

III.4. Case study 4 and Case study 5

The two last case studies are related to La Monnaie/De Munt, Belgium's national opera house based in Brussels. La Monnaie/De Munt, as a bilingual and federal institution, takes a specific position within the Belgian cultural field. The actions towards audiences run both in French and in Dutch. Certain policy domains such as education and culture are regional matters; therefore the education department has two branches. So instead of one head of department, it was necessary to engage two opera education practitioners in the research. One could then decide to split the snapshot up into a Flemish and Walloon part, but the situation is too complex since there are activities related to education that are run in a bilingual way. Therefore I decided to present case study 4 and 5 together. In the snapshot there will be a general section on the house followed by a divided section on culture and education. The company's mission, its audiences, its budget and its educational mission will be general again and where I focus on the number of educational projects there will be information on the Dutch and on the French projects. Finally I will introduce the two narratives. The Dutch narrative and information is related to case study 4 and the French narrative and information will be case study number 5.

III.4.1 Snapshot Koninklijke Muntschouwburg/Theâtre Royal de La Monnaie

C'était magnifique. Au départ, je m'étais dit que La Monnaie était réservée aux gens issus d'un milieu aisé, alors que moi, je viens d'un milieu plutôt modeste. Malheureusement, l'opéra est trop peu connu du grand public à cause des préjugés. Or, j'ai réalisé que tout le monde pouvait y aller. L'une des représentations était un opera de Verdi, "Falstaff" je crois. Les décors, la musique, tout était captivant. Le plus formidable, c'est que je changeais complètement de cadre, je sortais de l'hôpital pour découvrir un monde "féerique" dans le sens où tout était époustouflant de beauté. C'est un autre univers, une autre façon de voir les choses.

(‘It was magnificent. At the start I would have said that La Monnaie was reserved to people from a more settled background, whereas I’m from a more modest one. Unfortunately opera is not really known by the general public because of existing prejudices. Although I realised that everyone could attend an opera. I saw a performance of Verdi, it was *Falstaff* I think. The set design, the music, everything was captivating. The most impressive aspect was the total change of scene to me. I left hospital to discover a fairy-like world. It was all flabbergasting and beautiful. It was another universe, way of seeing things differently’: Asmaa, participant ‘un pont entre deux mondes’, November 2003)

* RUE LÉOPOLD 4
Main Auditorium 1152 seats

* RUE LÉOPOLD 23
Fiocco 250 seats
Malibran 400 seats

* 450 employees + seasonal contracts

Photo 11: La Monnaie/ De Munt
© La Monnaie

Belgium has three opera houses. The *Opera Royal de Wallonie* is located in Liège in the south of the country; *De Vlaamse Opera* is based in two cities in the northern part of Belgium, namely Antwerp and Ghent, and one in Brussels, *De Munt/La Monnaie*. The Walloon opera goes back to 1818 with touring theatre and opera companies visiting the region before that. The start of the Flemish opera is sometimes placed in 1698 when Lully’s *Thesée* was performed for the festival opening of the city theatre in Ghent, but it took until the 18th century before Jacob Toussaint Neyts (1727-1794) launched the Flemish Opera.

Not long after the first public performance in Venice (see pp. 8-9) the first opera performance in Belgium took place at the court in Brussels, 24 February 1650. *Ulisse all' isola di Circe* was the work performed, commissioned by the archduke Leopold-Willem from the Roman composer Giuseppe Zamponi (Korenhof 1989:71; Couvreur 1996:xxii). In those days Brussels was a transit city. To keep merchants and visitors for a longer stay, one looked for possible attractions and a theatre could become one of the assets in this strategy. Also in Brussels, about thirty years later on January 24th 1682, the first public performance took place. *Medea in Athens* composed by Zanetti (Antonio Giannettini, 1648-1721) was presented to inaugurate the theatre at the Quai des Foin.

Koninklijke Muntschouwburg/ Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie

But it was not until the end of the 16th century, under the reign of Maximilian II Emmanuel of Bavaria and governor of the Spanish Netherlands, that De Munt/La Monnaie opened its doors at the site of the former mint. Gio Paolo Bombarda, instrumentalist and Pietro Antonio Fiocco were the first directors. They started with opera at the Quai du Foin and moved in 1700 to the new theatre. Their company had been enlarged with French actors. The first written testimonial about the house dates from 16 October 1700 when a visitor at the court wrote in his journal about a rehearsal of *Atys* in the Grand Theatre: *S.A.E. boodt ter verstrooing een repetitie aan van de opera Atys in het 'Grand Théâtre'* (*S.A.E. offered a rehearsal of the Opera Atys at the Grand Theatre as entertainment*) for his guests (cited in Busine 2000:94) It was considered one of the most beautiful theatres outside Italy. In poor conditions, a century later, it was replaced by a new building in 1819 designed by Louis Damesmes. A fire destroyed the interior of the building in 1855, which led to the refurbishment and restructuring of the House in 1856 by architect Joseph Poelaert. Major restorations in 1985-1986 largely kept the outlook of the 19th century, except from the extra floor added to the top of the building (Couvreur et al. 2000; Cabris 1996).

La Monnaie plays a specific part in Belgian history since it was the performance of Auber's *La muette de Portici* on the 25th of August 1830 that instigated the revolution leading to the independence of Belgium. In Auber's opera the Italian freedom fighters react against the Spanish rulers. The theme came close to the feelings of the bourgeoisie in the southern part of the Netherlands. They wanted to liberate themselves from the Dutch. The audience was so caught up in the performance of Auber's opera that when 'Aux Armes! (take your weapons)' was sung on stage, the southern Netherlands citizens attending the performance took it for real and started to fight against the Dutch present in the auditorium (Van De Stomme van Portici 1979:13).

By the late 19th century La Monnaie was mainly French orientated. Until 1853 theatre, dance and opera were equally performed at La Monnaie. Afterwards it became a house for dance and opera performances. In 1963 the theatre became a national institution, having first been run as a private concern and then as part of the City of Brussels. In 1998 la Monnaie bought a large part of the old Vanderborght department store (about 20,000 m²) just behind the theatre, thereby grouping the workshops and rehearsal rooms that were spread over the city. The new building added also two alternative performance spaces to the main auditorium: the Fiocco rehearsal room for the orchestra (250 people can attend a chamber music concert in this hall) and the Malibran rehearsal room for opera (400 seats are available for a small opera production).

In contrast to the Opéra de Wallonie and De Vlaamse Opera, La Monnaie/ De Munt is depends not on the regional but on the federal government. It is a bilingual institution. La Monnaie's communication towards the audience happens both in French and in Flemish.

This setting already shows the complexity of the Belgian context. The country counts three communities (Flemish, Walloon and German) and three regions (Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels- Capital) (see fig. 12).

To understand the political situation the National Opera works within, a short overview of the federalisation in Belgium is necessary. The process took almost a quarter of a century. Between 1970 and 1993 four state reforms have been approved by the federal parliament.

Fig. 12 Federal overview of Belgium (Federal Public Services Belgium (2005) [online] 2006).

Step by step the communities and regions received their own government, council (which is their parliament) and also their own administration. Systematically their powers were enhanced too. This results in the fact that not all political competences are situated at a federal level. Some such as Education and Culture, are the responsibility of the communities and thus are regional matters.

But Belgian federalism is asymmetrical. Whilst the Flemish region and the Flemish Community merged their institutions, the Walloon region and the French Community stayed separate. In such a way the French community has jurisdiction on the Walloon provinces, except from the German-speaking provinces and the Brussels Capital region. The latter has a Flemish Community Commission (the VGC) and a French Community Commission (the CoCoF), which act on behalf of the two communities (Verhoeven 2001:14; Alen & Van Nieuwenhove 1994; Communauté française de Belgique (*The French Community*) [online] 2006; *Federal Public Services Belgium* (2005) [online] 2006).

Indeed the National Opera House in Brussels is one of the seven federal cultural institutions, depending on the services of the prime minister and receiving federal funding. For certain aspects of the work, such as the educational programme, the cultural and educational policies of the regions do play an important role, thus a short focus on both cultural and educational policy in Flanders and Wallonia is relevant here.

Culture and education in Flanders

In Flanders, the minister of culture stresses two aspects; first that the access to culture is a human right and that as many people as possible should be able to participate in culture, and secondly that every individual has cultural potential. These two views on cultural participation are a central part of the cultural policy and every initiative to enable access to culture should be considered. The Flemish cultural policy tries to facilitate initiatives that take away the thresholds preventing people to participate in culture. *'Het Vlaamse cultuurbeleid streeft naar het wegwerken van de drempels die de participatie aan cultuur tegengaan en ondersteunt initiatieven in die zin. (The Flemish cultural policy tries to take away the thresholds that prevent people from taking part in culture and supports initiatives in that sense)' (Anciaux 2004).* As such the authorities support projects in the socio-cultural field, in communication (the traditional channels and the new digital channels), in financial and physical accessibility. From the cultural institutions the ministry expects that they reflect about and work on the relationship between their cultural projects and their audience: *'De Vlaamse overheid acht het ook van groot belang dat alle kunsten en erfgoedininstellingen, bibliotheken en culturele centra en cultuur- en jeugdwerkorganisaties nadenken over de relatie tussen hun aanbod en het publiek dat aan dat aanbod deelneemt (The Flemish government stresses the importance of the fact that all arts and heritage institution, libraries, cultural centres and youth organisations reflect on the relationship between what they offer and the audience taking part)'*. Each instrument and each initiative that wants to enlarge and deepen cultural participation has to be challenged by finding solutions designed to take away

the limitations that prevent someone from taking part (Anciaux 2004). And finally, projects tailored towards a specific audience are seen as important to enlarge cultural participation and citizenship (Anciaux 2004). One of these audiences are youngsters.

Education is compulsory from six to eighteen throughout the country. According to the Belgian Constitution *access to public education is free up to the end of compulsory education*. When looking at the Flemish education system, the decree of 17 July 1991 addresses the Department of Educational Development among other things to formulate proposals regarding specific targets to be attained. These are goals that the educational authorities see as the minimum level of education that needs to be attained each year including personal development and social skills. In primary school (6 to 12) musical development is part of the curriculum directed at personal development. These goals are applied to all schools and are formulated for all educational levels: pre- primary and primary schools, for the three grades of regular secondary education and for the special primary and secondary education. Music and arts education also play a part here. For primary school these targets have been formulated by the Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling (DVO: *Department for the Educational Development*) and legally defined in the decree of 25 February, 1997. *Muzische Vorming* or musical development is one of the teaching packages in primary school. It involves image, music, drama, movement, media and attitude, and is thus defined more broadly than music education. For secondary school, the targets defined by the DVO have been ratified by decree in 1996 for the first grade of secondary school and in 2002 for the second and third grade. Muzisch-creatieve vorming or musical-creative development is part of the interdisciplinary targets that have been defined (Verhoeven 2001; DVO 1997; Weg-wijzer 2004; Eindtermen en ontwikkelingsdoelen 2001).

The Flemish Ministry of Education recognised that a link between culture and education was vital to assist the school with the interdisciplinary activities involving

different artforms, so they started with the CANONcultuurcel (1995), a cultural department in the Ministry of Education. CanonCultuurcel has been operative since 1995-1996. The project Dynamo2, supporting artistic projects in schools, had been launched in 1992 and was co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education before the cultural unit started. This only exists at the Flemish level and not in the Walloon part of the country. On 18th February 2002, a protocol was signed between the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Education, stating the importance of the link between the two disciplines and supporting the educational system at all levels with cultural initiatives. The first study days on cultural topics for teachers took place in 1998-1999 and since then the work at CANON year after year increased. The unit supports arts projects in schools, organises training and study days for teachers and bridges education with culture. From the start contacts between this department and the Flemish branch of the education department led to projects for teachers and study days on opera and education in primary and secondary school.

Culture and Education in Wallonia

The history of cultural politics in the French Community closely interlinks their philosophy about the democratization of culture. This link forms and legitimizes cultural action in democratic experiences and in exercises in citizenship. But apart from this aspect, the most essential part of culture is the artistic part within the wider community. ‘*Agir sur le monde, mobiliser les facultés humaines de création et de créativité, constituer patrimoine et connaissance* (Cultural activities provide spaces for reaction about what happens in society, mobilises creativity and builds a specific heritage and knowledge)’ (Laanan 2005: 13). The link with the audience in this process is vital according to the Minister of Culture. ‘*An artistic or cultural expression without audience does not make sense. Finding the audience is also about refinancing culture. Reaching the audience is also about knowing its diversity and about rethinking the mediators such as culture at school or the projects of artists in residence at a cultural institution*’ as the Minister of Culture at the French community states in her *Etats Généraux de la Culture* (General Conditions of

Culture) (Laanan, 2005:25). These *Etat Généraux* are part of a larger debate started by the Minister of Culture with the sector and everyone involved in the Arts, in order to get a ‘general overview’ of the actual situation, and the needs & wishes of the sector (*Etats Généraux de la Culture* (Cultural Forum) (2004-2005) [online] 2006)

In 1996 culture and education are brought closer together. Since then there is a new political climate in the French community, which has resulted in a closer collaboration between the Department of Culture and the Department of Education. Since 1997 the Cellule culture-enseignement (culture-education unit) facilitates and initiates synergies between Education and Culture based on article 8 and 9 in the *Décret du Conseil de la Communauté française* (Decree of the Concil of the French Community July 1997) devoted to the fundamental objectives for primary and secondary education in the French community: *art 8 § 8 ‘Veiller à susciter le goût de la culture et de la créativité et favoriser la participation à ces activités culturelles et sportives par une collaboration avec les acteurs concernés* (to enhance the taste for culture and creativity, and to facilitate participation in culture and sports in collaboration with the practitioners involved’). Through the decree cultural activities become part of the objectives of the French education system. In turn, this is part of a wider context aiming to create a taste for culture, to stimulate creativity, to enable participation in culture as well as to work on art in education, to facilitate the transmission of cultural heritage, to enable the discovery of other cultures in such a way that these cultures are recognized and contribute to a social structure. (art. 9 § 5 & 7: cited in the brochure Culture-Enseignement). ‘*Les politiques nouvelles menées en communauté française vont enfin rendre possible ce qui, jusqu’il y a peu, relevait d’une certaine utopie (the new political climate at the French community offers possibilities that lately would have been seen as a utopia)*’ (Laanan in *Chemins de Travers* 2005:3). This opens perspectives for the future in such a way that what was seen as utopian now stands as a chance to be realised in that every child is given the possibility to connect with art, music, literature and other forms of expression as part of the schools’ courses. In March 2006, a new decree on education and culture was launched. The new decree offers a more coherent view on the collaboration between

culture and education and introduces some novelties such as the 'Guichet Unique', a unit becoming the sole intermediary for teachers and cultural practitioners, as well as a resource centre for valuable information on the collaboration between arts and education (circulaire 1419 - 21 mars 2006).

III.4.2 Company mission statement

The royal decree of 1963 defined that La Monnaie's main task is to present opera and ballet. The latter is no longer part of La Monnaie's creative programme. The House still has an independent dance-company in residence. A published mission statement is not available but from annual reports, interviews, audits, and internal documents, the following objectives could be identified. Apart from its central mission being the presentation of highly qualified opera and dance performances:

- La Monnaie aims to be a House where young talent has the possibility to work and develop. In the past, several singers, stage directors, conductors and composers started a promising career after having performed in Brussels.
- The House also wants to have a creative and dynamic attitude towards the art through the choice of the performers, through a contemporary interpretation of major repertoire works and through the creation of new operas.
- In its choice of the works presented the House also tries to instigate reflection through existing works about current issues.
- And finally the House wants to be open to a wider audience through the facilitation of new ways of interaction between artists and audience at different levels and for a diversified group of people.

III.4.3 General view on performances and audiences

This mission is also reflected in the type of performances. Apart from opera and dance performances, concerts and recitals are part of the season. In the New Horizons cycle, music from other cultures and other genres are performed.

Just as at the Royal Opera House in London (see p.77) and the Opéra National de Paris (see pp.105-106) the House is highly frequented. Opera has the highest level of visitors and increased in 2004-2005 up to 97% (see table 13). The figures are clearly related to the works programmed, illustrated by the fact that in 2003-2004 there was a high level of audience attendance for dance, whereas this turned in favour of the concerts in 2004-2005.

Table 13: Number of performances, frequentation and capacity at the TRM/KMS 2003-2005

Number of Performances, capacity and number of audience at the Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie/Koninklijke Muntschouwburg				
Frequentation 2003-04				
	Performance	Capacity	Places sold	%
<i>Opera</i>	89	101.509	94.403	93%
<i>Dance</i>	41	21.065	19.183	91%
<i>Concerts</i>	9	11.789	8.273	70%
<i>Recitals</i>	8	5.973	4.702	79%
TOTAL	147	140.336	126.561	90%
Frequentation 2004-05				
	Performance	Capacity	Places sold	%
<i>Opera</i>	87	95.828	93.132	97%
<i>Dance</i>	15	17.246	13.237	77%
<i>Concerts</i>	17	13.352	12.828	96%
<i>Recitals</i>	7	5.843	4.509	77%
TOTAL	126	132.269	123.706	94%

There is a high audience interest in Opera and TRM/KMS wants to give a wider audience the chance to come and see a performance. The last rehearsals, such as the pre and the final dress rehearsal, are open to the public. That public consists of

family of the performers, people working at La Monnaie as well as the members of the Friends' organisations, teachers and audiences linked with the fact that the company wants to welcome those people that usually do not have the opportunity to visit the opera.

In the annual reports, education activities other than performances are also mentioned next to the other audience figures, which suggests how the importance of education is perceived by the House. Although the number of visitors stays the same, the spread of these figures between the age groups has changed. Reduced ticket prices and specific activities organised for young adults resulted in 10% of the under 18 age group in 2004. This number increased by a further 3% in 2005. Although young people prefer to buy tickets per performance rather than for a whole series, the number of season tickets sold for youngsters increased from 9% to 11% between 2002 and 2005. This increase can be explained through the open and mixed formula of the programmes proposed. There is still freedom to choose and there is a mix of genres. The numbers of *pass partouts* doubled between 2004 and 2005. This success is not only due to the type of tickets but also due to the work done by the education department at university within the programme 'Campus University' and to the young people representing the opera as ambassadors at their university.

III.4.4 General view of the budget

Fig. 13 a and b income TRM/KMS 2004 and 2005 Other: (sponsorship, rent sets/costumes, in 2005 also the subsidies of the City of Brussels and CoCof)*

As can be learned from figures 13a and 13 b, more than 70% of the budget is state funded. Compared to 2004 here was a slight increased in income in 2005 mainly due to touring projects (to Vienna, Amsterdam, Japan and Rotterdam) and to the rent of productions. The subsidies offered by the City of Brussels (0.30% of the budget) and Commission de la Communauté Française (CoCof) (0.13% of the budget) were the same in 2004 and 2005, but instead of labelling them independently as happened in 2004 these sources of income have been included in ‘other income’ in 2005. Sponsoring was part of ‘other’ in 2004 but has been highlighted in 2005.

Fig. 14a and b expenditures TRM/KMS 2004 and 2005

Figures 14a and 14b show that half of the expenditure is dedicated to salaries and 32% to the productions. The part of the budget used for educational activities is about 2% of the overall budget at La Monnaie. The project ‘Un pont entre 2 mondes’ (a bridge between two worlds) has held a specific place in the cost structure since 80% of its budget is generated through private income; La Monnaie covers the remaining 20%. For its work with schools La Monnaie receives extra financial support of the CoCof (Commission communauté Française) and the VGC (Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie); two commissions one for the Flemish and one for the French community in Brussels.

Table 14: Detail spread production costs 2005 TRM/KMS

Detail spread production costs 2005 La Monnaie/De Munt	
6 % Concert and Recital	
8 % Tours	
69% Opera	
7% Dance	
10% other : Educational work, RESEO, Guided tours, Chamber music concerts at Friday noon,...	

When looking at the detail within productions for 2005 (table 14) it can be noticed that about 10% of the costs is spent on activities linked with extra activities for/with the audience. The RESEO cost is linked with the fact that the organisation has its offices at La Monnaie and that the education department takes part in RESEO through linked projects and programmes.

III.4.5 Education within the company

In the 1970s education was not really part of the activities of the House. Maurice Huisman, general manager at the time, did start an opera studio for young singers, which lasted until the new management arrived in the 1980s. Gerard Mortier, the new manager introduced at the moment of his arrival, reduced ticket prices for young people and invited schools to attend performances at the Opera. Introductions and guided tours took place on an ad hoc basis. Parallel to the Friends of the Opera, the Young Friends of the Opera was founded, but a real programme for youngsters did not develop until Bernard Foccroulle became general manager in 1992. La Monnaie started during the season 1992-93 as one of the first theatres in Belgium with an education department. Educational activities were already common in museums, but not in the performing arts. Today, 13 years later, the 3 opera houses have education activities and several theatres have initiated a programme to widen their audience, working mostly with schools.

At an international level, La Monnaie has been one of the pioneers in thinking about education programmes in Opera. Apart from England, Scotland, Wales and France, there were few education departments in Opera at the beginning of the 1990s. After a first informal meeting at the Royal Opera House in 1995, La Monnaie in Brussels set

the scene for the first informal meeting of European opera educators to reflect on the ongoing work (Wilson 1996; Laenen 2004). This meeting led into the foundation of RESEO, (European Network of Education Departments in Opera Houses) in 1998. La Monnaie was one of the founding members, and has since hosted the office.

III.4.5.1 History of the educational programme at TRM/KMS

What started during the season 1992-1993 with a small department focussing on work with French and Dutch speaking schools, has now grown into a full grown part of the House involving different audience groups. After 10 years of education work, Bernard Foccroulle still believes in the democratisation process he started with the educational programme. He also believes that with this work he is creating a critical audience for tomorrow. He is convinced of the fact that a cultural institution needs to work every day on the relationship with its audience. The audience should reflect the composition of the society that surrounds the cultural institution (Baeten 2003). In such a way Foccroulle suggest that *'an opera house or a cultural institution has to work permanently on the relationship with the audience. We have to be worried about that part of the audience that cannot come to the opera, does not find its way to the opera or thinks it is not for them. In a context of democratisation of society we have to guard the fact that our Houses need to be accessible to everyone. This is a long-term vision we might not achieve, but we have to fight for it'* (Baeten 2003:84).

III.4.5.2 Educational mission

From the start Bernard Foccroulle, General Manager of La Monnaie, felt the responsibility – according to the federal funding he received for the House – to open up the House for a wider public. He states that:

'Looking towards the future, it simply is the duty of the Opera to open the House socially, democratically and educationally. After four centuries of history, Opera still has an elite image. "Artistic elitism", aiming for

perfection and high quality is not a problem; ‘Social elitism’ is. Our Opera Houses should find a way to open up to a larger group of the population and to youngsters in particular’ (Monnaie Magazine 2001:3).

To be able to enlarge the audience, primarily with youngsters but also with those people that normally would not have the opportunity or the possibility to attend La Monnaie, he gave encouragement to an education department to develop to reach these audiences (Blanmont 1998). In the documents the press received at the press conference to celebrate the department’s 10 years of working the following objectives are identified (Segers and Van Den Weyngaert 2003):

The department wants to welcome the young audience and those audiences

- to appropriate that part of our cultural heritage involving lyrical art, music and dance.
- to live the unique emotional experience characteristic of an opera performance.
- to appreciate in a creative and an interactive way the nature and the richness of the genre, which encompasses all art disciplines.
- to discover the theatre, the workshops and the professions linked with the opera company and the opera performance.

The department also wants to sensitize the audience towards the lyrical arts through activities stimulating creativity and reflection.

- to contribute to developing the creative practice on singing and dance
- to simulate a critical and engaged curiosity for the artform
- to turn Opera, when possible, into a space for personal development and/or social rehabilitation.

III.4.5.3 Place of education within the company

Within the structure of La Monnaie the education department is actually part of the group that is labelled as ‘Communication’ since it has a very strong link with the audience, without being part of marketing, reporting directly to the general

management (see fig. 15a). It should be noted that activities for youngsters not linked with schools are not integrated in the education department, but are part of a unit that works closely together with the department.

The education officers collaborated directly with the general director of la Monnaie. The education department is thus an integral part of the House but works fairly autonomously within the House. Since it is not part of the official statutes of La Monnaie, the future of the department depends on the goodwill of the next general director. Factually s/he can decide to stop this activity when s/he wants, but since the reputation of the departments work has grown (inter) nationally this is unlikely to happen.

Communication groups: the Press Unit, Promotion Unit, The Monnaie Magazine, the website, the Dramaturgy Unit, the **Education Department**, the young audiences programme, the Marketing& Audience development Unit and the Front of House unit; but has no resource person.

Education Department:

- *Dutch Projects*
- *French Projects*
- *Introductions and Guided Tours*
- *Secretary of the education department*
- *Professional apprenticeship for students*
- *'A bridge between two worlds' (socio-cultural projects)*

Fig 15: place and structure of the Education Department at La Monnaie/De Munt (La Monnaie/De Munt [online] 2006).

The education department at La Monnaie has a Dutch and a French branch (fig. 14b). What started as a department with two officers, a secretary and some freelance collaborators developing projects linked to the needs of the French and the Flemish schools, has evolved towards a full grown department. As will be identified through the narratives, the bilingual aspect of La Monnaie/De Munt has more than a linguistic effect on the work done by both branches/units of the education, the different cultural backgrounds also seem to play an important part in the way projects are developed for the two Belgian communities reached by the Opera House.

Apart from the Dutch and the French projects, the introductions & guided tours unit and the project *A bridge between two worlds* (bringing socially vulnerable groups in contact with opera) have their own heads of unit. Both units integrate Dutch and French activities. The secretary takes care of the administration of the different parts of the department except for *A bridge between two worlds* which has its own administrator. An ex-collaborator of the technical department of La Monnaie/De Munt helps the different parts of the department and is in charge of the professional apprenticeships at the Opera. But in fact the audience development work is wider than the two education programmes (Dutch and French), the introductions and guided tours unit and the project 'A bridge between two worlds', since there is also a young audience programme that runs next to this 'cluster' of activities. This programme works closely together with the two education programmes and the introduction and guided tours unit.

With the financial help of a financial institution, the project 'A bridge between two worlds' could be put into place. The department is now an important link between La Monnaie and socially deprived groups. 'A bridge between two worlds' works quite on its own, which sometimes creates misunderstandings on communication level and is not always efficient. Therefore a new head of department - in charge of all education and audience development projects - will be installed when the new management arrives in the summer of 2007 and thus become the resource person for all heads of unit.

III.4.5.4 Education programme

The education programme is not limited to Dutch and French projects with schools, but is an important part of the activities provided (1485 activities in 2003-2004). Since education is a regional matter, both branches work fairly independently when the activities with schools are concerned. The ways of working are influenced by the different educational systems. The type of activity might be the same, but the content differs between the two branches according to the schools worked with due to different types of policy. There is reason to believe that at the moment there is a more open climate in Flemish schools for Opera Education activities due to the set targets in primary and secondary school (see p. 165-166), whilst the place of music in school is subject of a debate in Wallonia at present (see p. 168).

Photo 12: Atelier à l'école
 © Service éducatif *La Monnaie*

The activities link with the musical activities at school, and try to add something to these activities in order to bring something of the passion of Opera into the classroom (Pouget 2001). The education department provides activities for primary and secondary schools, as well as for higher education. For primary school we note the interactive guided tours, one-day workshops in schools on a specific opera, and a one-day workshop on Opera in general in school or at *La Monnaie/De Munt*.

For secondary school and higher education, general or theme-linked visits to the House, introductions, interactive workshops in school, the attendance at a an opera, a dance performance and/or a concert are part of the possibilities.

In some cases long-term projects are developed in collaboration with schools sometimes leading into a performance such *Tristam (Dutch project)*, *Kahaani (Dutch project)*, and *L'Aile du Papillon (French project)* or into a concert such as the concert with 600 primary schoolchildren to celebrate 10 years of the education department at La Monnaie/ De Munt performing work from contemporary Belgian composers. This project united the Dutch and the French department in collaboration with the Children's Choir of La Monnaie/ De Munt. Table 15a sets out the type of activities, the number of activities and the number of participants for the Dutch project. Table 15b offers the same information for the French projects.

Table 15a: Number of Dutch educational activities and frequentation at La Monnaie/De Munt 2003 - 2005.

Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie/Koninklijke Muntschouwburg				
Activities Dutch projects (schools, students, teachers)	2003-2004		2004-2005	
	Number of Activities	Number of Participants	Number of Activities	Number of Participants
Workshops 1 day	272	5,252	237	4,601
Workshops 1/2 day	6	118	16	441
Introduction/workshops 2 h	40	951	39	1,025
Rehearsals (groups)	34	1,271	39	1,014
Training sessions	16	94	7	286
Guided Tours	249	4,983	248	3,597
School matinees (groups)	8	319	40	1873
Total	625	12,988	626	14,010

One could say when comparing both tables that one day workshops are more popular with Dutch schools than a half-day or two hours working sessions, but the reason for this is linked with the school age. The French department seems to work more with secondary schools, the Dutch at the moment work more with primary schools although interactive workshops at secondary level are becoming more current and increased by more than 50% in 2005 compared to 2004.

Table 15b: Number of French Educational activities and frequentation at
La Monnaie/De Munt 2003 - 2005.

Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie/Koninklijke Muntschouwburg				
Activities French projects (schools, students, teachers)	2003-2004		2004-2005	
	Number of Activities	Number of Participants	Number of Activities	Number of Participants
Workshops 1 day	180	3,704	174	3,588
Workshops 1/2 day	66	990	59	946
Introduction/workshops 2 h	161	2,899	243	3,435
Rehearsals (groups)	53	1174	42	883
Training sessions	9	135	10	150
Guided Tours	380	7260	393	7,505
School matinees (groups)	11	307	35	1421
Total	860	16,459	956	18,613

Another important increase can be noted at school matinees' level (see table 15 a and 15 b). Whereas at first children could only attend rehearsals, school matinees and family performances are now (since 2002) regularly part of the programme, due to the performing possibilities the Malibran auditorium offers. In a newspaper interview Linda Lovrovic, in charge of Dutch education projects at La Monnaie/De Munt, revealed that she was not keen on school matinees at first, because she prefers mixing audiences, but through a debate with teachers from secondary schools she learned that these matinees were vital to introduce newcomers to opera in a proper way (Eelen 2003). She believes that this first visit is crucial for the future view on art for these youngsters. Teachers are crucial partners in the relationship between pupils/students and opera. In order to start an ongoing dialogue with these teachers the association 'School-Opera/ Ecole-Opéra' was put into place. Teachers taking part in this association are invited to meetings evaluating the educational activities of La Monnaie/De Munt, to rehearsals and to performances. Teachers can find pedagogical files on opera, the opera house and musical exercises online. The French branch of the education department also provides training sessions for teachers. And the technical and administrative departments of La Monnaie/De Munt are open to students having to pass a training period.

But activities are not limited to teachers and schools. Before every performance the audience can join an introductory session. The ‘Journées Portes Ouvertes’ give the curious visitor an insight in the life at the Opera House and once a year the house is full of young adults. During the ‘*Take a Note*’ weekend they are invited to attend a performance, to take part in a creative workshop, meet artists and so on.

Since 2003-2004, family workshops have been also part of the Dutch and French programme. These workshops are then linked with a family performance such as, for instance, around *De Toverfluit/ La Flûte Enchantée* an adapted version of *The Magic Flute* for the age group 5+.

Photo 13: Family workshop on Mozart’s The Magic Flute © Educatieve dienst TRM/KMS

Table 15c presents the number of educational activities addressing the general audience, showing the increase in creative workshops for children and youngsters outside the school system as well as the family workshops.

The guided tours mentioned here include the tours for groups in other languages than French and Dutch including English, German, Italian or Spanish, as well as the fixed tours on Saturday at noon in order to give individuals the opportunity to visit the House. *Broodje Brussel* include the activities at noon organised in collaboration with the organisation in charge of the reception and promotion of Brussels (Onthaal en Promotie Brussel).

Table 15c: Number of General audience activities at
La Monnaie/De Munt 2003 - 2005.

Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie/Koninklijke Muntschouwburg			
Activities General Public	2003-2004	2004-2005	
	Number of Activities	Number of Activities	
Guided Tours (other languages)	14	41	
Introductions to performances	204	200	
Guided Tours Saturday	33	41	
OPB Broodje Brussel	6	10	
Creative workshops (children & youngsters, families)	28	37	
Commercial Department (intros & guided tours)	64	71	

From 1999 onwards La Monnaie/ De Munt and Fortis Bank joined forces for the project 'A bridge between two worlds' based on two simple observations:

1. culture is one of these privileged spaces for the construction of memory and an identity in society. Cultural practice, especially in big classical institutions, need to be accessible to the whole of society.
2. cultural practice is something uncommon for a part of the population, far from their daily life, due to multiple reasons and often linked to social exclusion although these forms of cultural expression are also open to them.

In order to change this perception the cultural institutions have to recreate links, organise and enable meetings with artists and offer opportunities to everyone who wants to take part in cultural activities.

Photo 14: un pont entre 2 mondes
© TRM/KMS

To be able to also include the socially deprived groups into the opera's accessibility strategy, La Monnaie/De Munt works closely together with intermediaries. If not it would be difficult to reach these people.

It should be noted that the project ‘A bridge between two worlds’ is part of the Education Department, runs parallel to the Dutch and French education activities, and has its own head. It is managed by a special staff and supported by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, the Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie (VGC), private Foundations (the Suez and the SWIFT groupe) and the several CPAS (public centre for social actions). ‘A bridge between two worlds’ is based at La Monnaie/ De Munt, but works closely with other cultural institutions such as BOZAR, Théâtre National and the La Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth. So ‘A bridge between two worlds’ is in fact a cross-institutional initiative. The participants can attend a performance in one of the Houses involved, take part in a workshop organised by the team at La Monnaie/De Munt, visit the opera house and listen to the concerts on Friday noon in the foyer of the opera house. In 2003-2004 this involved 2,070 participants in 138 activities and in 2004-2005 1,339 participants in 89 activities.

III.4.6 Education Narratives

As mentioned at the beginning of this section two heads of department took part in the research for the bilingual and federal opera house Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie/ Koninklijke Muntschouwburg (in the narratives named as La Monnaie/De Munt). First the reader will find the narrative drawn from the Dutch interview; followed by the narrative from the French interview.

III.4.6.1 Narrative Dutch interview

The interview took place on the 16th of November 2005 at the office of the head of education of the Dutch education projects at La Monnaie/De Munt. In the narrative the head of education will be referred to as “D”.

Personal context

“D” grew up as the eldest of four children in a musical family. Both her father and her mother were amateur musicians. Her mother played – and still plays – the violin, her father the piano. Her mother worked in a shop until “D” was born, while her

father was archivist in a company. He went to the conservatory, and played the piano, but he never became a professional musician, simply because music making was not thought of as what one did for a living at that time. All members of “D’s” family played a musical instrument. At the age of six, “D” went to music school; she went to the conservatory later on and continued a professional career in music education. “D” also married a musician and their two children studied music.

Thus music in general and opera specifically played and still plays an essential part in “D”’s life. Her parents met at the opera and their love for the artform has been transferred to their children. Three or four times a year the family attend a performance at the opera. The first time this included “D” was when she was about ten years old.

The first contacts with Opera

‘*Going to the opera was a feast*’ according to “D”. The family always attended the Sunday matinees. “D” explains this in following terms:

‘Als we gingen was het altijd feest. Dan vertelde mijn vader op voorhand heel het verhaal, want dat was toen natuurlijk nog niet met boventitels. ’T Was natuurlijk belangrijk dat we goed konden volgen, want anders was de lol er misschien ook af (when we went it was always a feast. My father would tell the whole story beforehand – because subtitles did not exist at the time – because it was important that we knew what happened on stage. If not it would probably not have been so much fun)’.

So her father would introduce the work they were going to see in order to be sure the children knew the story and could enjoy in full what happened on stage. After the performance the family went for dinner, and it is difficult to say according to “D” ‘*whether it was the dinner or the whole Sunday afternoon, but she did remember these Sundays as gorgeous family moments*’.

But the real coup de foudre for the opera came in 1977, Peter Paul Rubens's commemoration year in Antwerp. As students of the conservatory, they had the chance to see Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. "D" recalls that she saw this performance about four times. Since then the love for the artform stayed.

During the mid 1980s "D" had her first professional contacts with the opera. She was teaching music theory and music history at music school level. In line with these courses she visited the Opera House with her students. There was no education department at the time, but through her husband (who played in the orchestra) she was aware of the possibility to visit the Opera with students. A simple letter to the general manager seemed to be enough. The first guided tour they got was a success, and after that, other activities such as attending a performance followed.

Working in opera education

In 1994 "D" started to work for the education department of La Monnaie/ De Munt as a freelancer. She introduced Georges Bizet's *Carmen* and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Magic Flute* to a young audience. A chamber ensemble with musicians of the orchestra played musical excerpts of the opera and she weaved the story through these musical parts. Five years later "D" became head of the Dutch projects. She was asked by the former head of education to take the position.

"D" realises that the work has evolved over time. To begin with, in her career at the education department, workshops were mainly focussed on primary schools, whereas the activities in secondary school were basically restricted to introductory sessions on opera in general or on specific operas. Only now and then would a workshop take place at secondary level. Today the interactive workshops are also more integrated in secondary school, just as they are at primary level. The 'interactive' aspect in the workshops is bigger than before, because, according to "D" '*door het interactieve kom je meer tot een dialoog met je publiek*' (one gets into a dialogue with the audience through these interactive sessions). Through these interactive workshops one '*gets the audience more involved in the different aspects*

of the performance than when one just has listened to an introduction’ “D” concludes. To her just an introduction stays a distant, voluntary act. “D” is convinced ‘*that through the interactive workshops one demands an engagement of the participants that goes beyond that voluntary act and leads into a stronger and better experience*’. In any case she feels the difference between a group attending a performance after having taken part in an interactive workshop or a group that just had an introduction and then went to see an opera. ‘*The response you receive afterwards is different*’ says “D”. From “D”’s responses in the course of the interview one could conclude that when a participant is taking part in a thorough preparation for the performance s/he is going to see, s/he will have a stronger/better experience. Further research on the impact of education programmes might clarify this, but existing literature on arts education suggests that this depends on more factors than just ‘knowing’ what the performance is about, since taste is on the one hand personal and on the other hand might be influenced by a person’s social context (Hallam 2002; Scruton 1979; Cook 2000). As “D” asked herself when talking about her first opera experience: ‘*I am not sure whether it was the whole afternoon out that made going to the opera fun, or that it was the opera itself*’.

The department also tried to work more with teachers, but noticed that workshops with them were not really successful. Those that did take part in the sessions seemed to have been the most creative ones, and therefore those that did not exactly need an extra session. The other teachers told the department that they preferred having an opera educator of La Monnaie/De Munt at school because according to these teachers the educators were better skilled to do the work.

Challenges and changes

When asked which challenges brought change in “D”’s way of working she gave a very personal answer. Compared to her colleagues taking part in the research she did not immediately raise a major change in her working context as a challenge, but ‘change’ is seen as a challenge. “D” responded that she is constantly looking for new challenges, because these challenges keep her going. She adds that

she loves change and illustrates this with an example relating back to her teaching career, she then never gave two identical lessons in a row. Because to “D” repetition is dull, so she still tries to find diversity in what she does. Extrapolating this to her work at the education department, this means that when a project especially tailored to a school has been successful and she is asked to repeat the same project in another school “D” refuses:

‘It is a unique project and it worked for that specific institution, because all parameters were right. The education department comes up with ideas, the school adds its ideas and the result is a beautiful project’.

The same project would thus not be the same when ran in another school since different partners result into different impulses to the project.

‘Throughout the years there have been projects where one could not see the end of the tunnel when one started. These are hard to digest, but if everything turns out fine the satisfaction is enormous and one then has the feeling that one has set a big step forward’.

So “D” is convinced one has to take risks otherwise one would not evolve in one’s work. “D” then gives some concrete examples of big challenges that resulted in major changes to the department’s way of working. One of the biggest challenges lately has been the work the department did with schoolchildren in Japan. La Monnaie/De Munt went on tour with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and the department joined the company with a school project on the opera. Before starting the project there were a lot of open questions. Usually one has a set of parameters that are known and a couple of things that will develop during the project. With the Japan-project all these certainties seemed to have been gone. They did not know for instance how the children would react to Mozart’s music, what the easiest language would be to communicate with the pupils, what the cultural difference would bring to the project, and so forth? In the end it turned out to be a

marvellous week and to “D” it meant a fresh start as well as an unforgettable experience.

Apart from the Japan-experience, the major change to the department came in 2000 when la Monnaie/De Munt opened its building just behind the theatre. Two new rehearsal spaces gave room for smaller performances when not in use for rehearsals. Due to their smaller scale, performances asking for a more intimate setting and especially focussing on a young audience could be performed there. Another asset the new building offered to the education department was the working space education received. In the days before, most workshops took place in schools since the department was never sure if a workshop for schools at the opera could take place, simply because the department worked in rehearsal spaces that could also be used by other players in the House. Today more in-house activities for schools can be planned and linked to the attendance of a rehearsal or a performance afterwards. And last but not least another change in the way of working came about the same time, and took place when the department worked on Benjamin Britten's *Golden Vanity*. The Children's choir of La Monnaie/De Munt performed the opera and the education department developed workshops for schools attending the performance. At first sight nothing was new, but this was the first project where “D” had the opportunity to work closely with the stage director. This close collaboration led into a set of very rich workshops perfectly linked to what the children were going to see on stage. “D” noticed that the first hand information she got about the way the opera was going to be staged and about the director's ideas, resulted in better sessions with the schools.

Hoe meer je weet, hoe die regisseur zijn visie is en dus ook hoe hij het op de scène wil gaan brengen, hoe beter dat wij onze workshop daar kunnen op afstemmen. Als je vanaf het begin met de regisseur contact hebt, resulteert dit meestal in de beste workshops.

(the more you know about the stage director's vision and the way he is going to stage it, the better we can adjust our workshops to the performance. If you

have a close contact with the stage director from the start, this results most of the time in the best workshops).

So for future projects, where possible, she tries to connect with the stage director from the beginning of the staging process.

Changing ideas

According to “D” the changes in the way of thinking are linked with international contacts. RESEO-meetings offer “D” the opportunity to reflect on her work with colleagues across Europe. *‘Every House works in its own way and every department has to deal with its own problems’* explains “D”, *‘but the ideas and topics exchanged at the RESEO-meetings and through the RESEO-contacts sometimes makes one evolve into a direction one otherwise would not have taken. It is not possible and not the intention to just copy an idea from another opera company, but to reflect on it and adapt it to the situation of the company one works in’*. To illustrate this “D” tells about the family workshops, which first took place at La Monnaie/De Munt in 2004. According to “D” she would not have started with them if there had not been influence from an international angle. The workshops were a project set up with the Finnish National Opera in Helsinki, the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, the Royal Opera House in London and La Monnaie/De Munt. “D”’s team acted as an observer in Helsinki, worked with the other partners on a project in Paris and developed the format for La Monnaie/ De Munt. The workshop in Brussels was based on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*.

‘Before attending a smaller version of the opera the children and their parents were interactively introduced into the work’ says “D”, *‘it was a completely different way of working. Involving artists and collaborators of the house and taking place in spaces that were normally hard to get’*. But it was an immediate success and “D” is happy she dared to take the risk.

Not only the international contacts, but also a new management model (management by objectives) recently implemented at La Monnaie/ De Munt was raised by “D” as

having influence on her thinking, since every department now has to work towards a set of objectives. One of these objectives is linked with the position and the training of the freelance educators working for the department. “D” is challenged to think about the development of skills of the opera educators working for the education department. The development of a new Dutch workshop or activity is pure teamwork. Collaborators with diverse skills are working together on a project and thus look at it from very different angles, which seem to strengthen the project. She notices that the needs of the French educators are dissimilar to the needs of the Dutch educators, because both departments work in a different way. The interview with her colleague, referred to as “E” in this research, and which will follow this narrative, indeed showed a difference in ways of working, due to the different cultural background. I will therefore develop this thought further in the next narrative.

The education department within the company

As mentioned earlier the department works with freelance artists, only now and then in-house artists are involved in educational projects e.g. the family workshop on *The Magic Flute*, but since “D” has an ex-collaborator working within the props department at her service, the contacts with the set and costume department run more smoothly. On the whole colleagues and artists of the House are curious about the education department’s work. Sometimes these colleagues even have the impression they missed something such as has happened with the musicians and staff who went to Japan. Not all of the team in Japan knew that there would be a performance presenting the results of the one-week education work with a school just outside Tokyo, but the musical director of La Monnaie/De Munt knew and attended the show. He was very moved by the result. Everybody talked about it and the musicians that did not attend the performance had the impression they had missed something important.

Hence the reputation of the department in the Opera House has clearly improved throughout the years. The department is now better integrated in the House than

twelve years ago. Nobody questions the existence of the work any more, and the department has the right to sell more seats on regular performances to children and young people taking part in the education programme.

The educational work in relation to the wider cultural context

From the start in 1993-1994, the work La Monnaie/De Munt introduced to the schools had been appreciated by the teachers. The reactions from the educational field are still largely positive and there are still more demands from the Flemish schools than the department can offer. Thus “D” “had to find solutions over the years so that everyone who asked for it once has the chance to take part in an activity. The arts educators working in the classes do not replace the teacher but try to offer a different experience for the children. For “D” and for the arts educators it is important to actively involve the teachers in the workshops at school, but this does not always happen because most of the time teachers keep a distance. This has the advantage of giving them the opportunity to observe their pupils in a different setting. “D” illustrates this as follows: ‘*Pupils often functioning poorly in general educational topics seem to score well to very good during the workshop and show skills the teacher did not know about*’. Thus teachers have said that they are often positively surprised in the capacities of their pupils. For “D” this is an important asset of the education department to school-based education, and therefore she sees it as one of the elements that makes her work worthwhile.

It has happened that collaborators refused to go to a specific school because of the negative attitude of the teacher. Such has occurred when the school management decides to have the opera activity in all classes of a certain level, but not all teachers are motivated to see it happen in their class. At such moments “D” would challenge her team and convince them that going to these places is vital, because otherwise no one would offer these children the possibility to discover something new.

As for the wider cultural context “D” raises the example of a project involving 600 children. Just before this interview took place, there was a concert involving 600

children age 10 to 18 from schools all over the country, singing together to celebrate the 175 year existence of Belgium. It was an initiative of the Services of the Prime Minister and La Monnaie/ De Munt. The children worked and concerted twice with Aka Moon, a renowned jazz musician, in front of a full auditorium. “D” reflected that as she sat in the hall, at the same moment youngsters of 14 were fighting in the streets of Brussels (it was about the conflicts in the Banlieues of Paris), whilst here youngsters from different ages and different backgrounds stood peacefully next to one another in song. According to “D” *‘one should not have to idealise this picture, but she believes that to those youngsters that took part in the project, something beautiful is added, since professional artists have taken them seriously, and they were able to express themselves positively, instead of getting bored’*. Here the belief emerges that the arts can have a positive effect on those young people that take part in a beautiful project.

It is hard to determine whether the arts have impact on someone’s behaviour, but what can be learned from the literature, is that an arts experience might hopefully relate to what art-educationalist Elliot Eisner calls *‘domains related to the sensory qualities in which the arts participate’* (quoted in Carey 2005:102). And thus that students/young people taking part in arts refined their ’sensibilities’ and the Arts might add something to the students’ inner growth (Carey 2005:102; Gill 1990).

Future perspectives

For the future “D” sees three major objectives. First of all she realises that working on accessibility to both the Opera House and the performances is something she believes they have to continue working on. *‘Lowering the threshold stays important, because one still hears too often, De Munt, that is a place you never can enter, it is a place for the ‘high society’*. And then again *‘one has to explain that it is possible to attend a performance, that not all seats are taken beforehand, and that there are quite a lot of tickets available out of subscription, that one can buy tickets online and that for youngsters the House has good prices’* says “D”. *‘So the House has to continue finding ways to enable access to those visitors. It should be clear that Opera is something for everyone’* she continues.

“D” mostly works with schools and teachers, because according to “D” ‘*children and youngsters should have the opportunity to learn to know the artform. The first contact with the opera has to be right and is crucial for future visits. If the first opera is too hard to handle, then children might lose interest for a long time*’. As an example she offers the experience she had with her own children once attending a performance of *Wozzeck* by Alban Berg. They found it hard to grasp:

Ik herinner me dat ik m'n eigen kinderen meegenomen had naar Wozzeck, en die zijn de volgende 4 jaar niet meer naar de opera willen komen. Na 4 jaar zijn ze wel teruggekomen omdat ik er nog altijd was om hen te begeleiden, maar als je op dat moment niet iemand hebt dan is het verloren voor altijd

(I remember taking my children to a performance of *Wozzeck*, and that the next 4 years they did not want to come back to the opera. Later on they did come again, because I was still around to accompany them, but if at that moment there had not been someone then they would have been lost forever.)

But most children or youngsters do not have that chance and thus would never attend a performance again according to “D”. ‘*Therefore the education department has an important role to fulfil here in guiding the young audience*’ concludes “D”.

Secondly “D” would like to see that the young audience is really mixed with the general audience. At the moment of the interview classes prepared by the education department attend a school matinee, or are placed as a group in the auditorium between the regular performances. “D” would like to see youngsters from 16 years onwards becoming an integral part of the audience. ‘*Children and young people should be taken seriously*’ says “D” and *that starts with seeing them as part of the audience and not as something ‘apart’ from it. Therefore they should be involved in the process of attending a performance just as the regular audience does. Find their place in the same way, and not having a teacher organising it all for them*’. In other words give them more responsibility. “D” guesses that ‘*if you respect them as*

audience, and not as students, this might lower the threshold and make it easier to them to join another performance next to this class visit’. ‘D’ realises that this wish is not usually possible, *‘because the auditorium is full of visitors with a season ticket and teachers want to keep control over their class, but it is worth thinking about’* she concludes.

And thirdly ‘D’ hopes *that one day the education department may advise which works could be open to a young audience, so that a first experience is not missed out because the opera seemed to have been too difficult and thus they do not want to go and see another work.*

At the moment the department is not involved in the decision-making of the works performed. During the season the interview took place, the department had places for five performances. This was something that ‘D’ welcomed a lot, but it would be even better if they had something to say in the choice and thus take care that the first experience is as good as possible.

To conclude, at the interview ‘D’ made the reflection that through being in charge of the Dutch education department of La Monnaie/De Munt she had learned to look differently at herself and at the work she is doing. Whereas, at the beginning of her career the school she worked at was the world, the world now has become bigger, more complex and more fascinating. Her beliefs are very much linked with her personal experiences though. Just focussing on the future hopes and beliefs indicates that her view on opera education is driven by ‘the visiting experience’. With all aspects that makes this visit worthwhile and might lead to future visits, meaning the preparation to the visit and the circumstances in which the visit takes place. She is quite extreme in stressing that a negative experience might turn young people for the rest of their life. We do not know though what the impact of the first opera on a new opera goers is, but one might expect that not just one visit to opera determines whether one likes the artform or not. First of all as cultural theorists and sociologist have described, that cultural choice is driven by several factors, not in the least by

the personal background and by the person's social context (Lievens and Waege 2005; Bourdieu 1979 a and b; Reay 2004). Secondly, to someone attending opera for the first time, all works are new and might be difficult to digest. As these participants do not have a reference scheme, a contemporary opera might intrigue them as much as Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*, an opera that is considered by the experts to be an accessible work from the opera repertoire. So maybe there might be a choice of operas, taking into account the age range of the children attending according to the topic, but not necessarily according to the music, since all music is new to them and they do not have a specific work to refer to. Opera is a combination of music, staging, costumes and set. It is exactly that combination that might capture the visitor when attending a performance (Cook 1998:71) even if the opera is perceived as difficult.

III.4.6.2 Narrative French interview

The interview took place on the 22nd of November 2005 in the office of the head of the French education projects at La Monnaie/De Munt. In the narrative she will be referred to as "E".

Personal context

"E" grew up in a musical background. Her mother's father was a very good musician and wrote chamber music of different sorts for the musical ensemble in his family. All his children played an instrument. "E"'s mother played the violin and had a conservatory degree, but she never worked as a professional musician. She did listen to music and she introduced her children to it. "E"'s father, a financial broker, liked cultural expressions, but the real cultural appetite the children got from their mother.

"E" herself was an amateur in music. She played the piano until she went to university, and she sang. After university "E" became a history teacher in secondary school. Her lessons were never purely historical.

J'ai toujours fait du cours d'histoire un cours qui était toujours articulé aux questions culturelles. Parce que je considérais que la culture disait beaucoup des sociétés (My history lessons were always linked with cultural questions, because I considered that culture explained a lot of societies).

Thus she always looked for cultural components to introduce in her history lessons. To her, culture was a tool to understand history. So within the history lessons there was always a lot of room for the visual arts and music.

First contacts with opera

Opera came rather late into focus. Her relationship with the artform is complex. There are things about it that she adores and other aspects she finds unbearable. According to “E” ‘*Opera is an extremely demanding artform and does not support mediocrity. If the work, the music, the staging and the voices are at the right level, opera may generate something magnificent and fascinating. If this level is not reached opera does not make sense*’.

And it is exactly this aspect “E” wants to share with young people; the high quality level of the artform, which makes it an extraordinary experience. She believes that this part of the audience is very sensitive to this. This was a perspective I will elaborate on later in this narrative, because it kept coming back during the course of the interview. First it is interesting to see how “E” integrated opera in her history lessons as a school teacher.

Working in opera education

In the mid 1990s “E” started to work on her own projects as a history teacher. She worked with her pupils on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* and completely embedded it in her history course. A year later she integrated opera in a project involving vulnerable and marginalised adolescents. It was at the same school, but within a course foregrounding culture. The school had high intellectual

standards, which were not reached by all students. “E” believed that through a project leading into a performance these adolescents would be revalued within the school. And so it happened. It did not mean that the children succeeded better in school results, but they kept a memorable souvenir from the project. Up to today these pupils reminded her of the wonderful experience when meeting her in the street.

Both projects were personal initiatives. *‘Indeed the education department at La Monnaie/ De Munt already existed in those days, but financially it was not possible to work on a longterm project with the department, since one needed to pay a fee for every intervention of an opera educator at school, the project would become too expensive when one did not look for possibilities to keep the prices down’*. According to “E” this highlights a problem every teacher today encounters when engaging with a cultural institution for an elaborated project.

In September 1998 “E” became the new head of French projects at the Education Department. “E” is convinced that she started to work for La Monnaie/De Munt at the right moment. She wanted to try something else. The House asked her to come and work for them, probably because of past projects she did with the education department. She could not say explicitly whether she had changed her way of working since she arrived at La Monnaie/ De Munt, but when she started she had two objectives. These objectives, she believes, she shares with her Dutch colleague and which are well developed today.

First of all “E” *‘wanted to give wider opera access to secondary and high school students, because there were few activities at the time. And secondly she wanted to give them the chance to engage into a performance and thus enter a different world that is also open to them’*. So to “E” it was important to develop a programme for this age range and give access to performances to them as well as to high school students. She explains this further by saying that working with educational institutions (whether it is primary, secondary, high school level) is vital to “E”, since schools are the first spaces of democracy to her.

But what preoccupies “E” most nowadays are the cultural and social outburst in society. As an answer to these outbursts, “E” wants to enable all students to take part in something unique, and that unique element is opera. Through the artform she wants to ‘*offer to all Belgians, whether they are Belgians by birth or second or third generation Belgians, the experience of something common. The common aspect here is a cultural heritage and creation that is more cosmopolitan and more European than theatre. This is a heritage interpreted in a contemporary way and relevant for today's audience*

. Operas are played in German, Russian, Italian and other languages without any problem. It is that European aspect that makes “E” appreciate opera and that makes her believe it is important to share this feeling with children and adolescents. On this point she makes the following statement:

Ce n'est pas du tout prouvé. Ce n'est pas essentiellement une utopie. Mais je pense que je ne ferais pas ce boulot si je n'y croyais pas (It is not proved, but it is not just a utopia. I would be not involved in this work if I did not believe that art humanises and makes society better).

“E” is convinced that artistic pleasure and artistic emotions makes better persons. She realises there is no written proof of this, but she likes to believe it does. This humanisation is what society needs at the moment according to “E”. ‘*A minor opera work does not answer this criteria, it can largely entertain but nothing more. But all works that meet up with the high quality level are good to introduce youngsters and adolescents to, whether it is a Shostakovich, or a Mozart, in any case works with a lot of artistic pleasure*’. She concludes by saying that ‘*after having seen the performance they might take it or not. That is less important, the fact that they have lived through the experience is vital. Giving them the opportunity to enjoy something special and to remind them of a cultural world that also belongs to them, that is the centre of the work*’.

Whether art humanises, or makes people better is indeed difficult to prove, because every person is different, and it is subject of a very complex debate within cultural studies; psychology, education and sociology as mentioned in the previous narrative,

when person “D” raised the example of the concert organised to celebrate Belgium’s 175 anniversary. One might indeed hope that an arts experience leaves something positive behind, which might lead in seeing society differently, but it is not set in stone. It is meaningful to the students participate in an art experience, since you can not like what you do not know, but in the end they decide for themselves whether they like it or not and whether it will become part of their cultural context or not (Johnson 2002; Hallam 2002).

Challenges and changes

When asked which challenges changed her way of working “E” raised the example of the beautiful experience they had with the project involving 600 primary school children performing works of contemporary composers in the auditorium at La Monnaie/De Munt. The project inscribes itself perfectly in the struggle “E” has with the French community in bringing music back into schools. There is a whole debate going on at the moment to give the artform its space back within the curriculum. The project illustrated perfectly what music at school could lead to if one worked with children even over a limited amount of time (two or three months on a specified repertoire). It showed that this could lead to a concert of a respectable level of quality, and apart from that it was, according to “E”, a milestone in her work. It pushed the work in the department forward. “E” hopes to do more of these ‘long-term’- projects in the future. *‘Activities running over a couple of weeks have a different impact on the participants’* says “E” and she believes *‘one has to find the right balance between one-off activities, activities over eight to ten weeks and big projects generating a lot of visibility and which saw the general public society of the more modest projects the education department does in schools’*.

One of the major problems and biggest challenges for the future in this work according to “E” is the lack of training for art practitioners that want to work in arts education.

'Et donc quand on cherche des gens pour constituer des équipes de travail ici, on cherche chaque fois les perroquets avec des pattes d'ours. Parce qu'il faut à la fois des gens qui ont une grande compétence musicale, qui ont si possible une pratique musicale à un certain niveau et il faut avoir des gens qui ont les outils pédagogiques. Et cela c'est un peu la quadrature du cercle. Si on trouve des gens très créatifs, ils n'ont pas le bagage intellectuel et musical et inversement'.

(And thus when we bring a team together to work on a project, we are looking for exceptional people because they need enough musical background, and need to have pedagogical skills. And that is a problem, because when one finds creative people, they do not necessarily have the right intellectual and musical baggage and vice versa).

So when “E” looks for collaborators to reinforce her team, she always has the impression she is looking for someone exceptional. Often creative people miss a pedagogical background and trained teachers miss the musical and intellectual level and so one goes around in circles. “E” believes *‘the authorities could play a role here and refers to the University of Lille, where musicians are trained to work in schools’*. But she most immediately adds that *‘one does not have to train musicians if there is hardly any music in education. So first music and other artistic expressions should gain influence in formal education again and then one could follow from the other’*.

Changing ideas

Once again there is the place of music in school that emerges in the interview. “E” develops this thought further when I ask her what might have had influence on her way of thinking. At the moment there is little music in Wallonian primary school curriculum. And “E” believes that through the work of the Education Department

can make a difference. In 2002-2003 the Education Department celebrated its tenth anniversary.

During that season several reflection moments took place at La Monnaie/De Munt and the place of music at school was one of the topics. Different actors (cultural and educational) were involved in the discussions on music (with opera in particular) and education. To “E” the meetings organised were refreshing and nourishing for the future, because one could look back and forward at the same time.

The sessions showed that on an artistic as well as on an educational level music at school could generate beautiful things (Segers and Van Den Wijngaert 2003). Therefore according to “E” this is one of the axioms the department should work on: *‘to show that with a little discipline, energy and willingness one might reach astonishing results’*. A working group within the association ‘Culture et Démocratie’ (culture and democracy) reflects on the situation of art in schools at the Walloon part of the country, maps the current situation and lists the priorities for the near future. It also tries to show that schools have everything to gain by working with cultural institutions. (Culture et Démocratie [online]).

Rather than changing “E”’s thinking it seems that these reflections have enriched her ideas on opera education, because apart from the belief that it is important to ‘offer young people the opportunity to experience something special’, the idea of ‘defending the place of music at school’ continually emerges during the interview and seems also to be shaped by her personal and professional educational background.

The Education Department within the company

Compared to other colleagues in Europe (e.g. person “A”), “E” states that they do not have to struggle against a management that is not sure about education work. Thanks to general manager Bernard Foccroulle the department had and still has the

full opportunity to develop within the House. He launched the department when he became the new manager in 1993. Step by step the department integrated into the structure of the house. It has now become an integral part of the House, so when new management arrives, they will be asked to continue this mission in the future. “E” believes that *‘Mr. Foccroulle has a strong democratic preoccupation and the feeling that he needs to legitimize the institution. One could not imagine, not even for a second, that La Monnaie/ De Munt exists only for those who can afford a ticket, because it is only a small part of society and hence is impossible if one sees how many resources this House gets from the state’*. So to “E” this democratic preoccupation is essential, as well as the redistribution of the outcomes of this artistic and cultural heritage towards those citizens that did not have the idea to come and see a performance. “E” is happy about the fact that teachers bring classes of which maybe 2/3 children are not willing to come but for whom – when leaving – some recognized that it was fun.

For a couple of years the Education Department and the promotional & communicational part of La Monnaie/De Munt have worked more closely together, which has given the work a better visibility. Before, the department was seen as part of all communication related services, but worked on its own promotional material. The fact that leaflets are now in the same style as the rest of the house’s communication material has had a positive effect on the ‘image’ of the department. This seems to be important because time and time again, “E” is surprised to see how little known the work of the department is in schools: *‘A school receives a lot of flyers, programmes, posters and brochures on school-linked activities, a lot of this material is never looked at. But is it is different when it is a leaflet from La Monnaie/ De Munt of course’*.

The educational work in relation to the wider cultural context

“E” recognises that there are differences between the Dutch and the French part of the country, which is not related only to the fact that one speaks a different language,

but also to the fact that there is a different political climate for the arts in school. For instance “E” has the impression that, *‘although there are still a lot of demands from schools for activities, there is a kind of stagnation at the level of the primary schools, due to financial restrictions’*. This is different in the Dutch part of the House, since the cost for a Dutch school that takes part in an activity is less than for the same project for a French school, due to the subsidies system of the VGC (Flemish Community Commission in Brussels) for Dutch schools. The ‘CoCof’ (French Community Commission in Brussels) does subsidise the French branch of the education department structurally, but this does not have a direct influence on the price to be paid by the schools, whereas with the VGC it does, since schools only pay half the price and the authority pays the other half.

“E” notices that if the package goes over €10 it becomes too expensive. So it is harder to convince teachers to take part in the project. Apart from the financial threshold there is also the pedagogical barrier. If a teacher does not grasp how s/he can work with opera within a course, it is difficult to take the first step to opera, certainly if there is an overload of cultural activities they can choose from. *‘Opera is not part of the educational field, which makes it even more difficult to explain to teachers why they should take the opportunity to go to the opera’* says “E”.

‘The primary and secondary teachers that do come with their pupils are most of the time those that know opera or those that are curious to know about it and would like to discover something new. They often adore opera or dance themselves. When there is not such a ‘locomotive’ it is hard to convince teachers’.

In any case “E” would like to have a closer relationship with the Ministry of Education. It is getting better but does not go as fast as “E” would like. In contrast to the Flemish ministry the French community does not have a cultural service within the Ministry of Education that is as open as is the CANON Cultuurcel at the Flemish Ministry since 1995. Indeed with the ‘Etats Généraux’ (Laanan 2005) there is much reflection going on at the moment about the school curriculum, and that is very

positive but there is no clear willingness, since it is not as determined as it is at the Flemish ministry. However it has to be mentioned here that since May 2006 a lot has been changed. A special unit will be installed becoming the reference for schools and cultural institutions. The unit is a joint initiative of the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Education (see p.168), and it has to be seen how it will develop in the future. Part of the discussions about the Etats Généraux is exactly about facilitating access to performances of different genres, thus also to opera, by lowering the financial thresholds; for instance with a cultural pass or cultural cheques (such as the ones the VCG – Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie- launched) enabling schools to come and see a performance at a reasonable price. The institutions themselves already take initiatives and make efforts, and if politically there would be some extra support, the price would no longer be an issue for schools to participate in a project and attend a performance.

Future perspectives

At the end of the interview future perspectives were raised. “E” responded to these that she ‘*is not sure whether she wants to do things differently. What she wants is accentuate things differently*’, and she gives the following example: *to increase even more the number of performances dedicated to different age ranges*’. And another one is linked with a programme for children that is really integrated in the working of the House. At the moment it still depends on circumstances and opportunities. “E” would love ‘*to have at least one performance, but preferable two, per season dedicated a young audience; one for age 8 to 12 and one for age 5 to 8. In such a way that people do not have to ask whether La Monnaie is proposing something for the young, but what are they proposing this season? Since La Monnaie/ De Munt is able to present high quality performances, it is worth presenting these productions*’’. She still remembers vividly the performances of *The Magic Flute* for children, when 600 little auditors reacted full of pleasure on what happened on stage. “E” believes that ‘*through giving them the chance to attend this performance, a seed for the future is present. One day it may expose or not, but at least they lived through a unique musical experience*’’.

On the other hand “E” is more than positive about the collaboration with universities. This season they started with *Campus Opéra* both in a French university - the UCL - and a Flemish university – the RUG. It is an opera course, which is embedded in a cultural programme open to all 2nd or 3rd year students (depending on the University) whatever their speciality is. Here the university gives the opportunity to, for instance, lawstudents to discover culture. This project is inspired from a Barcelonese example. “E” hopes they will be able to implement the programme in the other Belgian universities in the future.

III.4.7 Education narratives in context

Person “D” ’s passion for opera is steaped in her personal background. Her parents met at the Opera. Later on they regularly took they took their children to a performance (pp. 188-189). This seemed to have been a more than positive experience for “D”, since it influenced the rest of her career and her views on opera education. She beliefs opera is an artform that can be enjoyed by everyone, and she is very concerned about the way especially youngsters experience the art form. She wants them to have the same good experience she had when she was young and as such share, and even pass, this passion to them. “D” strongly believes a good experience is linked with a good preparation to the work they are going to see, take the youngsters seriously as an audience, and the right opera since according to “D” some Opera’s are more suitable for youngsters/new audiences than others (p. 197). She is convinced that when these elements are taken into account this might lead to future visits; a belief that is deeply related to her own experiences as a child and as a student although, as I will discuss later on, a future visit is not guaranteed by a good experience.

Apart from the family background, her education also influenced her views and ways of working. “D”’s training as a music teacher working with music in an interactive way remains central in her views on opera education. On the one hand to introduce the art form to new audiences, and on the other hand because she beliefs these activities lead to a better self-esteem of the participants (p. 196). Thus wants

people to take part not just in an introduction to the art form, but preferably also in interactive and creative workshops. As such she wants to get in a ‘dialogue’ with the audience, a dialogue that works inspiring both ways (p. 189). Her view on opening up the art form is indeed influenced by her personal background and links in with the Flemishcultural policy that would like to see as many people as possible participating in the arts (Anciaux 2004; pp. 170-171). It also answers the educational policy that gives room to a creative way of experiencing culture at school through setting targets such as the *Muzische Vorming* (Musical Development p. 170).

“D”’s views have not really changed over time, but her ways of working had been influenced more often through projects, because a project is always developed with specific partners and educators, through meetings with RESEO colleagues that for instance made her introduce Family workshops at La Monnaie/De Munt, and through the opening of the new building behind the Opera House in 2000 which offered the education department room to work in house with schools. The latter increased the visibility of the department in the house. As mentioned earlier in this section the department had the management’s full support from the start, but the department had his full support from the start, but not necessarily of the other colleagues in the Opera House. That profile did rise over time, because “D” now experiences that colleagues in house talk in a positive way about certain education projects, and they sometimes give the impression they missed out on something important when an activity took place and they did not know about it.

Person “E” has mixed feelings about opera (p. 200), and most of all loathes the possible mediocrity of the art form, although she used Opera in her lessons in history and culture (pp. 200-201). It is the ‘combined’ aspect of the artform that seems to fascinate “E”, since themes can be used in different ways, and the aspects of opera (music, drama, text, staging) are excellent to use in projects that give room to express oneselfs (p. 200).

The personal experiences she had as a teacher, before starting to work for the education department of La Monnaie/De Munt, seem to be the driving force within this view and within her work up to now. “E” keeps relating back to the importance of music education within the school curriculum especially at secondary level (her specialism). Defending the place of music in the school curriculum is crucial within her work. She believes that with her work she can prove to schools that a minor investment in the arts in school, may lead to major results (p. 203). “E” wants to share the qualities of opera with all Belgians, also those with a different cultural background, and since schools are the places where all nationalities mix, these are the places where the first contact should happen. As such her view does relate to the Walloon cultural policy which is based on the democratization of culture: *cultural activities provide spaces for reaction about what happens in society, mobilises creativity and builds a specific heritage and knowledge* (Laanan 2005; p. 171). What she adds is that youngsters and youngsters need to know that this high standard art form is also part of their heritage. “E” wants to believe that sharing high standard Opera with them might offer something positive and even lead to a better human.

In line with the views of the other participants taking part in this research, “E”’s view did not alter much over time. Changes in ways of working also relate to projects and physical changes. “E” much more than her colleague “D” seems to be challenged by the educational cultural policy, which is still at the center of the debate in Wallonia (p. 172) whereas it seems to have been stabilized in Flanders over the last ten years (pp. 169-171).

Though “D” and “E” work at the same House, their view on opera education does not exactly run parallel. Some lines of thinking are shared: for example they both believe that the opera experiences to newcomers (basically children and young people), whether it is by taking part in a workshop or attending a performance, has influence on the participants as a person, though they are both aware that there is no written proof of this effect yet. Some concerns are the same but the interpretation of this concern differs, and these different accents indicate something about their

cultural backgrounds: for example they have a common concern about the importance of the first contact with opera in relation to the future, but their interpretation of this concern differs. “D” ends this reflection with the hope to stimulate future visits and thus implicitly links in with the Flemish cultural policy to implicate as many people as possible in the Arts (Anciaux 2004). Whereas “E” ends the reflection with the belief that sharing this part of cultural heritage with all youngsters, might have influence on their development as a person.

To “D” all circumstances to enjoy opera for the first time have to be perfect from the preparatory level up to the way the newcomers are welcomed in the House. During the interview she constantly relates back to practical examples and workshops. Her way of working and her line of thinking seems to be more ‘practically’ orientated. Whereas to “E” the focus is on what is performed, that has to be of the best quality because sharing something positive with youngsters of all backgrounds she believes to have a positive effect on these youngsters. This is in line with the ‘la citoyenneté’, which is steeped in to French legislation: the wellbeing of the citizen in all its aspects.

Another difference can be noticed on the ways of working with schools linked with the different legislations of Education in Belgium: for “E” it is crucial to show schools what a minimum of investment in the arts can offer as outcome simply because the place of the arts is an issue at the French part of the country, whereas in Flanders the ‘educational targets’ (see p.165) have been installed for a couple of years and thus to “D” there is more the concern to team up with what happens in school and thus add something the teachers would not be able to offer.

Hence this comparison of the two narratives highlights that the socio-cultural background has an implicit influence on people’s thinking and explains in the Belgian House why the education department has a French and a Dutch branch.

Although both practitioners enjoyed the projects, such as the concert to commemorate Belgium’s 175 anniversary, joint projects seem to be rare within their education programmes. Possibly this is not just because of the difference in

language, but also because of the difference in culture and education, which has an impact on how education projects are looked at and developed within each branch, simply because the curriculum and policy has different focus points, and because the views/beliefs on the work is strongly determined by the personal background of both practitioners.

Chapter IV Summary of Results in a contextual framework

The presentation of the results gathered within each case study are related directly to the research questions and with the methodology chosen. Since this is the study of people's views, the primary source of information had been the 40 minute interviews with the opera education practitioners. The interview questions focused on the practitioners' background, his/her views and beliefs on opera education and the perception of the context s/he worked within. In order to be able to analyse the data in relation to that context and because these contextual aspects might have had influence on the practitioners' views, the second source of data used in the case studies consisted of legislation texts, company documents, leaflets and figures illustrating the situation the practitioners' worked from and within which their respective narratives were 'nested'.

First the contextual framework for the case study was based on the criteria used in the sampling process and on the aspects brought together in the contextual chart (fig. 2, page 41) marking the possible influences on a person's thinking: that is the size of the House/Company; the tradition of opera in the country the House/Company is based in, its history; the cultural and educational policy of the country the House/Company functions in; the mission statement of both the House/Company and the education department; the place of education in the House/Company and the length of education experience; the programme of both the House/Company and the education department.

The contextual part was followed by the narratives drawn from the interviews and adding next to the views and beliefs of the practitioners their personal backgrounds. The structure of the narratives resulted from the outline of the interview agenda (appendix D) grouped around the practitioners' personal context, their first contacts with Opera, their work in Opera Education, the elements they identified as challenges and changes in their way of working, the issues that according to the practitioners changed their thinking, the place of education in the company, their

work in relation to the wider cultural context and their future perspectives. In the first part of the coding process the material of the five interviews was grouped under nine headings defined by the above-mentioned outline (see appendix E).

Through the coding process the data was organised into different arrays following Yin (2003: 112). Hence it was noticed that the outcomes could be looked at from three possible angles involving the individual level; the individual within a context, and a cross-company as well as cross-country interpretation of the data. I started to group the rough data of each case in a comparative grid following the structure of the case studies, and relating back to the research questions. This grid offered me the opportunity to recognize patterns across case studies. After having refined the data to the essence: the individual practitioners views and beliefs in relation to the context s/he works in, the remaining data was brought together in a contextual diagram for each practitioner. This process allows us to focus on the practitioners' views in relation to the company they work in, their personal background (as external aspect), the socio-cultural background they work within and their educational work within the company. It relates back to the contextual chart presented in the first section of the methodology chapter (II.1, p. 45).

In the centre of the diagrams (fig.15a-e) one finds the opera educators' views filtered from the data gathered through the interviews. Here the evidence is grouped under five headings, relating to the main research question 'Why Opera Education' and addressing the subquestions: what is opera education according to the practitioners, why are they involved in it and how they fulfil this provision and these aims, furthermore there are the possible influences on their work and their thinking and last but not least the way they perceive the place of education in the company.