

PROJECT SHEET

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Creative Europe. Culture sub-programme

FUNDING CATEGORY

Category 2 - Larger Scale cooperation projects involving a project leader and at least five other partners having their legal seat in at least six different countries taking part in the Culture Sub-programme.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

5 March 2014

FUNDING

Within a maximum EU funding of 2.000.000 €. EU financial contribution will not exceed 50% of the total eligible costs. The remaining amount shall be secured by applicants with own resources such as human resources. We foreseen to request a EU grant lower than 750.000 € in order to not provide an external audit report produced by an approved external auditor.

TEMPORARY TITLE

The Affordable Opera. A new model for the production and diffusion of opera performances out of the mainstream system

CURRENT STATE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

PROJECT LEADER

Music Theatre International – M.Th.I. (<http://lnx.mthi.it/>) (to be confirmed)

PARTNERS

Monti&Taft (<http://www.monti-taft.org/en/>)

A German Theatre (still to identify)

A Danish Theatre (still to identify)

A Croatian Theatre (still to identify)

A Slovenian Theatre (still to identify)

Music Faculty/Janacek Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno, Czech Republic (<http://english.jamu.cz/>) (to be confirmed)

Opera Holland Park (<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/subsites/operahollandpark.aspx#.Uu-CfvtqPXR>) (to be confirmed)

Screen Project (<http://www.screen-projects.com/portfolio/>) (to be confirmed)

PROJECT TYPOLOGY

Opera performances

PROJECT DURATION

36 months (3 years) - from 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2017

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR

Professor Michele Trimarchi, PhD in Economics (Buckingham, UK), teaches Economic Analysis of Law (Catanzaro) and Cultural Economics (Bologna). Expert in markets and cultural policies, he participated in numerous cultural cooperation projects (Middle East, India, Indonesia, Brazil).

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Used to address a traditional and initiated audience, opera can expand its markets without losing its identity and its fundamental features, but simply adopting semantic, technical and symbolic tools aimed at establishing an effective and familiar relationship with individuals and groups who show enthusiasm for similar products such as TV series, role games and epic storytelling in novels, movies and music. The aim of the project is to expand opera audience, addressing multiple markets as many other arts and culture experiences confirm, and integrating the direct audience experience with various products and services. The variety and richness of opera allows us to elaborate a wide range of specific products. A further market which can be activated and developed, as a fallout of opera production out of the conventional channels normally considered expensive and exclusive, is the market for internal and international tourism. This does not strictly imply explicit connections with the places where stories occur (e.g. Mantua for Rigoletto) but widens the room for connecting opera with heritage, the arts and tourist services.

THE PROJECT**The State Of The Art**

Opera is experiencing a complex and contradictory period: on one hand its production enjoys a wider range of creative ideas being staged with a new and fertile semantic orientation able to address contemporary perceptions and expectations on the part of a multicultural society. On the other hand the audience is still representing quite a limited proportion of society. Nevertheless opera is present in many advertisements, as well as in cartoons and movies, showing and emphasizing its seductive power and the perception that contemporary individuals acknowledge, although instinctively, its beauty. Jointly considering the figures on opera consumption and its diffusion in non conventional channels, opera may enjoy a potential demand, simply reluctant to its ritual features.

The Product

Opera is the outcome of a complex combination among various creative artistic disciplines: theatre, music, dance, stage decoration, costume design, stage effects. The complexity of opera, requiring a versatile ability to represent myths and comedy, war and family stories within an indefinite range of options, make it a typically plastic production. Opera has always been the kind of cultural production where technology can be elaborated and experienced to give the audience strong emotions reproducing

facts and phenomena with an evident economy of tools. The growth and diffusion of accessible technology also involving digital tools can clearly widen the area for building and experimenting new technological options.

Structure

Opera requires four layers of human resources: the artistic group formed by orchestra, choir, sometimes dancers and actors, conductor, stage director; the technical group including stage workers, electricians, digital professionals; the external relationships group including press, communication and marketing professionals; the administrative group formed by the general manager and her/his staff. Considering the weakness of the existing organisation in opera houses, and the low quality of opera tours carried out in summer by occasional companies, the challenge is focused upon the actual and effective combination of artistic quality and consistency on one hand, light and flexible organisational and contractual structure on the other hand, within a sharp and wide managerial strategy. This requires a small permanent staff (one manager for each professional layer described above: general, technical, marketing and artistic director); a selected group of professionals who should rotate according to the single productions (conductor, director, singers, and other professionals according to the occasional needs); orchestra and choir as independent groups with the agreement of stable engagements.

Choices

The production and diffusion of opera performances out of the mainstream system, and adopting an innovative structure, highlights a series of issues to be faced in a non-conventional way. The power of opera as a multidimensional, cross-medial, and hypertextual product is therefore prevailing upon its traditional ritual features. Also its technical infrastructure must be redefined. Such a wide setting can benefit from the use of comfortable spaces, not limited to one single venue but including smaller and differently equipped areas to allow a diversified attendance. It could be an effective rehabilitation of the old-fashioned box as extension of family home, towards the creation of social spaces where consumption is shared and not ritual, but user-friendly. This model can be improved through the establishment of alliances and synergies both in a wide territorial map facilitating exchanges and common activities, and in a network of non-theatrical sites that can attract its potential consumers.

Sustainability

The project is based upon an innovative structure of both supply and demand. On one hand the productive side can associate high quality and artistic consistency with a light endowment of human resources and a flexible managerial organisation. On the other hand the demand side is aimed at capturing the audience's willingness-to-pay with a wide range of options, goods and services. The present high cost of opera production strongly depends upon the high level of current expenditures (whose burden cannot be modified) covering fixed costs, the oligopoly power of agencies and the parallel favour towards stardom of interpreters, the frequent choice of very high stage costs, associated with high average ticket price which ends up to restrict the market

opportunities of opera. The project aims at simplifying the cost structure and to expand the audience through an active marketing action and through an effective combination of residents and tourists in the audience.

ACTIVITIES

The main activities of the project will be:

- 1) management and coordination;
- 2) design and development of a new business model suitable for affordable opera performances;
- 3) design and development of 3 opera performances;
- 4) design and development of collateral activities, such as workshops for artists' selection;
- 5) mapping of a network of non-theatrical sites such as monumental buildings, commercial centres, open air spaces and so on;
- 6) staging of 3 opera performances both in each theatre involved in the project and in selected non-theatrical sites;
- 7) design and development of innovative products related to opera performances;
- 8) communication and dissemination activities;
- 9) monitoring and evaluation activities.

THE ROLE OF PARTNERS

As project coordinator, Music Theatre International – M.Th.I. will be responsible for the general coordination of the project, the secretarial, administrative and financial tasks, managing operational, administrative and financial outputs.

Monti&Taft, a consulting company active in the cultural field, will be responsible for: the development of a new business model suitable for affordable opera performances; the analysis of current and potential markets; the set-up of audience development and funding strategies; the monitoring and evaluation activities. Monti&Taft will work in synergy with all partners to map and select significant non-theatrical sites in each country involved in the project.

All of the theatres involved in the project, together with the project coordinator, the Music Faculty of Janacek Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno and the Opera Holland Park, will be responsible for the design and production of 3 opera performances, adopting an innovative structure. These partners will collaborate, under the supervision of the project leader, in order to select a international group of professionals (conductor, director, singers, and other professionals according to the occasional needs). As the project aims at simplifying the cost structure, only a few professionals will be stable to grant a credible strategy (general, technical, marketing and artistic director); that professionals will be selected among the theatrical staff involved in the project. Many artists will be selected among young professionals, normally more appropriate in a consistent interpretation, through workshops and masterclass specially designed for artists who seeks to improve their skills and capabilities.

Screen Project, a cultural agency dedicated to contemporary art, with a special focus in the moving image community, will be responsible for the design of innovative stage decoration in order to emphasize the theatrical value of performances. In addition, the Screen Festival – organised by Screen Project – will be one of the non-theatrical sites where opera performances will be staged.

Screen Project and Monti&Taft will play a key role within the development of an extended range of services and commodities (books, records, videos, downloadings, photographs, backstage movies, etc.). In this respect, opera performances will be broadcasted on the web, both in short formats like YouTube videos and in more consistent digital staging able to combine web techniques and languages.

All partners will be responsible for communication and dissemination activities in order to promote the project at local and international level.