the possibility of handling a workable amount of interviews in an in-depth way without losing the richness of the comparative aspect of the study (II.2).

Five case studies with five narratives make up this study being four different companies in four different European countries including one opera house with two stories due to the political situation of the house. These are presented in Chapter III. Each case starts with a snapshot of the selected organisation and of the socio-cultural context the company works in, followed by the personal story of the interviewee drawn from the narratives achieved through interviewing. A presentation of the results given in Chapter IV shows the outcomes in a comparative way, in a contextual setting and in relation to the research questions. These results are then discussed in Chapter V and lead into the general conclusion to this thesis given in Chapter VI.

Chapter I Literature review: background to the study

Before focussing on the reasoning behind opera education a review, of the literature concerning the nature of 'opera' and on the position of 'opera education' within the field of arts education, especially of arts education department in Arts Institutions, is relevant since the present study is looking at the views and beliefs of education practitioners active in an opera house.

After having established the background to opera and opera education, this chapter will consider existing research studies in the field of opera education and indicate where there are connections with the present research and where the present research may introduce an opening to another view to the existing discussion on arts education and to opera education in particular.

I.1 Opera: Background and current concerns

This section will briefly indicate the nature of opera from its origins to its current position. Opera is derived from the Italian word 'opera' meaning works. It is defined as musical dramatic works in which actors sing some or all of their parts. It unites music, drama and performance (Sadie 1995:544). The genre is a rich and multi-disciplined artform involving literature, drama, music, dance and visual arts. But the genre is also seen as an 'elite' and 'difficult' genre. I will briefly address the complex concepts of 'elite', 'popular', 'high' and 'low' culture, as these are relevant to a study of beliefs and reasonings that motivate opera educators in their work.

I.1.1 Origins and social development of opera

At its origins in the 16th century, opera was part of the high culture that reigned at the Italian Renaissance courts. Artists and thinkers, gathered in the *Camerata Fiorentina* at the house of Duke Bardi, were looking for a new way of musical expression integrating music and drama with reference to the Greek dramas. The first operas were created for special occasions (such as *Euridice* composed by Jacopo

Peri for the wedding of Henri IV and Maria de' Medici in 1600) and their audience was restricted to the 'nobility' invited by the Duke (Grout 1988:359).

Having seen *Euridice* in Florence, Vincenzo Gonzaga, duke of Mantua asked his composer in residence, Claudio Monteverdi, to write a "dramma per musica" for him. Many authors agree that *Orfeo* (1607) overshadows all former works (Robbins Landon 1991; Leopold 1982; Walker 1995) and a case can be made for this as the first 'true' opera in the modern sense (Leopold 1982; Walker 1995). Though the themes were often derived from antiquity, the topics were relating to contemporary situations. The emotional conflicts of the characters were recognizable from everyday life. *Music's full potential was realized on the operatic stage, where it provided the emotional backdrop to the dramatic words and actions* (Cook 1998:71). Opera gradually spread to other Italian courts. It was only when the troupe led by Benedetto Ferrari (poet, composer) and Franscesco Manelli (lutenist) arrived in Venice that the genre slowly moved from "divertissement" at the courts to a wider audience. Their performances of *Andromeda* in 1637 and *La magna fulminata* in 1638 were the first to be performed at the Teatro San Cassiano. They were an attempt to introduce lowcost 'court' spectacles to a new environment (Walker 1995:552; Carter 1996:12-13).

The productions at San Cassiano, the first public opera house that dates from 1637, were an immediate success. Venice had a strong theatrical tradition, whether in private houses or on the public forum. But as Carter puts it 'opera seems to have struck a particular chord with the Venetian public' (1996:13). The introduction of opera in Venice thus marked an important turning point in the social history of opera. Opera was no longer solely dependent on royals, but found new audiences and new patrons. *The San Cassiano was organised in such a way that the nobility could hire a box for the season and the citizens could purchase a ticket for the pit. So it was in fact the first public opera house* (Robbins Landon 1991:87). Furthermore opera did not only entertain the citizens but also the steady stream of tourists who attended Venice on their 'Grand Tours' and wrote about it (Carter 1996:13). And the

differences in ticket prices facilitated a greater attendance by a variety of audiences from the nobility, through the merchants and to the common man (Weiss 2002:35).

Thus the theatres became the principal meeting place for people of all classes. The genre had a strong link with social life in 18th century Europe and was very popular in 19th century Italy. The nobility could hire a box for the season and the citizens could purchase a ticket for the pit. The audience was not expected to arrive on time, sit still, keep quiet and concentrate on the stage action, or to stay till the end. There was room to dine, to gamble, to play cards or to meet up with friends. Public theatres opened all over Europe. Going to the opera became a part of the everyday cultural and social life (Robbins Landon 1991; Couvreur 1996; Rosand 1991).

At the turn of the 19th and the 20th century a new order began to show in Opera houses. On the one hand there was the rise of the 'middle class' and their increasing participation in arts activities, and cultural activities in the wider sense, due to the growth of leisure time (Bennett 2005; Mclean 1997:10-12; Storey 2001:14). On the other hand there were the changing conventions within performance practice in opera. One of the reformers in those days was composer, Richard Wagner. In his theatre in Bayreuth he was the first to lower the house lights in the theatre and to make his audience focus on the stage. He wanted the audience to pay attention to the performance, and no longer to what happened elsewhere in the auditorium (Baker 1998). This was the time when some people may have started to feel that going to opera was not casual any more. There were certain rules and standards to take into account now, such as not leaving before the end of the performance, no possibility to talk, and respecting a certain dress code. As John Rosselli explains in his text on the social context and opera: *Going to the Opera had become more demanding and many ceased to attend* (1996: 318).

The genre had once more become an expression of 'high' culture enjoyed by few and not accessible to everyone. 'Elite' in the sense of being related to a 'select' group of people that has leadership in some sphere of social life, understood to be relatively homogeneous and with a largely closed membership (Edgar 2000:124-125).

I.1.2 Opera and culture

In order to understand how it came to be that opera is labelled as being an 'elite' artform, it is important to set this view into a broader cultural and historical context. What is culture and how does 'art' and 'high art' in particular relate to 'culture'? The debate on art and culture is complex and challenging. Both aspects can be looked at from the point of view of sociological, cultural and arts studies. Hence, I will present a selection of broad general views on the nature of culture and art that have helped me to define a workable definition on culture and art for this research study.

First I will focus on the possible meanings of culture. There are a multitude of answers that can be given to what culture might be. The word 'culture' is derived from the Latin words, 'cultura', 'cultum', 'colere' and was linked with nature, as well as the cultivation of the earth. At the moment when Cicero added 'animus' to the word culture ('cultura anima': development of the soul) it received a whole new perspective associating cultivation with knowledge, science, education and art.

This is a workable but very restricted way of defining culture and too narrow for this piece of research. Other definitions of culture are useful, particularly the all-inclusive definition of culture defined by UNESCO that had been recognised by 130 governments in 1982. To them, and UNESCO, culture in its widest sense:

> *may now (1982) be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs; it is culture that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices. It is through culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his*

> *incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations.* (UNESCO 1982)

This view on culture gives room for reflection, expression and creation. It sees culture as a broad territory of values, habits, symbols, thoughts and artefacts, linked to a group of people, helping them to give sense to their lives. It offers tools for daily social interaction between individuals and the group. The culture of a group can find its expression in daily rituals, games, verbal communication, dress code, relation patterns, media and art objects. It is dynamic and diverse. It is inseparable from everyday life and it is strongly defined by the contrast between groups and subgroups in society. So compared to the former view of culture this definition creates a broader setting and does not focus solely on the individual but also on the community and the social interaction between aspects of culture, the community and the individual.

Thus culture can be seen as a given community's entire way of living and it also refers to the components used to express oneself as a human being in that community. One of these components is 'art'.

The arts may just be a way of expressing oneself, but they also carry a social aspect in themselves. It is this aspect that is crucial for my view on art and culture within the scope of this study. Focussing on opera, a performing artform, one could conclude as Rellstab does that both the artform and the interaction with the audience are crucial in order to be able to speak about culture and cultural expression:

> *A film show, concert or theatre performance involves people on the screen or stage and others in the audience. This is a permanent feature of artistic events: there are those who perform and those who watch them. Likewise, there are writers and their readers. Both are necessary, otherwise there is no culture* (1999:13).

It is through this interaction that the artform takes shape. The artist produces a work, but if s/he does not share the work with an audience it only exists for the artist and not for the wider community. By sharing his/her work with an audience it starts to exist. It is in the unique experience in which the artform is confronted with the individual that a dialogue might take place. This dialogue between the one who 'consumes' the artform and the artist challenges and shapes the values and the sensitivities of the social culture. Being engaged in the Arts may help us to gain a better understanding of the culture of a community. It shows us what we have in common and where we are different, what we like, what we don't like, what excites us and what leaves us indifferent and it thus enriches the way we see the world (Hewitt 2002:2).

I.1.3 The place of opera today

Opera takes a specific place as an artform within culture. In contemporary society it is still perceived as demanding and therefore difficult to access (Rosselli 1996), which seems to correspond to Wilensky's perception of 'High Culture' referring to:

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

To the critics of popular culture such as Wilensky, the artforms that are linked with high culture are thus seen as more complex and more difficult to access. These critics add that if the audience had a better understanding of the artform they would be able to enjoy it more fully. High culture is here defended in comparison with cultural products linked to mass culture, which they define as solely made for the "broad" market, easily accessible and easy to enjoy. It seems to critics of popular culture that just 'enjoying' art, without intellectual exercise is less valuable than trying to enjoy a 'complex' art work. However, this notion is difficult to sustain, because of the differences held by those who define what is valuable and what not, and who define

what can be considered as ‘high’ and what as ‘popular’ culture (Vulliamy 1977; Storey 2001).

Critics of popular culture seem to see a clear division between ‘high’ and ‘popular’, but in fact this distinction, developed in the 19th century to react against the industrial revolution, the mass production of goods and the rise of the new middle classes (Kolb 2000:23), is not at all clear.

It is a simple exercise to categorise artforms into two groups, based on critical literature about high and low culture (Storey 2001:1-15; Edgar 2000:287; Levesy (1995-2003) [online]).

- components of ‘popular’ artforms could be pop music, film, musicals, comics, dance music and fashion.
- components of ‘high’ art could be: fine arts, classical music, theatre, literature, ballet, opera.

This raises interesting issues, because this apparently clear-cut division is not clear at all. One could ask where ‘jazz music’, ‘blues’ and ‘alternative cinema’ would be located and where the ‘popular’ classical repertoire should be placed? Connoisseurs of opera might consider parts of the opera repertoire e.g. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Giacomo Puccini’s *La Bohème* and *Tosca* or Giuseppe Verdi’s *La Traviata* and *Aida*, to be popular operas but to new operagoers these works might be as challenging as any other opera. Certain arias might be ‘popular’ but not all of the opera; most of the time people don’t know to which opera that aria belongs because it has been launched in a range of ‘greatest classical hits’ or as one of the arias sung by a famous singer or because it has been used in an advertisement.

Furthermore the word ‘popular’ itself has in fact many layers. Different critical points of view lead to diverse definitions. According to John Storey popular culture can therefore not just be seen as *‘culture’ enjoyed by a wide audience*, or *as culture that originates from the people* (including the ‘folk’ aspect of culture), or *as culture*

which refers to the way in which a dominant group in society seeks to win the consent of the less powerful groups in society, neither *is it simply a synonym for 'mass culture'* leading into the pure commercial aspect of culture, nor *is it only that component of culture that is left after having decided what 'high' culture is* (2001: 5-14).

So a clear distinction between 'high' and 'popular' culture becomes very complex, since each individual perceives art differently. The perception is part of the experience of the spectator, not set by external standards (Cook 1998:73). Besides the definitions of culture being on the one hand a given society's whole way of life, and on the other hand being a way of expressing oneself in that society (UNESCO 1982), leads to the possibility that what is considered to be 'difficult' and 'high standard' at one period in time, might be 'common' at another moment in time.

Culture and society cannot be seen apart from on another. '*What people value in one period they might find ridiculous in the next, and what today seems dignified and honourable may tomorrow seem senseless and corrupt'* states Roger Scruton 1997:474). So changes in society may influence the way we 'see' and 'consume' culture. Take for instance the influence of the pop art artists of the 1960s, as described by theorist John Rockwell when talking about Andy Warhol's works:

> *Art is what you perceive as art: a Brillo box isn't suddenly art because Warhol puts a stacked bunch of them in a museum. But by putting them there he encourages you to make your every trip to the supermarket an artistic adventure* (cited in Storey 2001:149).

Theorist Frederic Jameson describes it in the following terms '*what has changed is that the texts and practices of high culture have become intermixed with those of popular culture to the point where the line between art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw*' (cited in Foster 1985:112).

The place of culture and/or art in society seems to have changed. This is a complex area, which brings the 'entangled' view on 'culture' and 'society' into focus and the

'value' a certain society at a certain moment in time offers to 'aspects of culture' and to 'culture' in general. Cultural critics such as Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society* point towards this: '*The traditional culture of a society will always tend to correspond to its contemporary systems of interest and values, for it is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation'* (cited in Storey 2001:46-47).

Thus society is constantly changing. Since this research project takes place in the 21st century and I am particularly interested in what may or may not influence people's behaviour as a cultural consumer on the one hand and people's thinking as opera education practitioners on the other hand, it is important to take this thought a little further and see from a theoretical point of view whether there are significant changes that might have influence on our cultural behaviour today. One notices that certain cultural changes actually do affect our everyday life. Cultural theorist David Chaney remarks that '*the cultural homogeneity of conventional experience has been broken up. Waves of immigration and mass tourism made 'cultural diversity' become standard rather than exceptional'* (2002:7). This results in a new understanding of cultural diversity. Not surprisingly, this was one of the main themes emerging during the present research. This finding will be further developed in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

Apart from the changing nature and understanding of cultural diversity, Chaney mentiones two other major changes based on people's cultural behaviours: '*The means of entertainment for ordinary people have been vastly expanded. Mass media blurred the distinctiveness between 'high' culture and 'popular' culture.* And *an expansion of leisure time has changed daily rhythm and has brought into life a new range of consumer goods and services'* (Chaney 2002:7). This results in a different way of attending to cultural and non-cultural leisure activities. The differentiation between 'high' and 'easier to access' artforms has faded (McLean 1997:25). One evening a cultural consumer might go to the opera, the other evening to a musical or a pop concert and enjoy both. Some sociologists like to call these consumers

'cultural omnivores' (van den Broek 2000:39; Peterson 1992) as they no longer distinguish these artforms from one another, which places artforms such as opera in a new position in which they are lined up with other leisure activities such as sports. On the one hand one could say this is positive, because these cultural omnivores do not make the difference between 'high'/ 'elite' and 'popular' anymore. They just want to take part in an enjoyable evening between friends (Lievens and Waege 2005). On the other hand one could signpost an important challenge here, because the artform has to compete with other leisure activities, without diluting the strength of opera in order to preserve its integrity.

I.1.4 Knowing opera

Opera is not exactly part of people's daily life, so in order to be able to choose to experience opera one should at least have the chance to know about it. As Julian Johnson puts it in his book *Who needs classical music?* (2002:116):

> *It is, of course, our individual right to choose not to be open to the experience of artworks. But it is a free choice only if it is an informed one: there is no freedom in rejecting what has been kept closed to us. Having cultural choice about art implies that we have encountered the thing about which we exercise choice.*

Allowing for the opportunity to discover the artform is a first step in opening up this artform and bringing it into the picture of possible choices. Once opera is experienced for the first time people can decide whether they are interested in the artform. These choices not only depend on what they know, but also on what they like. And this makes the whole aspect on cultural choice very complex, since the first element (knowing about the artform) based on cultural competence might be trainable and might lead to a higher appreciation for the artform, but this does not necessarily means one likes the artform. Since the latter is strongly linked with taste which is very personal and subjective on the one hand and which might be strongly

influenced by the social context (family, friends, partner, cultural/social groups) of the person attending a performance (Cook 1998, Scruton 1997, Chaney 2002, Benett 2005).

When looking at cultural background and context the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu cannot be ignored. He introduced the term 'cultural capital', a capital which exists alongside people's social capital and which represents people's cultural resources. This can be understood to be a product of an investment, which secures a return on that investment (Bourdieu 1979b).

The accumulation of this cultural capital starts in early childhood, continues in institutionalized forms such as education and finally in the objectified state existing as books, artefacts, paintings and other cultural expressions. But the training is not limited to high art expressions; it is part of a broader 'cultural' education since for Bourdieu cultural capital encompasses also linguistic competencies, manners, orientations and preferences. For him society is divided into a number of specialised, relatively autonomous and hierarchically organized fields, such as arts, law, business and mass media. Individuals accumulate knowledge of common values and rules at the level of arts, science, education and culture in general. Here Bourdieu is critical of the sociology of education that generally conceptualized cultural capital with the focus on the high-class artforms and thus overlooked the full potential of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1979a and b; Reay 2004).

In view of what has been mentioned earlier about the changes in society, one has to take into account that the situation is more complex today than in the 1960s and 1970s. Cultural choice is not only influence by cultural knowledge but, as illustrated earlier in this chapter, by a variety of elements. Though it still makes it easier to appreciate an artform, when having compiled a cultural capital from a young age onwards. Therefore training and education in the arts at any level throughout life might help the individual participant in his/her appreciation for the arts, and his/her decision to attend a specific show or to visit a specific exhibition (Bourdieu 1969:161-162). This training might begin at home or at school.

I.2 Education and the arts

Next to the social situation of the individual, education and especially cultural education thus seem to be crucial in the cultural taste of the cultural participant. Formal education plays an important part in this development. '*The further one is educated, the greater the chance to become interested in arts'* says sociologist Rudy Laermans in his contribution to the *A Must or A muse* – conference in Rotterdam (Hagenaers 2002:36).

When focussing on education, it is not just the 'education level' that counts, but also the cultural impulses individuals received during their education. *It is of course not only "educational capital" which is of importance. It is also the amount of "cultural education"* (Sharp 2000), which influences the choice of our cultural client. *Pupils receiving arts and cultural education do participate more in art than other pupils* (Hagenaars 2002: 198). However this statement needs to be read in a nuanced way, since a recent report about concertgoers in the UK and America showed that although more people are highly educated today than fifty years ago, this does not reflect in a higher attendance to concerts (Kolb 2001), and in Harland's report on arts education in school it is noted that contemporary youngsters in secondary schools have a low recognition of music at school (Harland 2000:567). As mentioned earlier social background and personal taste are also determing someones choice, as is the quality of the arts education at school (education through the arts as well as in the arts) which is based on the teachers themselves (Bamford 2006:77). An inspiring teacher might lead to a more positive view on the arts by his/her students. Therefore concludes Anne Bamford in het UNESCO report, '*there is a need for more training for key providers at the coalface of the delivery-chain (e.g. teachers, artists, and other pedagogical staff)'* (2006:140).

But the arts in school are not only important to build on children's cultural competence. They also have a crucial role to play in the young persons holistic development. Throughout Europe, education has been challenged by political, economical, social and cultural changes, emphasising the urgent need to promote

creativity, adaptability to changes in society and means of expression, alongside the development of skills and knowledge (Robinson 1999a and b; Downing 2003:15; Solvès 2002). Therefore the arts can be used for a wide variety of purposes, and could, as Eliot Eisner states, '*lead towards the development of creative thinking skills, the refinement of the perception of works of art, the enlargement of the understanding of art history or the development of art-making skills*' (Boughton et al. 1996:79). Thus the arts can be seen as the principal means of promoting creative abilities in children, and as the main field of creative action in general (Robinson 1997:28). But human being is not 'isolated' but part of the surrounding world. The socio-cultural perspective in education (Hargreaves 2003) recognizes the incorporation of the influence of cultural events, situations and groups into the learning process. Some impulses are difficult to grasp since they affect our inner world. Here the arts can provide ways to express a hidden area of 'experiental knowledge', e.g. the way we see, sense and feel the world, unreachable by other means according to A. L. Gill (1990:27). The arts offer the possibility to open up oneself, one's mind, and one's emotions (Best 1985:18). It can be seen as a unique form of 'sensuous knowing' grouping cognitive, perceptual and affective elements according to Peter Abbs (1994).

This type of knowing combined with factual knowledge is crucial in children's development. This is strongly expressed in the Calouste Gulbenkian Report *The Arts in Schools* of 1982 '*not to attempt at some stage, and some form, to involve children in the arts is simply to fail to educate them as fully developed, intelligent and feeling human beings'* (Robinson 1982:20), since the arts offer them tools to express themselves and to help them position themselves in the world that surrounds them (Gill 1990:25; Harland et al. 2005).

For some theorists such as David Best the opening of horizons of thought and feeling is of even greater importance than the acquisition of facts and useful skills. Education should stimulate progressive individual development in search of ideals concerned with the ultimate values of human beings (Best 1985:17).

> *True education should develop qualities such as curiosity, originality, initiative, cooperation, perseverance, open-mindness, self-criticism, responsibility, self-confidence and independence. In exploring and learning new forms of expression one gains and refines the capacity for experiencing new feelings* (Best cited in RSA 1997: 41).

Thus the arts could stimulate this process; whilst science and numbers relate to objective knowledge of the external world, the arts can contribute to the growth of students' 'inner world' of subjective knowledge or the life of feeling, and have as Anne Bamford concludes in het global report on arts education a vital role *in such areas as, among others, health and socio-cultural well-being'* (2006:140). Not just by teaching about the arts, which is also important, but by enabling to take part in an arts project and use the arts to express themselves, there ideas, there feelings and thus develop their 'personal powers of thought and action' (Robinson 1982:21; Robinson 1999a).

Here well-trained teachers, artists and cultural organisations need to find each other, since the best arts projects (with the broadest impact on all participants) are build upon a combination of their specific skills (Harland et al 2005; Bamford 2006)

In 1945 Lord Keynes expressed in the *Listener* (12 July) in the Arts Council's policy the wish *to look forward to a time when the theatre and the concert-hall and the gallery will be a living element in everyone's upbringing, and regular attendance at the theatre and concerts a part of organized education* (reported in RSA 1997:19). This was of great importance to the UK and influenced over the past few years policy and funding bodies, as well as cultural and educational institutions within the UK and the surrounding European countries in bringing education and arts institutions closer together. Several studies stress the importance of this link (Council of Europe 1998, Robinson 1999b, Bevers 2001, Öks 2001). Recently the Arts Council of England and the NFER published *The Arts-Education Interface: a mutual learning triangle?* based on 15 arts-interventions that took place in 2001/02 and 2002/03 outlining the effect on the young people, the teachers and the artists when taking part

in an arts project. The highest impact ratings were found in long term projects rather than one offs, in long sessions rather than in short interventions, in projects where the distribution of time achieved the needs of the context of the project, in those with joint collaboration and joint planning between teachers and artists before the project, in those with a positive artist-teacher relationship and in those where continuity as well as progression were built into the project (Harland et al. 2005:xii).

Noteworthy is the finding of a recent European survey conducted by the Boekmanstichting, Cultuurnetwerk Nederland and Erasmus University Rotterdam of experts in Arts and Education in each European country. *A must or a-muse* (Bevers 2001), concentrates on the current agenda with regard to policy, practice and research in the field of in-school arts and cultural education. These co-operations are generally with the museums and libraries rather than with other cultural institutions. It seems that this type of co-operation needs less organisational effort and is less costly than co-operations with theatres and concert halls according to the results of the survey. The findings of this European survey also made clear that in order to secure their own revenues and make full use of their own capacity the cultural institutions are forced to look for a new audience (Bevers 2001:33). Co-operation between schools and cultural institutions through education programmes is one way of doing it. Working with and towards the wider community that surrounds the cultural institution is another strategy. The conference was followed in 2004 by a European meeting in The Hague gathering again policy makers, researchers and those involved in cultural education. At the centre this time was *Culture and School: Policies of Arts and Heritage Education*. The conclusions of this meeting highlighted that there are some successful examples of partnerships between schools and cultural institutions across Europe. The participants at the meeting had the impression *'that these co-operations are most of the time ad hoc, very diverse and patchy'*. They also identified '*that national governments could help facilitate closer cooperation, while the EU could take significant steps to document best practices and help develop a much-needed glossary of art and heritage education' (*Cultuurnetwerk Nederland Report 2004:35, Cultuurnetwerk Nederland Summary 2004:2). The lack of clarity in

definitions and the need for better and more comparable data seemed to be crucial to continue the discussion (Cultuurnetwerk Nederland 2004).

Both conferences thus focussed more on 'what' Arts Education is rather than questioning the 'reasoning' behind Arts Education. They also concentrated on Arts Education in schools, whilst the following reports look at Arts Education from the cultural institutions' point of view. It is an angle that has been less researched, but which is crucial to mention here since the scope of this study is actually about the views and beliefs of Arts Education practitioners working in Arts Organisations.

Major research mapping of Arts Education activities within Arts Organisations happened in the UK, where the Arts Council of England conducted research into the education programmes of education departments as a collective whole (Hogarth, Kinder et al 1997) in order to build up an understanding of the range and types of UK Arts Organisations with education. The survey *Arts Organisations and their Education Programmes* also had to provide firm data for the purposes of policy development and advocacy with government and other funding bodies. Finally the survey was seen as the first step in the creation of a national database of arts organisations and their education programmes to facilitate contacts and exchange of information between Arts Organisations.

For the purpose of the research, 'artforms' were defined according to the eight artforms at the Arts Council of England (Hogarth, Kinder et al 1997:11) being: combined arts, dance, drama, film, video and broadcasting, literature, music, touring and visual arts. Opera was not mentioned as a separate discipline, but seems to have been listed under music and touring rather than under combined arts which the writers of the report understood as '*innovative cross-artform collaboration. Including art centres, international work, national umbrella organisations for cultural diversity arts, as well as disability and participatory arts* (Hogarth, Kinder et al 1997:11).

The overall results of the survey showed that if the company was large it was more likely to have an education officer in place. Most Arts Companies work with both their own staff and freelance artists on education programmes; most had or were working on an education policy; the groups targeted by the programmes were likely to be youngsters between 12 and 18 as well as young adults and senior-age groups. The survey also provided an overview of education activities across disciplines. Most common were workshops, performances, exhibitions or productions and master classes, followed by residencies, lectures, in-service teacher training and the production of educational research material. The vast majority of the companies with an education programme conducted some sort of evaluation and most relied on public funding to undertake their education programmes.

Thus the report maps the field in England as a whole and describes the facts and figures but does not attempt to explain the results beyond the data. The interpretation is left to the policy-makers and practitioners.

Yrjö-Koskinen's report on *Arts organisations and their education programmes: responding to a need for change* for the Council of Europe on the other hand discusses some issues related to education programmes, dealing with the contextual aspect of education programmes and as such linking in with this PhD study (Yrjö-Koskinen 2000:22)*:*

> *The relationship between the educational and artistic policies and practice is a pivotal one: education programmes thrive when they are integrated to the organisation as a whole. Adequate time, payment and training are all resources in great demand. And if an education programme wishes to amount to more than a string of one-off projects, it needs to foster a sense of continuity by seeking to establish long-term partnerships with the community*.

Thus education programmes cannot be seen as separate from surrounding elements

such as artistic policy and practice within and outside the company. Therefore one should continue asking why the education programme is as it is in relation to the context it is happening; if not activities might lose their link with the institution and the artform on the one hand and the link with the surrounding community on the other hand.

Critically attending to the 'philosophy' contextualising education work is important in order to develop a long-term vision on education in cultural organisations and in order to create a frame to evaluate activities. In his article *Evaluating Education Programmes in Arts Organisations* Malcolm Ross argues that arts organisations are unclear about their educational role. The article is based on a pilot exercise set up in 1999 funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and conducted by the University of Exeter. The study was conceived to evaluate current assessment within education programmes of arts organisations and to locate methods leading to 'good practice'. It focused on arts projects for schools. Two research phases were involved. First a 'case study' involving a theatre strongly committed to its education programme, secondly a survey of a sample of eleven organisations across the UK, with a strong commitment to education and a written education policy. The sample included theatre companies, orchestras, dance and opera companies, art galleries and one arts education agency. The survey was conducted through a range of channels: Internet, face-to-face interviews and discussions, telephone, and visits to observe work in progress. No distinction was made between artforms while reporting the results of the research. The author offered an evaluation matrix, but also focused on the situation of education within a company, the ways of working and the possible objectives. It is the latter that is most pertinent to the current study on the reasoning behind opera education work. According to Ross the place of education within the company and the education qualifications/experience of the education practitioner are both '*issues for future consideration of education policy making, delivery and evaluation in arts organisations'* (Ross 2003: 73).

Defining purpose, character and scope of the 'educational dimension' of an arts organisation's programme are essential in an evaluation. The researchers worked on an evaluation matrix that looked further than a list of 'desirable' outcomes and gave room for the philosophy that underpins the evaluation to be recorded as well as what is meant by 'education' in and through arts. The matrix mentioned in Ross's article (2003) is based on the models of Harré in *A student's creative process in art* (1983) and Schön in *The teaching of arts* (1983). It concentrates on teaching skills, values that might inform the teacher's/tutor's judgement in respect of the student's work, the pedagogy that informs the teaching and pedagogic relationships most appropriate for each aspect of learning in the arts. The matrix crosses tradition, personal taste, the use of symbols in the arts and the moment of cultural transaction with the practitioner's repertoire skills, the values that might inform the teacher's/tutor's judgement in respect of the students' work, the pedagogy and the relationship between the teacher/tutor and the student (Ross 2003:77-78) and involves a series of questions (see table 1).

Table 1: Questions evaluation matrix based on Schön & Harré (Ross 2003:77-78)

Questions raised on ***Repertoire of skills*** were: What teaching skills are needed to cover the four areas of learning in the arts? Does the teacher/tutor in question have these skills?
Questions raised on ***Values*** were: What values might inform the teacher's/tutor's judgement in respect of the student's work? How might these judgements be expressed?
Questions raised on ***Over-arching Theory*** dealt with: What pedagogy informs our teaching? What belief system concerning teaching and learning in the arts operates within our arts teaching practice?
Questions on ***Role-framing*** were: What pedagogic relationships are appropriate for each aspect of learning in the arts: instruction, demonstration, dialogue, partnering, conversing, bearing witness?

The overall conclusions of the research were that education departments are driven by enthusiastic and dedicated people making the best of limited resources, having to work on tight time schedules in order to meet the short-term demands from funding bodies and having to respond to taxing agendas often set by others in the organisation. But according to the study, arts organisations are unclear about their educational role. '*Such programmes are often put together to serve the organisation's immediate marketing imperatives rather than to meet the educational priorities of its clients'* says Ross. *That no system of accountability currently exists, beyond what the suppliers feel able to manage, must be of concern* (2003:74). According to the study, defining a clear, long-term educational goal becomes quite difficult when taking these constraints into account. *The matrix offered should*, according to Ross, *be one way of systematically approaching the 'still largely unresolved question', What shall we mean by 'education' in and through the Arts?* (2003:78)

Recent empirical studies conducted in the UK by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) focused on the aims and objectives of arts education in arts organisations. One, dated 1998, concentrates on orchestras. Two related documents were published in 2002 and examine the rationale behind education programmes in Theatre and Dance Companies expressed by artists, education workers and directors of the companies researched, but focussing on the views within the selected companies. Personal views were thus explored within each company (Tambling and Harland 1998; Castle, Ashworth, et al. 2002; Downing, Ashworth, et al. 2002). The reports list the findings of a multi-site case-study research project into the education programmes of UK - based orchestras, theatres and dance companies, using purposive random sampling. Six orchestras, ten dance companies and ten theatre companies were chosen to provide a range in terms of the organisation, the type of clients, type of staffing, geographical spread and accessibility.

On the whole in the three reports education aims seem to correspond to one another, notwithstanding they involve art companies specialized in different artforms: dance

companies, theatres or orchestras. This seems to contrast with the perception of the respondents in all reports that the fact that aims might vary from project to project might have to do with the mixing up of the terminology about outcomes and aims mentioned in the consultation document.

When looking at the influences on the educational aims similarities are striking across the three disciplines. The interviews identified that:

- The commitment of the chief executive and his/her influence on the educational policy within the company is crucial.
- The demands of funding bodies, in most of the cases, were judged as being a constraint on long–term planning.
- The size of the company could affect the communication of the educational aims to respective members; it seemed to be more effective in smaller companies according to the study on dance – and theatre companies.

All the reports mention though that there does not exist a common 'vision' on education. Even with strong visions on education within the companies researched, the perception of what 'education' could be differed between interviewees depending on personal skills, experience and interest of those delivering the work. A chief executive who has never been involved practically in education programmes might have a different view on 'education' from the freelance artist working in the field. This diversity was noted as a barrier for the integration of education in the overall artistic activities of the companies, but was not seen by the different researchers as a problem, rather a way to encourage and open the debate, so that the field as a whole could benefit from it. A study on opera is missing from this research and arguably it is necessary to research the 'individual' perceptions of the interviewees at a deeper level, in order to get a better view of the aims and objectives of arts education in arts organisations expressed by individuals working in the arts and in order to see whether external aspects have influence on these individuals' thinking.

I.3 Opera education within arts education

Opera education has only recently been treated as a separate practice in research on education in arts organisations. Reports on good practice started to emerge in 1996 - 1997 and concentrated on concrete educational activities looked at from the students, the teachers' or the artists' point of view. Several studies seem to concentrate on the work with young people and with schools, although community work and activities offered to the general public are also present when giving an overview of educational activities (Leblé 1997; Wilson 1996). Almost all major opera houses and companies in Europe developed education programmes over the last 15 to 20 years (Tambling 1999; Kayas 2002; Leblé 1997; Saint-Cyr 2005a).

In 1998 a Network of Education Departments in Opera Houses (RESEO) was put into place, and still is important for the exchange of expertise and knowledge on education within opera (Wilson 1996; Laenen 2004; Jampol 2006). The first publication dates from 1997 and is a booklet with opera education activities in 12 European opera houses. The brochure gives an overview of activities that took place in 1996-1997. It is a snapshot of projects, giving an idea of what 'education in opera' could include: giving access to those that have never had the chance to see opera has been the mission of some of the opera houses that created programmes such as workshops, introductions and community projects, and taking away opera's reputation for elitism or archaism.

With this publication RESEO wanted to encourage Opera Houses that were hesitating to begin education (Leblé 1997). From then onwards the network regularly published a newsletter named *Operacessibility,* giving room for exchange of expertise and ideas on opera education between members, and recently the RESEO pubished an overview of ways of working on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (King-Fralow 2006).

An overview of practices within opera education can be found in writings linked with (international) organisations and magazines specialising in opera and music, such as

the Opera and Music Theatre Forum that published the *Opera Education Handbook*. Opera and music theatre are seen as offering unparalleled creative opportunities to anyone involved in art-based education and participation work. The pack basically provides a practical overview of work undertaken by companies and artists in the field, and is useful for teachers, community workers, local authority officers, promoters, artists and many others offering perspectives, advice and contacts. In each company an individual sheet testifies to the energy of a sector which, contrary to much press coverage about the elitism of opera, is continually engaged in sharing with and learning from other people in the widest range of contexts (Ackrill 1997).

In the same year *Quodlibet*, a Spanish Music Specialist Journal, dedicated a special issue to music educational projects in Spain and abroad. One chapter collects the practice of Opera Education at La Monnaie, the National Opera in Brussels. The main focus here is the concern to give the teachers the tools they need to be able to work on opera in their classes, but also the social aspect of opening the artform to these groups of society that would never have the chance go to the opera. This was seen as very important when developing education projects (Palacios 1997:60-106).

But not only education specialist magazines started to pay attention to 'Opera Education'. A long article in the summer edition of the German opera magazine *Opern Welt* in 2001 reports back on workshops in Germany using an educational methodology labelled 'Dramatic Interpretation'. The methodology was devised to make the artform more accessible for students. They learn in an interactive way what opera involves: staging, role playing and designing (Prokop 2001:16-23).

Opera Now also regularly focuses on young audiences and education programmes in opera. In its last number of 2002 *Opera Now* focussed on opera education in the UK under the heading *Learning Curves: Developing young audiences* (Jones et al 2002: 37-41). The opening issue of 2003 highlights the conclusions of a meeting organised by the Opera and Music Theatre Forum concentrating on the question whether opera can ever bridge the gap between popular and elite (Thicknesse 2003: 6-8).

Some ways of working with new and young audiences are highlighted and key people are also asked to give their view on Opera Education and whether or not it should be provided by an opera company. Most interviewees agreed that education was vital in passing the knowledge of Opera to those that haven't heard of it before. Giving access to the artform and giving the opportunity to have a creative experience through Opera education were also mentioned as reasons for doing education work. These creative experiences might lead people into opera for the longer term. They were judged to be important, not just in creating a future audience, but also because of the personal development of participants. The opinion on whether opera education should be located in an education department varied. For some interviewees opera needed to be part of the core business of the company and thus in a sense all artistic activities were educational.

In the last number of 2005 Emma Pomfret focuses on initiatives trying to attract young adults. In her article *Rules of attraction* (2005:25-26) she writes "*prejudices are high, but when twenty-somethings see good opera performed with energy, many respond positively to its raw emotion and musical power".* A range of performances targeted this agegroup. *1984* at Royal Opera House, the Komische Opera in Berlin co-produces eight operas with Berlin art schools each year and casts young singers whenever possible because a thirty something singer is much easier to relate to for this age group, Glyndebourne set up *Tanger Tatoo* with a young audience of this age range, and English National Opera simply visited the rock-festival Glastonbury in 2004 with Act III from Richard Wagner's *The Valkyrie*.

By the end of 2001 the first International Youth Opera Festival took place in Utrecht and opened with RESEO (van Hamersveld & Oskamp 2002) the discussion about Youth Opera and opera education. Alexandra Wielaard (2002) wrote in her article for the *Boekmancahier* that in the Netherlands, opera education is driven by quality and craftsmanship. The article focuses on Dutch initiatives involving opera specifically written or adapted for youngsters by artists and small opera companies, as well as on the educational activities organized around the repertoire at Het Muziektheater in

Amsterdam. Both initiatives are intended to bring the artform closer to this target group.

Apart from the writings mentioned above there are three empirical research studies focussing on or paying attention Opera Education. One has been conducted in the UK in 1997 and two in France recently focussed on aspects of Opera Education. All three concentrate on youngsters and raise questions about ways of working and good practice, but do not explicitly raise questions about the 'reasoning' behind Opera Education.

Pauline Tambling's article 'Opera education and the role of Arts Organisations', published in the *British Journal of Music Education*, is based on three case studies of projects organised by the Royal Opera House Education Department and proposes *that Arts Education can be most effective when students are encouraged to see themselves as artists* (1999:139). The activities took place between 1985 and 1997 and were analysed in terms of the students, the artists and the teachers, placing the work within an overall conceptual framework suggesting that arts education offers an interface between the work of the artists and the school setting.

The level of interaction between teacher, artist and student as well as the connection with the company's repertoire is different in each project. The lecture/demonstrations *Quarrels in Opera* (based on the question *What is Opera*, and involving different operas as an example) had a strong link to the Opera Company's repertoire and focused on the artist introducing the repertoire to the students. *Always believe in* (students creating their own production in collaboration with artists) also linked with the repertoire of the Opera House but involving the artist and the students in a creative process of staging a performance together. *Write an Opera* (a course for teachers, giving them the tools to guide their pupils when creating their own opera at school) had no direct relationship to the repertoire and is the process in which the artist gives the teacher the tools to support students to create and stage their own Opera. This case study pictured the creativity of the students and the interaction with artists, as well as the role of the teacher in the process. The conclusion proposes that

arts education can be most effective when students see themselves as 'artists' creating their own work (Tambling 1999:139-156), which links in with more recent findings reported in *The arts-education interface* (Harland et al. 2005).

In 2002 the French Ministry of Culture and Communication ordered a study mapping all music genres, including Opera, and their relationship with the young audience, more specifically within school circumstances. The exercise was intended to be not only a catalogue of practices, but also put into perspective the current experiences and activities, with critical question marks towards the future, since the Ministry wanted to get more young people involved with classical music.

The results of the study *Musiques et jeunes public -écouter-interpréter -inventer* are based on a questionnaire sent to all lyrical theatres, brochures, observation of educational activities and talks with programmers, artists, mediators and participants nationwide. In this study 0pera is seen as a rich and complex genre with a multitude of openings towards education. The study gives an overview of the structure and the means of education within the 15 French opera companies that returned the questionnaire, and focuses on two strands:

- Educational activities giving access to the opera repertoire
- Specific programming for youngsters

The study lists possible ways forward for the future. Since opera is not part of the youngsters' everyday life, education programmes could help to get the artform known to this target group using focuses such as literature, the use of the voice, the link between text and music, the use of the theatrical space, staging and the backstage opera professions. Reduced ticket prices could help to lower the financial barrier. The chapter closes with two examples of creative workshops and sees enriching possibilities in setting up projects with European colleagues in the future, since the UK colleagues seemed to be more skilled and had more experience in working with communities on creative workshops than the French colleagues. The UK practioners had a longer tradition in Arts Education than the French. This

illustrates that there is a different level of skills and knowledge about opera education across Europe, but that through the European Network of Education Departments (RESEO) it has become possible to learn from each other for the future (Kayas 2002:68).

Sylvie Saint-Cyr (2005) concentrated in her doctoral thesis (published in two books) on opera and young people and investigated further the link between youngsters and opera education within the lyrical theatres and operas in France. Some elements overlap with the previous mentioned study such as the programming of operas specifically dedicated to a young audience and the educational activities giving access to the opera repertoire. But her perspective was wider than the collaborations with schools and she concludes by evaluating the effectiveness of the programmes. She wanted to show how, and according to which principles, as well as with which means, and in spite of which handicaps, the lyrical houses in France are connecting with young people. Because if the hypothesis is supported that meeting a young audience offers the possibility for Opera to evolve, this would give the opportunity for opera to keep pace with contemporary social life and stay connected with the age range it had difficultly in connecting with before and it would offer new dynamics to the artform. In this study the situation in France was compared with the situation in the United Kingdom.The research took place between December 2000 and November 2002. It involved three phases: first a questionnaire was sent to the 19 members of the Réseau des Théâtres Lyriques de France (RTLF), secondly follow-up interviews were conducted over the phone to clarify the results of the questionnaire and thirdly an observation of activities in a selection of the theatres concluded the study. A slightly adapted questionnaire was sent to the ‘big six’ companies in the UK (Glyndebourne Festival, Opera North, English National Opera, Royal Opera House, Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera) and regular contacts with the Opera and Theatre Forum (OMTF) set the scene to be able to compare the French with the UK situation. The proposed actions towards young people have made it possible to address a new demand for pedagogy around the arts and to make the auditoriums more accessible to a larger, younger and more socially diverse audience. The study concludes with the findings that over the last 10 years, through education

programmes, price reductions and actions towards youngsters, the audience has actually become younger but not necessarily more socially diversified. Communication departments and those in charge of public relations now are challenged to find ways to keep those youngsters attracted to opera. Initiatives involving youngsters also seem to have revitalised the way lyrical theatres look at their artistic programme. However Saint-Cyr questions whether the houses will be able to answer the interests of the Ministry, which wants to '*form better citizens through the arts*'. (Donnat 2003: 241-247; Saint-Cyr 2005a & 2005b).

The literature discussed is a valuable resource in offering an idea of the place of education within the company, the staffing of the opera education department, the target groups opera education focuses on, and what opera education might be (Kayas 2002; Saint-Cyr 2003; RESEO 1997; Ackrill 1997). Through the literature one gleans a wide overview of strategies adopted such as introductions, operas for/with young people, guided tours, workshops and community work. However the aims are not always explicit and are often obscured by an emphasis on strategies: seeing opera education as part of 'audience development' for instance, or as a complement to the formal education system, as well as a possible aid to the personal development of the participants.

The importance of providing access to opera for youngsters and socially deprived groups seem to be present in all reports, researches and writings (Wieland 2002; Quodlibet 1997; Ackrill 1997). Programmes are developed with schools and youth centres (RESEO 1997; Ackrill 1997), which involve participatory and introductory projects based on the repertoire, as well as the creation and performance of operas specially written or adapted for a young audience (Kayas 2002; Saint-Cyr 2003). Through these activities opera companies hope to influence the youngsters in future cultural choices, though it is difficult to measure whether more youngsters would attend a performance in the future or not through these programmes. According to the French study (Saint-Cyr 2003) there is a trend showing that more young people attend opera, but what cannot be learned from the study is whether this happened through the education programmes or through socio-demographic changes. As such

the study, which offers a valuable overview of existing initiatives in France, is inconclusive.

Another consistent theme in the literature is the importance of the provision of special creative experience. On the one hand is a belief that by offering this experience to the participants they might be led into opera for the longer term (Jones et al. 2002). The question remains as to whether a creative experience in opera does lead to this. It is in the end the individual that chooses whether he/she will stay interested in the artform or not. On the other hand there is a belief that – according to youngsters - opera education could be of help in the personal development of the individual. Creative workshops and partnerships with schools are thus seen as the most effective way of working, especially those projects where the students are encouraged to see themselves 'as artists' and create their own work. Pauline Tambling's research gives an insight in the interrelation between teachers, students and artists and is the only study that also looks at the effectiveness of the proposed programmes (Tambling 1999), but the aims of the opera educators were not subject to detailed exploration.

In order to go beyond this literature, one first has to seek a clearer view on opera education aims. A study concentrating explicitly on the diversity of aims and objectives of education in opera, even to the more general extent as pursued by the three NFER research projects conducted in orchestras, theatres and dance companies (Tambling and Harland 1998; Downing, Ashworth, et al. 2002; Castle, Ashworth, et al. 2002) has not so far been pursued and is crucial if, as mentioned earlier in Malcom Ross's article (2003), in the future one would like to measure the effectiveness of art education programmes within arts organisations. The present study aims to explore more deeply than the three NFER studies, the 'individual' views of practitioners active in opera education within an opera house/company. Especially the view of the practitioners and not of the management or artist's involved in opera education work within a company, because the opera education practitioners have a key position in developing the education programmes. Through

a comparative study, in different European countries, the important dimensions of continuity and difference in cultural contexts will be explored.

I.4 Framing the current research

When studying people's views one encounters an important challenge, because what the interviewee says might not always be what they mean to say. Or when asked what they think about opera education they might get straight to the practices because this is more concrete. These challenges occur because the exactness of thinking is difficult to expose, in fact our way of thinking is much more situated and complex. According to James Wertsch (1991) our inner speech is the result of many voices that come into contact with us across social distance, time and space. In this way each of us is always in the process of responding to and rephrasing those lived experiences (Graham 1999:524) according to our inner voices. The relation between subjects and objects is mediated through the use of cultural means, signs and tools as well as rules, norms and society being equally important elements in collective activity.

This illustrates the complex interrelations and interaction in human and collective activity (Engeström 1987). There will always be a tension between the mediational means provided by the socio-cultural settings and the use of these means in carrying out a concrete action (Wertsch 1994).

I identified the following considerations from the psychological and social theoretical field, which I found particularly useful for this research with a focus on people's thoughts and beliefs.

Opera education, like any form of education, is a purposeful human activity (Pring 2000), so that to understand and characterise it, we need to understand the particular aims and purposes of those designing and implementing opera education. But people do not always entertain the goals of their action explicitly. Some goals seemed to be

implicitly present, as the pilot study illustrated. Within the Anglo-Saxon philosophy of education tradition, for instance, the implicitness of educational purposes as 'being built into' educational practices is emphasised (Pring 2000) and thus educational aims tend to be taken for granted. Here we may distinguish between what individuals think they *ideally* ought to be pursuing and those they feel they are *actually* pursuing, whether because of resource limitations, the policy of their institution, the cultural and political constraints of their national or local context, or another reason.

Therefore when looking at people's beliefs and philosphy, the complex relationship with their sociocultural context cannot be ignored. I found a possible way forward in applying the framework used in developmental and educational research where the socioculturally situated nature of human thinking and action (Engeström 1987) is emphasised. People live and work in a specific context and their thinking and their actions are influenced by it. This suggests that people's reasoning may best be understood as 'embedded' implicitly within their activity, which they may have 'grown' or been inducted into within a particular context. The theory used within these fields of research is based on what is known as the 'sociocultural theory' and the closely linked 'activity' theory. Harry Daniels (2004:121) sets out the difference as follows *'in the socio-cultural theory the emphasis is on semiotic mediation with a particular emphasis on speech* (see Wertsch 1994) whilst *in activity theory it is activity itself which takes the centre stage in the analysis* (see Engeström 1987*)*. Both theories have their roots in Lev Vigotsky's (theorist in psychology 1934-1987) triangular model in which mediation and externalisation are at the centre when looking at people's actions. On the one hand there is the subject, the individual or group whose actions are focussed on, and on the other hand the object, the activity that is acted upon. Artefacts, in between subject and object, mediate between subject and object. His theory turned out to be important *in shaping the learning processes in a growing number of classrooms in Russia, Europe and the United States* with at the center of the theory the understanding of human cognition and learning as a social and cultural rather than individual phenomena (Kozulin, Gindis, Agayev and Miller 2003:1). This model offers the opportunity to investigate the circumstances*, in which particular discourses are produced, the modalities of such forms of cultural*

production and the implications of the availability of specific forms of such production for the shaping of learning and development (Daniels 2004:122). Yrjö Engeström transformed this model by adding social/collective elements (society, rules, norms and conventions) to the activity system (Engeström 1987:78; Daniels 2004).

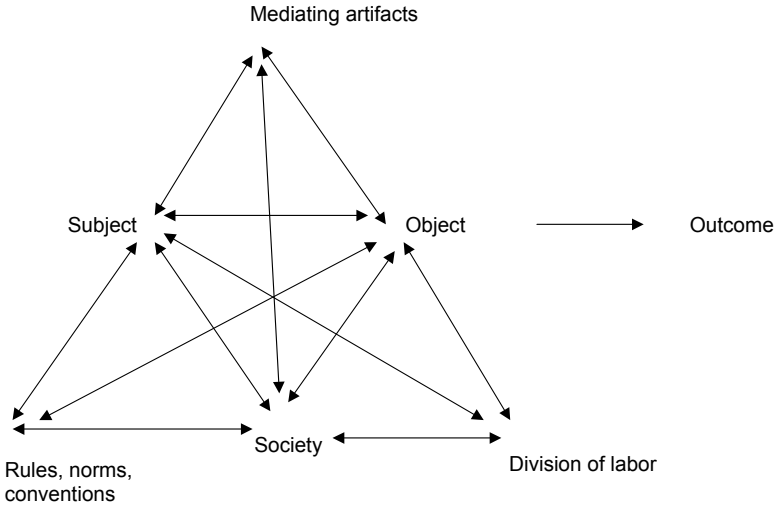

Fig. 1: Yirjö Engeström's activity model (1987:78)

Both the sociocultural and activity theory try to offer a framework, and the methodological tools to research processes where social, historical and cultural elements shape human action (Daniels 2004:121; Bakhurst 2005: 257; Hundeide 1985:311). Not only human action, also human thinking as David Bakhurst illustrated in examining the views of the Russian philosopher Evald Ilyenkov (1924-1979) on the relation between culture and mind (Bakhurst 1995).

The theories were successfully used in diverse research settings (e.g. in the understanding of learning, communication and development processes) and in combination with other approaches such as case studies. Kartsen Dundeide, for instance, used the approach in the study of children's judgments. He realised he needed a framework *that takes into account the historical and cultural basis of the*

individual minds, the collective institutionalized knowledge and routines, … All this is tacit knowledge that has its origin beyond the individual, and it is this sociocultural basis that forms the interactive background of our individual minds' (1985:311), since the results showed that elements of the participants' sociocultural backgrounds could be found in the way they acted. And recently (2004) Ana Popova investigated how people in Russia prepared for employment before and after the fall of the Soviet regime. She recognized, through using the sociocultural approach, that the events that happened at the beginning of the 1990s *did not only bring an abrupt change in political structure and economy, they also transformed the way people dealt with everyday activities of their life, including the way they took up professions and found jobs* (2004:193).

For a study looking at practitioner's views, from a common setting – education within an Opera House/Company, but with different cultural backgrounds - the sociocultural theory approach seems to offer a way forward to create a framework, and a guidance for the analysis of the data gathered through this research. Elements of it can be used to create a framework through which the practitioner and his/her thinking may be analysed. By looking at the practitioners' views in relation to their social and cultural background as well as their experience, this study will show how far their thinking is conditioned by their background and the meaning of this in a comparative context on the reasoning behind opera education across European countries.

Chapter II Methodology

In order to be able to explore the views of opera educators working in opera companies across Europe, a methodology had to be developed that on the one hand would give these practitioners the chance to express their thoughts as freely as possible, and on the other hand to address the context within which these practitioners work, because that context might have an influence on their thinking. The study focuses on the overall research question: 'Why Opera Education?' explored through the subquestions:

- What do the opera education practitioners working in an opera house/company understand opera education to be?
- Why are they engaged in it?
- How do they see opera education within the opera company and within the wider cultural setting?
- What are the influences bringing them to this perspective?

Ideally one would ask all opera educators in Europe working in an opera company what their view on opera is, but practically one would aim for a manageable sample to be selected without losing the richness and the complexity of the field. Since it offers the chance to work in detail and indepth, without losing the European scope, the case study approach seemed to be the most appropriate methodology to address the questions in this research.

The survey, part of the pilot study to this research (see pp. 1-2), which mapped opera education in opera companies throughout Europe (all related to RESEO) in 2002, was used as a starting point to reduce the sample to 4/5 companies. It offered a set of criteria. The sampling process will be explained in detail below, but it was decided to focus on RESEO members, because their membership indicates these houses/companies have an interest in opera education.

In total four companies in four different cities in four different European countries were selected. In each company the person in charge of opera education was asked for his/her views, which led to five cases since one company involved two opera education practitioners as will become clear in the paragraph on the sampling further on in this chapter.

To get as close as possible to these practitioners' personal views it was important to identify the most appropriate interview technique, the second part of the pilot study to this research had been been helpful in offering the opportunity to test a semi-structured interview providing the opportunity to access the respondents' own perspectives and views. In the pilot study, an approach was chosen that would minimise the likelihood of influencing the individual's expression while offering the ability to compare the data from the interviews afterwards. The *Hierarchical Focussing Technique* (Tomlinson 1989; Hobson 1998), a semi-structured interview approach based on a broad opening question and an agenda allowing for prompting elements that when not raised spontaneously by the respondents, seemed to offer the required structure. The broad opening question '*For you, what should be the purposes of opera education, who should provide it, and what ways of working should they use to achieve these aims?'* had the potential to elicit the respondents views on all other aspects of the agenda based on the issues about opera education listed by the working group members of the pilotstudy (see appendix B). Thus the second part of the interview agenda covered a series of questions promting the interviewee on whether opera education should develop audiences, whether opera education should include assisting the formal education system, whether opera education should include offering value directly to society independently of the formal education system, whether opera education should include promoting the interests of the opera company itself, who should provide opera education and by which activities (see appendix C for the complete interview agenda).

In the pilot study, the working group and myself decided not only to interview opera education practitioners, but also the directors of the Opera Houses/Companies, in order to see whether there was a difference in approach evident when comparing

management and practitioners. In total five interviewers (four members of the RESEO working group and myself) carried out 21 interviews in 7 different countries and in 6 different languages. The interviews took about 45 to 60 minutes. This resulted in a large amount of data, which made it difficult to conduct an in-depth analysis of the material. However, twelve trends could be highlighted in relation to the objectives. These were: to convey the passion and emotion of opera; to maintain opera heritage as well as to develop the artform; to develop opera company artists; to link 'education' to the other part of an opera company; to link between the school curriculum and the opera company; to meet a civic responsibility; to promote the image of opera; to widen the audience; to educate the audience; to introduce new ways of working; to explore different performance venues; and to broaden the cultural dimension. But these trends proved to be too general and needed more focused research in the future. The data was also limited by the fact that few interviewees were able to answer freely to the general opening question and therefore needed prompting in order to cover the items listed in the interview agenda. This influenced their freedom to communicate their personal views. Furthermore the data collected only offered the possibility of broad comparisons between interviewees (Laenen 2003), but a more detailed analysis of the results in relation to the countries and the companies involved could not take place, because the contextual data needed was missing. And last but not least the pilot study showed that most interviewees were not able to answer freely the opening question and needed to be prompted which biased the results. It also showed that interviewees most of the time talked about their activities rather than their purposes. This underpins the finding of theorist Riesman that *most traditional methods do not easily allow subjects' meanings to come to the fore* (1989:743) The reasons for this might be because educational aims and objectives are often the subject of contestation and debate, which is certainly the case in arts education, where the relevance of pre-specified objectives has been heavily questioned (Ross 2003). As mentioned earlier, any form of education is a purposeful human activity. Some goals seem to be 'implicitly' present in the action and were not expressed explicitly by the individuals.

Therefore, in order to understand an individual's views, it is crucial to take the socio-cultural context an opera education practitioner works in into account when looking at his/her views. From the experience of the pilot study it was therefore felt that a more focused interview technique was necessary if one would want to reach a more contextualised in-depth view of the interviewees' beliefs.

The narrative approach applied in research concerning the sociology of health, criminology, family & relationships as well as educational issues (see Miller 2000; Elliot 2005; Cortazzi 1991; Riessman 1989), was considered to be the most appropriate way forward for this research. Such an approach to the subject allows for an exploration of the participants' personal ideas as shaped by their specific cultural and social situation as well as past and present experiences. The method '*is an alternative to approaching individual worlds of experience through the openness that can be achieved in semi-structured interviews'* according to Flick (2005:96). As Elliot phrases it, '*narratives give meaning to experiences. Individuals are forced to reflect on those experiences'* (2005:24). It is then for the narrator to make the 'meaning' of their story clear.

As such this approach encourages the telling of personal stories in a smooth and reflective mode (Miller 2000; Rosenthal 1993; Flick 2005). It therefore appeared to be the ideal way of interviewing for the purpose of this study since it functions more like a conversation, giving the interviewee the possibility to relax and to ease deeper into the interview.

By giving the participants encouragement and space to tell their own story, meaning making is implicitly produced (Riessman 1989:743). Therefore, the narrative approach to interviewing was adopted for this research. Interviews were conducted and subsequently a narrative written from the data collected which formed a core element of each case study.

The narrative within each case study was then contextualised in the opera tradition and the history of the company, the cultural and educational policy, the companies'

mission statement, its overall educational goals, the place of education programmes in the company, the performance policy and the educational programme itself.

The qualitative data collected through the research was then further analysed from a comparative perspective across companies. The comparison between the five narratives in context framed each research subject with respect to the research questions.

II.1 Case studies as overall approach

According to Hitchcock & Hughes *'case studies are set in temporal, geographical, organizational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case'*(1995:319). The case study is a specific setting designed to illustrate a more general principle (Nisbet and Watt 1984:72). Case studies can explore in detail a unique example of a real situation, taking into account the complexity and the dynamics linked with this situation in unfolding the interaction of events, human relationships and other elements that are part of this unique setting (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2001:181; Yin 2003:1-2).

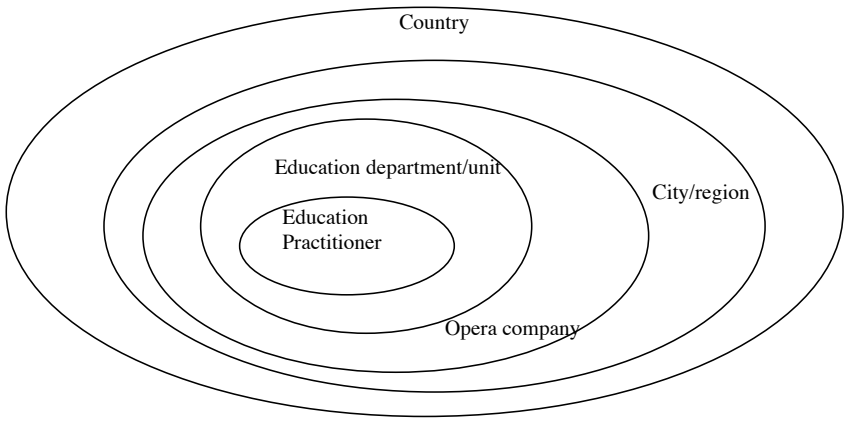

Fig. 2: The nested situation of the opera education practitioner

The setting here is the opera company within which the opera education expert works. In this way the expert is nested within a specific context, forming for our

purposes the centre of this context since (s)he is working in a department or unit within a rational, cultural and historical context. The department or unit is part of a company. That company is situated in a city/village, which is situated in a specific European country (see fig. 2).

This nested situation is crucial to be taken into account when analysing the outcomes of the interviews since each level of the context that the practitioner works in might/might not shape his/her views and beliefs. As the following contextual diagram shows (see fig. 3), this influence is not deterministic but functions on different levels. In drawing this diagram, elements from the sociocultural theory approach as mentioned at the end of the literature review (pp. 37-39), were very helpful. Especially the place of the subject (in this research the practitioner) in relation to society and in relation to mediating artefacts; the influence of these elements on the object (in this research the thinking of the practitioner) and the final outcome (the practitioner's view).

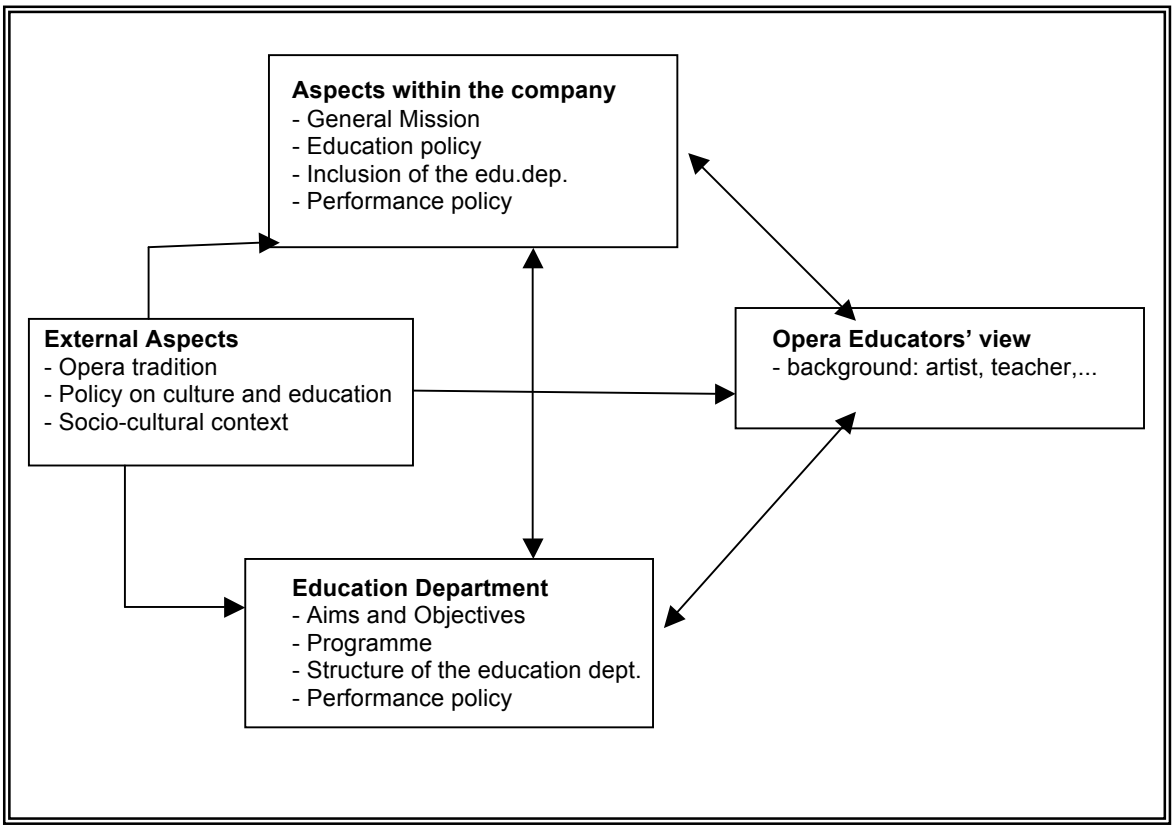

Fig.3: aspects with possible influence on the opera educator's view

There is a dynamic relationship between each element of this diagram. External aspects have an impact on the mission statement of the company and also reflect on the definition of education within the company. The view of education by management and the executive board influence the place of education within the company and the way education is structured. The education department has influence on the companies' views on education. Internal and external aspects have impact on the opera educators' views, since s/he is part of the socio-cultural context that surrounds his/her personal history. S/he acts from a contextualised and situated position and thus is influenced by aspects of context within the company and by socio-cultural aspects from outside the company s/he works in. Through this study I want to see whether these aspects have an impact on the views of the practitioners involved.

Hence the context for each case study includes the physical situation of the company (age, auditorium, situation in the city, situation in the country), the socio- cultural context of the company, the policy of the house (policy, programme, type of performances, number of performances), the place of education within the company (education team, education policy, programme, according to overall budget in %, programme, according to overall audiences in %) and a personal life story generated from the interviews.

II.2 Defining the sample

In an ideal world, the broadest picture of views on the work labelled as 'education' by opera educators working in opera companies would be gathered by interviewing the total population. But within the range of possibilities one needs to find a way to reach a manageable size of case studies without losing the richness of the field.

Traditionally there are three ways of achieving representativeness: stratified sampling, random sampling and stratified random sampling (Robson 1993; Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001; Flick 2005).

- *Stratified sampling* means that one notes forms of variation that one considers important enough to explicitly take into account. One makes sure that one gets representatives from different levels of each particular form of variation.
- *Random sampling* means choosing a sample from a population in such a way that each individual in that population has an equal chance to be chosen. To achieve this approach techniques are used that guarantee such randomness, e.g. by the use of random number generators.
- *Stratified Random sampling* combines stratification and randomness. Stratified sampling defines different levels of particular forms of variation. Within each level of variation the choice of individuals is random.

More recently, researchers particularly those who have adopted the grounded theory approach have applied theoretical sampling strategies (Flick 2005:64), which involve attempting to maximise the variation in response by deliberately seeking contrasting views to those so far discovered. In order to do this, such approaches may rely to some extent on respondents acting as informants who tell the researcher about others who they think will hold views different from their own. In theoretical sampling individuals or groups are therefore selected, and not chosen in a random way, because of *their*, as Glaser and Strauss put it*, 'expected level of new insights for the developing theory, in relation to the state of theory elaborated so far*'(1967:47*);* thus theoretically useful examples to extend or to test an existing theory.

It was necessary to decide which of the above-mentioned sampling techniques was most feasible for the present research. Stratified random sampling seemed to be the most appropriate technique, since effective random sampling would imply that one would be able to select a sufficiently large sample from a relatively much greater population, that would offer an insight in what opera educators views could be.

Amongst this population of individuals the sample was initially restricted to these educators from opera companies that have been associated with the European network formally or informally in terms of attendance at a RESEO conference or

meeting, because it was an available sample of practitioners engaged in opera education.

Further selection was made through *stratified sampling* because there were a number of variations known from previous research (Tee and Tomlinson 2002), which indicated important differences in opera educators' thinking. Applying stratified sampling was designed to reduce the sample to a manageable number for this study.

Based on the results of the questionnaire conducted between RESEO members (Tee and Tomlinson 2002), five forms of variation were noted as important enough to take into account, and I aimed to get representatives from different levels of a particular form of variation in order to reach a certain amount of 'representativeness'. The 5 broad areas (see table 2 page 53) of variation chosen are:

- Size of the company by number of employees
- Total number of employees working in education
- Opera education experience within the company
- Educational context
- Specific educational provisions

A. *Size of the company by total number of employees*

On the basis of the distinction of the opera companies size found in previous research mentioned above, it is clear that the actual spread is not equal but that groups of similar sized companies can be identified. Most companies have about 450 to 750 employees, some have more than 750 and others have less than 250, thus the dimension is divided here in the following sections:

a. more than 750 employees
b. 450 to 750 employees
c. 250 to 449 employees
d. less than 250 employees

B. ***Total number of employees working in education***

This dimension focuses on the total number of people designated as working in education within the company, part-time as well as full-time. In fact the results of the RESEO questionnaire (Tee and Tomlinson, 2002) showed that few companies have more than 5 opera educators. Most companies have between 1 and 5 employees working in education and very often it is just 1 person working in education. This leads to the following subdivision:

a. more than 5 employees
b. 2 to 5 employees
c. 1 employee

C. ***Opera education experience***

Opera companies have had education in their range of activities for a length of time (Tee and Tomlinson 2002). I categorized the years of opera education experience in opera companies as follows:

a. 16 years onwards
b. 10 to 15 years
c. 5 to 9 years
d. 2 to 5 years

D. ***Educational context***

Since the study focuses on the views of opera educators, school-related and curriculum related issues might have influence on the thinking of the interviewees.

Two sub dimensions within this dimension might be designated:

- 1. *The companies' liaison with schools*. Almost all companies work with schools. Only one seems to work solely with young people outside the school system. This gives the following variation within this dimension:
    a. school related (an administrative link with schools)

b. not related to schools (no administrative link with schools; activities outside the school system).

- 2. *The relation of the educational programme with the curriculum*. Almost all companies, except one, design education programmes for schools, but they are not all directly related to the curriculum. This leads to the possible variation within this dimension:

  a. Closely linked (programmes especially designed for the curriculum)
  b. Mixed (involving programmes not specifically designed for the curriculum, but used in school projects)
  c. Independent (programmes with no link whatsoever to the curriculum)

E. Specific educational provisions

This area involves a number of variables based on the provisions opera educators use within their work with young people. The selection of the variables is based on the outcomes of the RESEO questionnaire in 2002 mapping 'what' the European Opera companies, member of the European network do within their education departments (Tee and Tomlinson 2002).

- 1. *Performance attendance* based on the audience attending a performance. Some opera companies have performances solely for youngsters. Other houses mix youngsters with the general audience. The variation in this dimension is:

  a. Youngsters only (performances just for a young audience)
  b. Mixed (performances for a general audience)

- 2. *Performance space* based on whether a performance with a young audience takes place on the main stage, in an alternative space or in different settings because the company tours. The variables here are:

a. Main stage
b. Alternative stage
c. Mixed (both using main and alternative stage)
d. Touring

- 3. *Type of Opera* based on whether it is a full-length opera of the repertoire for a general audience or an adaptation especially designed for youngsters. Some operas in the repertoire are specially written for youngsters, or it can be operas newly created for a young audience, which led to the following variation:
    a. Original repertoire
    b. Original young audience repertoire
    c. Adapted originals
    d. New work

- 4. *Level of participation in a performance* based on the active participation of youngsters in a performance. This is by far the most complex dimension to subdivide since the degree of participation can go from no participation at all, to acting in a regular performance; the participation in a performance as a chorus singer, to workshops with a performing moment. The variables may be:
    a. Participation in regular performances as a singer/actor.
    b. Participation in a regular performance as a chorus singer.
    c. Participation in workshops sharing a moment with an audience
    d. Participation in workshops without performance
    e. No active participation.

In the following table (table 2) these areas of variation are set across the 25 RESEO opera companies across Europe involved in opera education. The results were based on the outcomes of the questionnaire held in 2002 and were checked by the participants in the last stage of this research in March 2006. The opera houses are numbered as follows:

1 As. Li. Co. – Milan/Como,
2 Berliner Staatsoper,
3 Den Norske Opera - Oslo,
4 English National Opera – London,
5 Finish National Opera – Helsinki,
6 Glyndebourne Festival,
7 Göteborgs Operan,
8 Gran Teatre del Liceu – Barcelona,
9 Het Muziektheater – Amsterdam,
10 Junge Oper der Staatsoper Stuttgart,
11 Muziektheater Transparant – Antwerpen,
12 Opéra National de Nancy et de Lorraine,
13 Opera National de Paris,
14 Opera North – Leeds,
15 Royal Opera House – London,
16 Scottish Opera for All –Glasgow,
17 Teatro Comunale Verdi – Pisa,
18 Teatro dell' Opera – Roma,
19 Teatro Regio di Torino,
20 Théâtre du Capitole - Toulouse,
21 Théâtre du Châtelet – Paris,
22 Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie/ Koninklijke Muntschouwburg- Brussel,
23 Vadstena Akademien, Stockholm,
24 Vlaamse Opera - Antwerpen/Gent ,
25 Welsh National Opera – Cardiff.