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# The Management of Public Subsidies for Opera

Comparative Study of Decision-Making and Proposed Model  
for Public Opera Funding Bodies in Britain and Germany

David Ranan

City University London  
Department of Arts Policy and Management  
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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Declaration**

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# Abstract

This thesis investigates the public funding of opera in Britain and Germany and the nature of failures of decision making in the allocation of funds by the public funding bodies. The hypothesis tested in this research is that the lack of clear objectives was the reason for the difficulties between funding bodies and opera companies and that clearer objectives would produce better decisions.

To investigate this hypothesis, the objectives set by the arts funding systems in Britain and in Germany in their funding of opera are examined. In addition to a description of the two funding systems, case studies in both countries are analysed. In Britain case studies examine the withdrawal of funding from Kent Opera, which brought about its demise; the Arts Council's involvement in the establishment of Opera North and the relationship of the Arts Council with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. For Germany the case studies are of Frankfurt, Bavaria and Berlin. The failure of the Frankfurt administration in its attempts to deal with financial constraints and the resultant deterioration of the Frankfurt Opera are analysed. The opera funding difficulties in Berlin since the city's reunification in 1990 and the Bavarian smooth running of its opera funding activities are examined. In short, this thesis explores what it is that the funding bodies are trying to achieve in their funding of opera and how they go about achieving it.

The case studies reveal that the funding bodies have never defined their aims well. However, on the basis of the case studies this thesis argues that neither the absence of performance indicators nor even the lack of clear objectives are the root of the problem of the funding bodies. The thesis further argues that power play of stakeholders and inadequate management of power politics are the source of the failures of public funding bodies to implement their policy vis-à-vis opera companies.

Various public-policy theories and decision-making models are reviewed and a decision-making model for funding bodies in Britain and Germany with regard to allocations to opera is developed. The proposed model covers the full range of decision-making situations confronting funding bodies. An important characteristic of the model is its realism and practicality.

Keywords: opera, subsidies, funding, decision-making, arts-policy, objectives.

## Glossary and Abbreviations

**Abgeordnetenhaus** - One of the terms for Parliament. The name of the Parliament of the Land Berlin.

**Ausschuss** - Committee. Term used for parliamentary select committees.

**Bund** - Federation. The Federal level of Government in Germany. Germany is a Bund of sixteen Länder.

**Dezernent** - Term used in Frankfurt for City Councillors elected by the Stadtverordnetenversammlung for six-year periods. Councillors who are also heads of administrative departments are referred to as Kulturdezernent, Finanzdezernent, etc.

**Generalintendant** - Usually an Intendant in charge of more than one organisation. Sometimes, also used to define a higher status than Intendant.

**Generalmusikdirektor** - Chief Music Director.

**Geschäftsführender Direktor** - Managing Director.

**Geschäftsführender Intendant** - Managing Intendant. Title used, when the Intendant's role is divided. The Geschäftsführender Intendant is not in charge of the artistic side of the organisation, which in such cases is the domain of the Künstlerischer Intendant.

**Bündnis 90 /Die Grünen** - German left-of-centre political party.

**Intendant** - Superintendent, director. Term used mainly for administrative and artistic managers of cultural institutions.

**Kulturdezernent** - Culture Councillor, Head of Culture Department.

**Land (Länder)** - State (s).

**Landtag** - State Parliament. Term used for the Bavarian Parliament.

**Magistrat** - Municipal Council. Term used for the City of Frankfurt's governing body. Frankfurt's Magistrat comprises the Dezernents headed by the Lord Mayor (Oberbürgermeister).

**Rechnungshof** - Audit body.

**Senat** - Governing Council. Term used for the State Government of (Land) Berlin.

**Senator** - Equivalent rank as minister. Member of the Senat. The Senators, headed by the Governing Mayor of Berlin form the Senat of Berlin. Senators are elected by the Abgeordnetenhaus for the duration of the legislature.

**Staatsoper** - State Opera.

**Staatssekretär** - Minister. At the Federal Government level this is a junior minister. In Berlin, it is one level lower than Senator.

**Stadtverordnetenversammlung** - City Parliament. Term used in Frankfurt for its Parliament.



### Key for Abbreviations

<b>ACE</b>	Arts Council of England.
<b>ACGB</b>	Arts Council of Great Britain.
<b>CDU</b>	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands . Germany's main right-of-centre political party.
<b>DCMS</b>	Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
<b>DNH</b>	Department for National Heritage.
<b>ENO</b>	English National Opera.
<b>NAO</b>	National Audit Office.
<b>PDS</b>	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus. The socialist party established in Germany after the collapse of East Germany.
<b>PPBS</b>	Planning, Programming and Budgeting System.
<b>ROH</b>	Royal Opera House.
<b>SPD</b>	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – Germany's main left-of-centre political party.
<b>ZBB</b>	Zero Base Budgeting.

# I Introduction

## 1 Preface

The original trigger for this work was the public outcry surrounding the events at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden\* during the years 1995 to 1997 and the subsequent 1998 *Report on the Future of Lyric Theatre in London* (The Eyre Report).<sup>1</sup>

Subsidies to opera, an art-form which appeals to only a small fraction of the population but which, because it is very expensive to produce, needs public subsidy to survive, are not easy to justify. Indeed, in many countries the question of why there should be public funding for opera is being asked. It is not even a new question. Concern arises with more urgency in periods of economic difficulties, where budgets have to be cut and when making ends meet becomes harder. It is in such circumstances that failures of the funding bodies to perform successfully become more apparent.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, State attitudes to opera have seen much change. A move to greater government involvement in both funding and control, according to Tuomas Auvinen, 'seems during the last few years to have lost its impetus.'<sup>2</sup>

Moves for the privatisation of the public service and legislative initiatives aimed at controlling "runaway" spending which gained considerable ideological and political support by the Thatcher administration are adopted by necessity in other European countries, such as Germany, which since the early 1990s has had to struggle with budgetary problems. Consequently, there have been increasing calls for

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\* A £240 million re-development plan of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, for which it was granted a £78 million Lottery award, stimulated public criticism, mainly in the popular press. This criticism became more wide-spread, culminating in an inquiry by the Select Committee for Culture, Media and Sport when it turned out that, not only was it not at all clear whether Covent Garden would be able to keep afloat, but also that the plans for the two-and-a-half year transition period during the re-development were seriously flawed. Adding to the controversy, Lord Chadlington who was Chairman of the Arts Council Lottery Panel, which recommended the Lottery award, was subsequently appointed as the chairman of the Royal Opera House. A new Chief Executive resigned, in unclear circumstances, only five months after her appointment, only to be immediately replaced by the then Secretary General of the Arts Council.

accountability. Government agencies are more and more expected to be answerable, for their spending and for the results produced, to both Parliament and the public.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Richard Eyre's long awaited report on the future of opera in London combined general criticism of the previous regime with calls for more public money. Fifteen years earlier, Clive Priestley, then Head of the Efficiency Unit at 10 Downing Street was asked to make a special financial scrutiny of the financial affairs and financial prospects of the Royal Opera House (and the Royal Shakespeare Company). Priestley recommended targeted funding following a strict economic formula. He did not, however, explain how that would fit in with declared targets of the Royal Opera House's funding body, the Arts Council of Great Britain, and spoke generally of:

consistency of activity with articles of association or charter, policy and objectives; quality of artistic achievement; quality of financial management and control; and one or more selected functions or activities.<sup>4</sup>

Although that was an era very sympathetic to rationalisation of government expenditure, and even though there was no question about the capabilities and qualifications of Priestley, the Priestley Report did not lead to any change in the way the Arts Council funded The Royal Opera House. Similarly, Eyre did not offer any new ideas or clearer objectives, nor suggestions for monitoring mechanisms.

In Britain, the present Labour Government, which came to power in 1997, is combining the demand for accountability with the notion that culture should serve wider government objectives. Hence, there are suggestions that the arm's-length principle is being eroded. It has recently been suggested by two former senior Arts Council officers\* that, 'whilst not (yet) stepping back from the arm's-length principle, it [the government] is clearly redefining the length of the arm.'<sup>5</sup> This principle, according to which a distance was created between the funded bodies and their ultimate funders, has been at the basis of public funding of the arts in Britain.

Theodor Adorno, in writing about 'Culture and Administration', makes the following observations:

Those who say culture, also say administration, whether they like it or not.[...] The German notion of culture, especially, is juxtaposed to the [governing]

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\* Graham Devlin a former Acting Chief Executive of the Arts Council of England and Sue Hoyle a former Deputy Secretary General of the Arts Council of England.

administration. Culture aims to be the sublime, the pure, that which has not been touched, nor structured for some tactical or technical considerations. This... is called its autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

Adorno indicates the symbiotic relationship between culture and administration but also points to differences. It is the split or dichotomy which interests me. This thesis looks at the ramifications of this dichotomy with regard to the public funding of opera. My background as a banker and as a business consultant has led me to search for a decision-making model which would be fed with data and produce the optimal decision. My original idea was that the ailments of the public funding bodies relationships with opera companies could be solved with the aid of well defined objectives, on the basis of which performance indicators would be established. These, I thought, would enable the funding bodies to quantify their decision-making and ensure that 'value for money' is achieved. My hypothesis was that the lack of clear objectives is the reason for the difficulties funding bodies have with their opera companies.

To that end, I set out to identify the objectives the Arts Council of England in connection with its funding of opera companies. To enrich the analysis and enable a wider scope of analysis, I also studied the system in Germany and examined the objectives set by the arts funding systems there. In both countries I consider the extent to which objectives have indeed been formulated.

Case studies were selected, in both Germany and Britain, with great care and deliberation to bring out a variety of situations confronting funding bodies of opera companies.\* These case studies investigate the implementation of the funding bodies' policies. The enquiry considers the shortcomings and failures in the decision-making of the funding bodies. The more difficult decisions and the ones which fail to achieve the objectives are probed.

In short, this thesis explores what it is that the funding bodies are trying to achieve in their funding of opera and how they go about achieving it.

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\* Section 3 gives details of the choice of case studies.

## 2 Choice of Countries

In response to the question why the German State of Hessen was funding opera, its Minister of Culture reflected and responded, 'because it is ours'.<sup>7</sup> The rationale was not the importance of access to opera performances, nor the desire to ensure the excellence of productions, not the educational significance, nor the role it had in developing creativity or nurturing young artists. For the German politician, the explanation was simple. It was a declaration that the opera is part of the German state and, as such, it is funded by the state. His view is clear. In Britain, there has never been that clarity and feelings of public ownership and consequent responsibility have always needed propping up.

Distinct differences can be noted in the history, tradition and present policy vis-à-vis opera in Germany and Britain. Perhaps the most symbolic difference is the German term *Kulturstaat*, literally translated as Culture State. According to this concept, the promotion and preservation of arts and culture are clearly considered in Germany to be a responsibility of the state.

Up to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Germany, as *The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation*, incorporated various kingdoms, principalities and dukedoms. The rulers of these entities normally considered patronage of the arts as a means of manifesting their standing and wealth. Similarly, the burgher-run cities also took pride in establishing cultural institutions such as museums, theatres and opera companies.

In Britain the monarch has not been the source of absolute sovereign power since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and has probably not considered it necessary to be a patron of the arts. State responsibility for the performing arts, and to a lesser extent than in Germany, has only developed in Britain after the Second World War. Until the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1945, opera in Britain was always privately funded and in the main a money-loser. The little opera activity was concentrated in London: there were no dedicated opera houses outside London, although there was some opera touring activity to the provinces.

The historical difference between the countries is also apparent in the provision of new operas by German composers, throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This enabled the German opera houses and their public to develop the opera culture.

The differences can be summarised as follows: In Britain,

- a. systematic public funding of the arts only began after the Second World War;
- b. opera does not have a widespread tradition;
- c. opera companies are independent trusts; and
- d. the arts are funded through an intermediate body and within a defined arm's-length-principle.

By comparison, Germany

- a. has a long history of public funding of culture;
- b. has a long opera tradition and, as a result, many opera houses dispersed all over the country;
- c. most opera houses are either departments of a city (or state) or companies fully owned by the city (or state);
- d. has a federal structure, in which culture is within the competence of the *Länder* (states). This enables examining a variety of systems within the same country; and
- e. has since the early 1990s had drastically to cut expenditure, after a long period of economic boom.

### **3 Choice of Case Studies**

I chose six case studies, three in each country. In Britain the number of opera clients of the Arts Council is not great and it would hardly be going too far to define each of the clients as a special case. This has made the analysis of the Arts Council's actual handling of opera clients most difficult. Of the five large-scale opera companies in Britain, four can be considered 'national' companies: The Royal Opera House, which includes the Royal Opera and the Royal Ballet (until 1989 the Birmingham Royal Ballet was also part of the Royal Opera House) and is widely considered as the 'flagship' opera and ballet house of Britain. English National Opera is the other main opera company in London. Scottish Opera and Welsh National Opera, are both 'national' companies, and are dealt with by the Scottish and the Welsh Arts Councils.

The case studies in Britain are: The Royal Opera House, Opera North and Kent Opera. Each of these case studies concentrates on a different aspect of the decision-making of the Arts Council concerning the funding of opera companies.

In over 50 years since it was established, the Arts Council has actively supported opera, investing very substantial sums in this art-form. Much of this activity, however, has been reactive rather than pro-active.\* Nevertheless, there were two important opera clients with regard to whom the Arts Council played a decisive and active role: Opera North and Kent Opera. The Arts Council has been active and conducted protracted deliberations concerning both companies. With both Kent Opera and Opera North, extreme measures were taken by the Arts Council after long planning. In one case a company lost its funding and in the other a new company was established.

Opera North was and remains the only large-scale, house-based, opera company in the establishment of which the Arts Council played a pro-active role. The decision-making process leading to the establishment of Opera North is analysed.

Kent Opera, on the other hand, was the only important provider of opera from which the Arts Council withdrew funding, thereby precipitating its demise. The latter was receiving over 750 thousand pounds in 1989 when its grant was withdrawn and it was brought to liquidation by the Arts Council.

Finally, the Royal Opera which, as already mentioned, is considered the flagship opera company of Britain and as such has a different standing, not least because of its traditionally high-powered Board. The Royal Opera has been most difficult to keep in rein. The Royal Opera case study considers the difficulties in the 'special relationship' the Arts Council has with this company.

In Germany, the three case studies I chose are: Frankfurt, Berlin and Bavaria. The Federal Republic of Germany consists of sixteen states (*Länder*) and arts policy is within the competence of the *Länder*. The case studies were chosen to cover a wide range of situations.

The city of Frankfurt is part of the *Land* Hessen. It is, however, a city with a long tradition as an independent burgher city. Most of its institutions, including the Frankfurt Opera, are funded by the city and not by the *Land*. The period reviewed in

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\* In an interview on 6.9.1999, Jack Phipps, a former Touring Director of the Arts Council of Great Britain, said that 'Until quite recently the Arts Council was a responding organisation. [...] it was almost heresy to have an initiative.'

the Frankfurt case study spans thirty years, of which twenty had a well-managed policy. The last ten years were years of crisis, in which the Frankfurt Opera suffered substantial deterioration. The juxtaposition of the two periods and an analysis of the administration's failure are the basis of this case study.

The State of Bavaria fully funds two state opera companies and partly subsidises another eight companies. Bavaria has had a long period of relative economic affluence and a stable political majority of one party. This case study demonstrates the impact these two factors have on Bavaria's policy vis-à-vis opera.

Since 1990, Berlin has been a unified city, merging the capital of the previous German Democratic Republic and West Berlin, which for forty-five years was West Germany's show-case set to contrast with the East. The unified city has three opera houses, none of which it wants to close but which it can not afford. In the eleven year period considered, the Berlin administration has made several attempts to deal with its opera problems. These attempts and other decisions in connection with the opera companies are analysed.

## **4 Sources**

With arts funding by the state being a relatively new phenomenon in Britain, there has been a constant need for the Arts Council to investigate the boundaries of the system and to question and define its aims and the means for their attainment. Therefore, the Arts Council has, since its inception, established committees and working parties to analyse and make recommendations on policy. In Germany, as demonstrated above, the funding of the performing arts, including opera, is considered an obvious role of the state. Consequently, there has not been such a need for policy documents. Moreover, in Germany culture is not a Federal responsibility, but the domain of the *Länder* and there is, therefore, no Federal policy-making body, similar to the Arts Council in Britain.

This difference has meant the research on the British system could, to a large extent, be based on original policy documents, while in Germany, this was only possible to a lesser extent. The German research is more heavily based on interviews. However, interviews are an important source not only for the German case studies, but also for the British ones. I held more than sixty interviews, in Britain and in Germany, with



both present and former politicians, arts administrators, directors and music directors and Intendants of opera companies.\* Additionally, the situation in Berlin and Frankfurt with their protracted crises brought about extensive press coverage. Information for these cases studies was also obtained from newspapers articles.

The sources used in this thesis may be grouped as follows:

- Interviews with present and former politicians, members of public administration and opera company directors;
- Arts Council and German funding bodies' papers;
- Committee reports;
- Minutes of Parliamentary discussions;
- Annual reports of the Arts Council and of opera companies;
- Newspaper articles;
- Books and articles written about arts funding in Britain and in Germany; and
- Books and articles written about specific opera companies.

## **5 Structure of the Thesis**

The first two chapters map out the contexts of this thesis. These two chapters are followed by the main body of the thesis: nine chapters which describe and analyse the British and the German opera funding systems.

The thesis is based on six case studies, three in Britain and three in Germany. Both sets of case studies are preceded by general chapters describing issues which are common to the case studies in that country, such as: historical background, national policy and legal and constitutional matters. Before the three British case studies, two chapters deal with the Arts Council of England. First a general chapter describing the Arts Council and its mechanisms for the implementation of its policies. Next is a chapter which analyses the objectives of the British arts funding system and specifically any objectives regarding the funding of opera.

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\* A full listing of the interviews is given in Appendix A.

The German chapters begin with a general chapter describing the history of arts funding in Germany and its present structures and constitutional aspects. However, whereas in England, the main public funding of opera stems from central government through the Arts Council of England, in Germany the arts (including 'high arts' such as opera) are within the competence of the *Länder* (states). Each of the German case studies, therefore, also includes some structural and constitutional information which is specific to the state or city.

Chapter XII concludes the main body of the thesis, summarising the findings and discussing the conclusions.

Following the conclusion of the thesis and based on the findings of the case studies, a model is developed in Chapter XIV. The preceding Chapter XIII reviews and maps the main decision-making methods in the public sector and the main schools of thought concerned with decision-making in the public sector. This chapter serves mainly as a 'tool-box' for the model proposed in Chapter XIV. The model is a practical model which takes into account the inherent characteristics of opera funding. It seeks to refine and improve the decision-making processes with regard to the allocation of subsidies to opera. Chapter XV is the epilogue.

## **6 Conclusion**

The hypothesis at the root of this thesis was that by defining the objectives of the public opera funding bodies, it would be possible to create a decision-making model, which would alleviate the difficulties these public funding bodies come up against.

Decision-making processes are the essence of public policy making and fundamental to them are objectives or goals. Professor John O'Hagan and Christopher Duffy make the point that, 'A coherent statement of objectives for public funding of the performing arts is important for purposive action and policy evaluation.' They added, 'It is true that objectives are often difficult to define and their achievement or otherwise almost impossible to determine.'<sup>8</sup> Professor Aaron Wildavsky made the observation that there is a tendency for public organisations to have goals that are difficult to quantify, making outcomes hard to measure.<sup>9</sup>

My research has established that there is indeed a lack of clearly defined objectives in the area of public funding for opera. However, it has demonstrated that difficulties arise especially as a result of the failure of the funding system in handling conflict situations with a small number of connected stakeholders. The case studies have highlighted the centrality of power relations in conflicts which do not get resolved. There is an inherent conflict of interest between any parties competing for funding, which by definition is limited. Sometimes, there is also conflict between the funding body and the opera companies regarding funding availability and concerning the extent of interference by the funding body the opera company is willing to accept.

The findings of this exploration, which are detailed and discussed in chapter XII, have demonstrated that the most difficult problems arise in situations when budgets have to be cut. They have also demonstrated that in such situations the mismanagement of relationships between the stakeholders, and not the lack of well-defined objectives or the definition of performance indicators, lay at the root of the failure to find solutions.

Based on the analysis of the funding bodies and the case studies describing the implementation of policy in practice, the thesis investigates the question of how the decision-making of the funding bodies could be improved.

The proposed model differentiates between the circumstances and defines four states of decision-making. In addition to a cut in funding and stand-still grants, two categories of increased funding are defined: one-off increases and substantial long-term investments. For each of these states, a different process is suggested. The model does not necessitate the creation of performance indicators, nor does it burden the opera companies with reporting requirements.

## II Contexts

This chapter sets out the three contexts of this thesis: opera, decision making and subsidies. As already stated in the Introduction, the curiosity to embark on this research was spurred by the public criticism of decisions made with regard to public funds spent on opera. This criticism is not a new phenomenon and has often been intertwined with a more general anti-operatic sentiment. The second context comprises definitions and terminology relevant to decision-making in the public sector. Subsidies and the definition of their role are the third context.

### 1 What is Opera?

The term opera has for some time been the subject of debate. The American music critic David Stearn suggests that the old definition of opera, which focused on people singing instead of talking, has given way to a view that music is only operatic when it is used as the primary means to illuminate characters and tell stories.<sup>10</sup> The theatre and opera director David Pountney makes the observation that the use of the term 'music theatre' as an alternative to 'opera', has taken on a political significance:

For some people the term "opera" is so emotive, [...] that they must either possess or destroy it. [...] Avant-garde composers of the 60s and 70s who felt the compulsion of story-telling with music but were embarrassed by the implications of the term opera, called it "Music-theatre"; their polar opposites on Broadway and Shaftesbury Avenue call the commercialised version "Musical Theatre". Spot the difference!<sup>11</sup>

Pountney considers the question of what is and what isn't opera pointless:

opera simply means "work" [...] [and] comes down to the same simple formula: a story is told, on a stage, through music.

*The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* sets out the scope of the dictionary to cover:

work belonging to a genre that arose in Italy about 1600. Broadly we have aimed to regard that genre as comprehending works designed for performance in a theatre, embodying an element of continuing drama

articulated through music, with words that are sung with instrumental support or punctuation.<sup>12</sup>

This thesis examines decision-making of public arts-funding bodies with respect to opera. Since most of the public subsidy to opera is allocated to the bigger and well-established opera companies, this inquiry will be confined mainly to the long-term relationships, which the funding bodies maintain with larger companies. The main body of work of these companies is covered by the above definition.

### 1.1 Anti Operatics

The prevalence of anti operatic sentiment, should be borne in mind when looking at the problems concerning public funding of opera. According to the philosopher Theodor Adorno:

not only have opera's place and function become questionable in today's society but, beyond this, opera in and of itself has, without considering its reception, come to seem peripheral and indifferent [...] <sup>13</sup>

It has not been easy to defend subsidy to an art-form which, as suggested by Adorno in *'Bourgeois Opera'*, seems to have become irrelevant. However, anti-operatic sentiments are as old as opera itself. Over the centuries, defenders of opera had to rebut allegations of absurdity, tediousness and grossness of opera. Professor Herbert Lindenberger points to the, 'disparagement of opera in favour of other musical and literary genres [which] has been a central and continuing fact of operatic history.'<sup>14</sup>

Opera is a popular art-form in Germany. There are 4 times as many opera tickets sold per person in Germany compared to in Britain.<sup>15</sup> And yet, in his definitive work *'Kultur für alle'*, published in 1979, Hilmar Hoffmann, one of Germany's foremost arts-politicians, considered it necessary to rebut eleven prejudices against opera:<sup>16</sup>

- Opera is subsidised for only 8 per cent of the population, thus for an exclusive set;
- Opera serves the representational requirements of the city or the state rather than needs of the wider population;
- Opera is "heritage" and should be in museums;
- Opera is a relic of bourgeois culture;
- Opera is reactionary;

- Opera is conservative;
- The box-office demands prevent new music-drama and experiments;
- Opera is a one-sided sumptuous entertainment, (“*kulinarisch*”);
- Opera as an imaginary art-form is an anachronism in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- Opera is socially irrelevant; and
- Sky-high fees make opera too expensive.

When in 1995 the Arts Council of England announced the lottery grant for the refurbishment of Covent Garden, it was not only hyperbolic headlines such as ‘It’s a Nightmare at the Opera : Arts Chief faces row over the £55 million for “well-orff” ’<sup>17</sup> or ‘Fury as more lottery cash goes down the drain : It’s the Greedy Beggar’s Opera’.<sup>18</sup> Anti-opera sentiment is not limited to the popular press. The depth of animosity to opera could also be seen in *The Times* newspaper, which wrote:

And yesterday, beside the Covent Garden announcement, English National Opera was given £1.4 million to carry out a “feasibility study” based, apparently, on the preposterous possibility that ENO might build yet another subsidised opera house in London.<sup>19</sup>

The Times apparently considers two subsidised opera houses for a city of London’s size and population preposterous.

## 2 Public Policy

Public Policy as a science deals with both the analysis of present or past policies and with suggestions as to how policy should be crafted in future. The first is the descriptive aspect and the second is the prescriptive aspect of policy sciences. Increased competition for government allocations combined with the growth in government bureaucracy has brought about the development of rational models for decision-making in government. The price of the perfection of such rational models is their remoteness from reality. To counter these rational models, a concept of ‘muddling through’ was developed. This concept suggested that the rational models were totally unrealistic and that the real way decisions were made was by small incremental steps. Moreover, the contention was that this was also the right way to make decisions. This was both a descriptive and a prescriptive model, whereas the rational models were only prescriptive. It did not take long for the ‘muddling-

through' model to come under attack. There were various suggestions for remedy, mainly in the direction of some kind of a synthesis between rational and incremental models. Chapter XIII, which follows the case studies and which leads to the proposed model, includes additional Public Administration and decision making definitions and outlines the main decision-making models in more detail.

## 2.1 Decision Making

The heart of Public Administration\* is decision-making which has been defined by *The Public Administration Dictionary* as:

A process in which events, circumstances and information precipitate a choice designed to achieve some desired result.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, efficient administration will be achieved through more efficient decision-making and increased decision quality. The need to make decisions stems mainly from the scarcity of resources. Budget decisions reflect the level of fiscal scarcity, which *The International Encyclopaedia of Public Policy and Administration* classifies as follows:

- (i) Relaxed scarcity – when governments are able to fund the existing activities and undertake new activities. In this situation there is no need to scrutinise the expenditure base and there are unlikely to be sharp disagreements as to the allocation of funds.
- (ii) Chronic scarcity – existing activities plus small incremental increases are possible. Budget controllers have to keep demand for funding down and try to make the money go further through the use of management improvements. Conflict is contained.
- (iii) Acute scarcity – the stage when increments are no longer possible. The means implemented by the budget controllers are tougher (hiring freezes, spending restrictions etc.) and the result is higher tension between spenders and controllers.
- (iv) Total scarcity – in this situation there are not enough resources to fund the base of public programmes. At first, decision-makers try to avoid reality; but

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\* Defined in *The Public Administration Dictionary*, Santa Barbara, 1988: 'All processes, organisations, and individuals (the latter acting in official positions and roles) associated with carrying out laws and other rules adopted or issued by legislatures, executives, and courts.'

gimmicks do not normally produce real resources and the result is that the political claimants challenge the legitimacy of one another with the consequential political tension.<sup>21</sup>

‘Acute Scarcity’ and ‘Total Scarcity’, as defined above, are the situations most likely to lead to a crisis.

### 2.1.1 Stakeholders

Decision-making in the public domain is made harder because of the need to take into account:

any individual, any formal or informal grouping of individuals, or any institution which both wishes to and is able to affect [an] organisation’s future.<sup>22</sup>

According to Robert Smith, former Director of Studies at the Civil Service College in Britain, ‘stakeholder analysis is a common feature of strategic management or planning in the public and private sectors.’ Smith adds, ‘if someone has the power and the potential to influence [an organisation’s] success, it is better to recognise that power and its implications. That way there is a far better chance of ultimate success.’<sup>23</sup>

A constraint-full environment and stakeholders such as public-opinion, external pressure groups and workers’ demands are part of the decision-making process.

## 2.2 Objectives

There are several terms such as mission, objective, aim, target, goal, all of which form part of an organisation’s strategy and of its decision-making. There is quite some fluidity in the terminology used.

Mission has been defined as:

a broad statement of purpose, expressing the *raison d’être* of the organisation.<sup>24</sup>



An aim similarly as:

a broad statement of purpose and direction. [...] The role of an aim is not to give a tight statement of the end result required, but it should convey purpose and values. It provides a constant reference point for all those who work for the organisation and should contribute to delivery of results through uniting people and inspiring them.<sup>25</sup>

A mission statement should be relatively enduring and set out:

1. the intended beneficiaries;
2. the main services to be provided;
3. the geographical boundary of the organisation's operations;
4. the desired consequences of the organisation's services; and
5. a concept which expresses the organisation's identity.<sup>26</sup>

Objectives can be differentiated between 'core objectives' and 'change objectives'. Core objectives are more specific than the mission statement or the aim of the organisation and serve to reflect the underlying purpose of the organisation. Change objectives emerge from later stages of planning and reflect initiatives that are likely to have a completion date. It has been suggested that good objectives should have the following qualities:

achievement-oriented; specific; objective; ends not means; few in number; achievable; prioritised.<sup>27</sup>

An organisation's 'key performance areas' are:

areas of activity which are critical to the organisation's survival and success.<sup>28</sup>

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines target as 'an objective or result aimed at', whereas it defines objective as 'something sought or aimed at'.<sup>29</sup> The purpose of a target, according to the British Government's Audit Commission is not just to measure an organisation's performance but to challenge it to do better.<sup>30</sup> The Audit Commission lists the following qualities which make an effective target:

1. Time-specific – setting out by when the expected standard or level will be achieved;
2. Comparative – against current performance, other providers in the sector or national benchmarks; and

### 3. Realistic.

According to the *International Encyclopaedia of Public Policy and Administration*, objectives:

have suffered from being bland [...], vague (or even outrightly ambiguous), incomplete (sometimes deliberately, in order not to alienate important stakeholders who must feel “ownership” of them), complex and interacting (so that each objective has important effects on several others), difficult to assess (in terms of whether they have been achieved), and symbolic.<sup>31</sup>

The complexity and haziness of objectives in the public sector has political advantages. Too much detail would make bridging different views and interests in society’s different groups hard to bridge.

## 2.3 Implementation and Assessment

The issue of accountability of implementors of public policy has gained momentum with the increased quest of lowering public expenditure and the actions of politicians and officials are judged by the relation between objectives and outcomes. The suggestion that it is impossible to evaluate the matching of objectives and outcomes renders accountability meaningless. However, there also is a growing tendency to argue that successful implementation does not exist because no process of implementation is predictable, or at least that ‘there is no single model of policy execution that will guarantee policy accomplishment.’<sup>32</sup>

There is a duality in the area of implementation of responsibility and trust. Trust in the implementors is above all a practical necessity as it is impossible to foresee all the details pertaining to the implementation of the objectives. On the other hand, total autonomy for the implementors would void the concept of accountability.

According to Professor Jan-Erik Lane, even advocates of the introduction of contractual arrangements, which take more of the functions of government into the private sector, consider such arrangements not to be universally suitable. It is difficult to write a contract when:

Certain services have this soft aspect, meaning that they are difficult to measure in terms of output and difficult to certify in terms of quality. ... When

it is difficult to write a contract that holds in court, then employ bureaucracy.<sup>33</sup>

### 3 The Purpose of Subsidies

Subsidies are either payments by a government to the non-governmental production sector in order to pay for a part of the market price of a commodity, or direct contributions when the commodity is provided by the government itself below cost price. In both cases part of the apparent cost or market price of a commodity is paid by the government.

The authors of the Arts Council of Great Britain Report *A Creative Future: The way forward for the arts, crafts and media in England*, published in 1993, wrote of the social priority which should be attached to the arts that:

are about developing the senses and emotions, about promoting the growth of the imagination and the creative use of media and materials.<sup>34</sup>

Art, it says, is central to the development of a cultural identity and as such a basic human need, adding that, 'those who are denied arts opportunities are indeed deprived.'

*A Creative Future* offers three main arguments for the claim that it is the business of government to pay for the arts:

1. Collective benefit – we are all improved by a society well endowed with artistic skills and talents, we want future generations to enjoy our heritage, but the cost must be met in the present.
2. Equality of access – a pure free market would distort effective public access geographically as well as socially.
3. Preference distortion – individuals simply do not have the information about the arts to enable them to make effective consumer choices.<sup>35</sup>

A wider scope than the *Creative Future*'s 'Collective benefit', is given by Professor John O'Hagan in his description of non-private benefits which may justify state assistance for the arts. O'Hagan groups the non-private benefits into four categories:

- The development of national identity, social cohesion and national prestige;

- The development of socially critical and other innovative/experimental work;
- The creation of an option demand for future and present generations; and
- The creation of economic spillover and social improvements effects.<sup>36</sup>

David Pountney, in a Royal Philharmonic Society lecture *The Future of Opera* made the following points to justify public subsidy to opera:

We have now a far more inclusive and democratic notion of what society is than was the case ... then the gems of artistic perception were only available to those who could afford a ticket. Now we should hope that most members of our society could have financial access to the arts if they wished to make the effort. That is why, ... I would simultaneously like to see the vigorous reassertion of the principles and ideals of public subsidy, which I believe should have an ever more important role in the provision of the arts in the next century.

[...]

the democratic state should also recognise that the freedom of thought which is the guarantee of its democratic probity is uniquely stimulated by the contact with the imaginative world which the arts supplies;

[...]

The arts are the creative responses of exceptional human beings who were able to compose, paint and write down perceptions which were clear to their highly developed imaginations, whereas they might be obscure to the rest of us. These perceptions encapsulate some of the most refined and profound and joyous recorded responses to the human condition and opera, in particular, is one of the highest expressions of that culture.

[...]

Such perceptions are clearly created by an "elite" group [...] The function of subsidy is to make these "elite" perceptions the property of the electorate in a democratic society.<sup>37</sup>

Pountney, in his lecture, is trying to reach a Labour Government in a plea for public funding to opera, the art-form considered in Britain as the most elitist. He does not shy away from referring to the exceptional and the elite and appeals to the political decision makers with his call for the perceptions of this elite to be available to the general public. Whereas Pountney talks about the arts role in upholding the freedom of thought, it appears that the present British Government expects the arts to deliver in other areas. *Modernising the Relationship*, a report to the former British Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, prepared in September 2000 by his Department's Quality, Efficiency and Standards Team (QUEST), stresses the need to tie funding to specific delivery objectives. When it comes to defining the objectives, the report states:

there is a growing awareness among policy makers and the public of the role that sport and cultural activity have to play in delivering right across a whole

range of government priorities – involvement, regeneration, education, health, a growing knowledge based economy. To benefit from this new awareness of the role they can play, all the funded organisations must be able to articulate what they have to offer, and be realistic about how they will deliver it.<sup>38</sup>

The writers of this report are plainly describing a different agenda from that which was defined by *A Creative Future* or from Pountney's call for public subsidy to make the creative output available to the general public. This Government expects the arts institutions to further its health, education and regeneration programmes to justify the subsidy they are given. It is not enough for subsidy to improve access to the arts, nor is it enough that society is improved by the existence of artistic skills and talents. It may be just a blip, which will pass and perhaps the words of composer Harrison Birtwhistle will be heeded:

What teaching does is raise the level of the mediocre. State subsidy does the same, if there's not enough of it. If you have at the centre a first-rate orchestra, properly funded, then everything else – folk-dancing, yoghurt weaving – comes into focus and flourishes. But if you neglect the centre, the rest falls apart.<sup>39</sup>

The cultural-economists Harry Hillman-Chartrand and Claire McCaughey defined four alternative roles government can have in supporting the arts: Facilitator, Architect, Engineer and Patron.<sup>40</sup> Chartrand subsequently suggested that in the real world most governments 'play some mix of all four roles.'<sup>41</sup> Arts funding system reforms in recent years have witnessed a growing convergence of the models, although they still accurately define certain underlying distinctions.

Facilitator – the best instance is the USA, where the arts are mainly funded by tax-deductible private and corporate donations to the arts. In this system, government public expenditure is, in effect, directed by the tastes of the donors.

Architect – Western European countries which mainly fund the arts directly through ministries or departments of culture.

Engineer – dictatorships, such as the former Eastern bloc countries illustrate system; not only do they own the artistic means of production, but also they also use them to promote political education.

Patron – Britain is the foremost example of this system, funding the arts through intermediaries (namely, Arts Councils), which operate on the basis of a mandate (in the form of a Royal Charter). This can enable the government to fund the arts without directly deciding which arts organisations will be the recipients of grants.

Neither the “Engineer” nor the “Facilitator” are relevant to this study. Artistic freedom is a strongly held tenet in democratic countries. Although, even Britain sees more political interference in the arts than it used to, the state has not used culture as a means of promoting political education, and it is unlikely that it will. As to the “Facilitator”, with the reducing financial commitment of European governments in the arts, there have been calls to change the tax system and make private donations more tax-advantageous to the donors than at present. This approach has not made any material advances. In considering the British and German systems, this thesis concentrates on the Patron and the Architect.

### **3.1 Decision Making and Subsidies to Opera**

Public opera funding bodies have to consider, before making any allocation decisions, what it is that is being funded. That is, what are their objectives in funding opera. Objectives tend, however, to be notoriously vague and that makes their application difficult.\*

The second basic question is what mechanism should the funding body use to implement its policy. The funding body can choose if and how it wished to influence the effect of its expenditure on opera. This can be achieved by the appointment of leading directors and managers of the opera company. Alternatively or additionally, the funding body can exert its influence through the use of various control and assessment procedures aimed at monitoring the extent to which the opera company fulfils the funding bodies’ objectives.

The choice of the mode of policy implementation is different in different political systems. The British arm’s length principle<sup>†</sup> creates a distance between the funded bodies and their ultimate funders:

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\* See section 2.2.

<sup>†</sup> See Chapter III – The Arts Council of England.

certain executive, administrative, regulatory or commercial decisions are taken by non-departmental public bodies or executive agencies – collectively known as sponsored bodies – within broad guidelines and spending limits set by DCMS/DNH and its predecessors.<sup>42</sup>

The arm's length principle and the more general principle of artistic freedom, according to which there should be no state intervention in the contents of arts (with certain exclusions, such as blasphemy laws, privacy laws, racial incitement and libel and in Germany loyalty to the constitution), have precedence over the wishes of funding bodies to implement their objectives.

There are opera-specific issues which add difficulty to the decision-making. Large-scale opera companies are normally operations with staff of between 700 and 1300, including technical, administrative personnel, artistic personnel, orchestra, choir, ballet, and often an ensemble of soloists. Before any art is produced, a huge payroll has to be covered. The flexibility of the funding bodies is, therefore restricted by the employment implications of any of its funding decisions. An additional factor limiting the flexibility of the funding bodies is the length of planning cycles in opera, which often span four and even five years. As a result, they do not have the same freedom to withdraw funding from one company and offer it to another company, as they are able to do in for the case of smaller groups.

# III The Arts Council of England

## 1 Introduction

The Arts Councils of England, Scotland and Wales, like their predecessor the Arts Council of Great Britain, are the bodies entrusted by Royal Charter with the distribution of the grant-in-aid to arts organisations as agreed by Parliament.\*

This chapter outlines the structure of the Arts Council and the instruments and mechanisms it utilises to achieve its objectives. The general term 'Arts Council' will be used for both the Arts Council of Great Britain and its successor for England the Arts Council of England.

Lord Harewood, the President of the English National Opera (ENO), also served in the eighties as its long-term General Manager, as well as a member of the Arts Council, was one of the main forces behind the establishment of Opera North and is its Deputy Chairman. He said of the Arts Council:

they don't really have standards, if they were to, they don't impose them, if they impose them, they don't have any sanctions, they don't threaten to withhold subsidy [...] they have never really imposed any element of policy except touring and seat prices<sup>†</sup>.<sup>43</sup>

Lew Hodges, who was Finance Director of the Arts Council, commented on the problem of withdrawing funding from clients:

I think that opera has actually been in many ways the same as other art-forms, but actually exhibited this particular trait more than others, namely that whatever it was – stays. The degree of change in opera over those years was really very limited indeed.<sup>44</sup>

Opera in Britain was not developed by the Arts Council according to a clear 'Grand Plan'. The main reason for this was not the lack of plans, but the lack of funds to

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\* Chapter IV, section 2 deals with the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain. i.e. in contrast to its chartered objective to widen access, the Arts Council was in fact pushing for increase in ticket prices.



follow the ideas set out in the various programmes suggested and recommended by the taskforces, working groups, investigations and enquiries, established by the Arts Council, over the years. Whereas none of the building recommendations were followed, a touring policy, the 'Spheres of Influence' policy, was established which dealt with the provision of opera in the regions.

## **2 Subsidised Opera Provision in Britain**

The Royal Opera was established as the Covent Garden Opera in 1946, and unlike the Royal Ballet which was granted a Royal Charter in 1956, was never granted a Royal Charter. In 1968, Her Majesty The Queen gave her approval for the Covent Garden Opera to be known as the Royal Opera. It started out as a company employing mainly British singers with all the performances sung in English. However, with time, and as more foreign guest singers were employed, this policy was dropped. The Royal Opera now defines itself as an international opera company and is the one company in Britain which consistently engages top (and expensive) international stars for its performances, which are always sung in the original language.

English National Opera (ENO) was established as Sadler's Wells Opera in 1931 and changed its name to English National Opera when it moved from Sadler's Wells Theatre to the London Coliseum in 1968. All productions are sung in English. Until the establishment of Opera North (which started out as English National Opera North) in 1978, ENO provided, in addition to a full season of 42 weeks a year in London, some 30 to 35 weeks of touring. This was achieved with two interchangeable companies of equal standing.

Welsh National Opera (WNO) was established in 1943, on the basis of an amateur chorus, and in the mid seventies developed into a fully professional opera company, which serves both Wales and England (mainly the East Midlands and the West Country). The company has strong relationships with Bristol and Birmingham which, together with Cardiff, are subscription series centres. As a result, WNO receives revenue funding from both the Arts Council of England and the Arts Council of Wales.

Scottish Opera was established, as a small company, in 1962. In its first year it gave only six performances, all of them in Glasgow. Five years later, the number of

performances had risen to forty, of which twenty-nine were in touring venues in both Scotland and Northern England. In 2000/01 the number of performances stood at 78 (excluding small-scale performances).

Opera North was established in 1978 as a branch of English National Opera, and became independent in 1981. Opera North is based in Leeds and tours in Northern England and in the Midlands.

The next tier includes the main touring companies: Glyndebourne Touring Opera, English Touring Opera and the Birmingham Opera Company (previously called the City of Birmingham Touring Opera).

English Touring Opera is the continuation of Opera 80, which was established after the Arts Council decided to close Opera for All in 1980. Opera for All was started by the Arts Council in 1949. This was an ensemble of a pianist plus a group of some four (later more) singers, who would tour the country and perform opera in costume and without scenery in small venues. Over the years, the demand for this type of performance was so high, that Scottish Opera and Welsh National Opera each ran similar companies. In 1980 it was considered by the Arts Council that they could no longer be associated with opera at such basic level and Opera 80 was established instead.\* Opera 80 was an opera touring company, which performed small-scale opera at a higher quality than its predecessor. They toured nationally, often performing in non-theatrical venues and visiting most venues for no more than three nights per year, in certain cases, three nights every two years.

In addition, there are also opera festivals in Britain. These are limited seasons of opera performed on a regular basis. The most prominent of these opera festivals is Glyndebourne.

There are quite a few small opera companies performing opera at different levels and at different venues. Similarly, there are companies, such as the Almeida Opera, which are also small and which cover the more avant-garde opera, mainly in small venues and on small budgets. Most of these companies last for a limited period and then disappear. This may be due to lack of interest in the more modern repertoire, or lack

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\* See Chapter IV, section 7.5.

of interest in lesser quality performances, or lack of funding, or a combination of the reasons.

### **Performances by main Opera Clients of the Arts Council**

Number of Performances [Number of Attendances]<sup>45</sup>

	1967/68	1971/72	1980/81	1986/87	1996/97
<b>Royal Opera</b>	146	157 [296,000]	125 [245,000]	120 [227,000]	143 [277,000]
<b>English National Opera</b>	395*	299* [452,000]	186 [335,000]	207 [389,000]	185 [310,000]
<b>Opera North</b>	-----	----	115 [117,000]	89 [91,000]	112 [115,000]
<b>Welsh National Opera</b>	55	96 [98,000]	110 [138,000]	99 [137,000]	112 [141,000]
<b>Scottish Opera</b>	40	89 [89,000]	96 [123,000]	116 [130,000]	84 [97,000]
<b>Kent Opera</b>	-----	9 [2,000]	49 [34,000]	38 [32,000]	-
<b>Glyndebourne Touring</b>			25 [29,000]	31 [36,000]	45 [61,000]

\* Up to the establishment of Opera North, the ENO provided substantial touring opera performances.

### **3 The Arts Council**

The principle, which defines the relationship between the Arts Council and the British Government, as regards artistic decision-making, is that the former operates 'at arm's-length' from the latter. The Council is, however, 'expected to account for those decisions and explain them to Government, the arts community and the general public.'<sup>46</sup>

The Arts Council of England is headed by a Council of ten members. The Council and its chairman are appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

An additional tier are the advisory panels. These panels have no executive authority and, like the Council members, members of the panels are unpaid. The main functions of the panels are:<sup>47</sup>

- (i) to assess and report on the work of artists and arts organisations;
- (ii) to advise on the formulation of policy; and
- (iii) to make recommendations which assist certain funding decisions.

In addition to different panels for the different art-forms, there are panels dealing with general issues that cross all art forms (such as touring, education or cultural diversity). The relevant panels for opera are the Music Panel and the Touring Panel. Panels have ten members, who are elected by the Council for a period of five years. The principle is to create a group of 'peers' as the relevant panel, to enable them to understand the issues and particular problems of their specific panel. Panels normally meet three to four times a year.

Although panels comprising peers are meant to give the assessment of clients a less bureaucratic angle and to benefit from the understanding and insight of people from within the industry, there appears to be a conflict of interest when a head of one arts organisation is a member of a body which decides on the grants of a competing organisation. Jeremy Isaacs, in his book about the years in which he was General Director of Covent Garden, refers to this problem and says:

it was not easy to deal with George [Christie]\* as Chairman of the Arts Council music panel advising on Covent Garden's grant. I still think it odd that I should have to do so. Could he really be objective about our needs? <sup>48</sup>

In March 1948, three years after the establishment of the Arts Council, an Opera and Ballet panel was established to deal specifically with these art-forms. This panel included representatives of the managements of Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells, Carl Rosa,<sup>†</sup> Glyndebourne and the English Opera Group. According to the writer Eric

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\* George Christie was Chairman of Glyndebourne Opera Festival.

<sup>†</sup> The Carl Rosa Company, was an opera company, established in the 1870s and which closed down in 1960, because of insufficient Arts Council funding. In 1957 the Arts Council made an attempt to merge the Carl Rosa Company with Sadler's Wells Opera, but Sadler's Wells was not interested in the proposal and the merger did not happen.

White, this panel was disbanded, after only four meetings, as 'the ingredients proved to be too explosive'.<sup>49</sup>

Since then opera has been within the remit of the Music Panel of the Arts Council. It is surprising, however, that notwithstanding the substantial grants allocated to opera and the problems that have arisen over the years, the Council has not established a special panel for opera. The issue of an opera panel was raised at the time of the 1985 funding crisis. Sir William Rees-Mogg reported<sup>50</sup> to the Council that the regional opera companies had raised the question of such a panel. It was agreed to ask Arts Council officers to consider the question as part of the ongoing Organisational Review. There was no further action taken. No explanation was given for the Arts Council's avoidance of an Opera Panel. It may be that the almost incestuous, on the one hand, and competitive aspect, on the other hand, made a panel of peers which assesses the opera companies and makes funding recommendations with regard to them, impractical.

The extent to which the Panel structure is effective and what their true role is or should be is worthy of a separate investigation. The composer Michael Berkeley, a former member of the Arts Council's Music Panel, wrote in a letter to *The Times*:

Until earlier this year I was a member of the advisory music panel. I felt consistently frustrated and angry at the Council's apparent lack of regard for the often unanimous advice of its advisers [...].<sup>51</sup>

It certainly seems that the Music Panel has very limited influence in the field of opera. According to a study, which was undertaken by Sheffield University in 1981, and which looked at cost-effectiveness in opera provision in Britain:

Overall policy discussions on opera do not take place, or if they do it is between informal groups not reporting to anybody.<sup>52</sup>

The Arts Council is headed by a Chief Executive, who reports to the Council. Reporting to the Chief Executive are four Executive Directors, who are the heads of the four directorates comprising the Arts Council.

Within the Arts Directorate, opera (in England) was, until May 2001, dealt with by two departments at the Arts Council: the Music Department and the Touring Department. The result was that some of the clients were dealing with two different departments of the Arts Council and getting separate grants from each department.

Opera is now the responsibility of the Music Department, which is also in charge of the relationships with the opera touring companies. Historically, the Touring Department was a somewhat independent body within the Arts Council. It was the one department, which not only evaluated clients and agreed grants, but also the venues, their capabilities and their needs. As such, it had some aspects of an impresario in it.\* The people who ran the Touring Department were loath to give up an important part of their territory. According to Richard Witts, a commentator on arts policy in Britain, Jack Phipps who ran the Touring Department in the 1980s, considered it as his own fiefdom and was 'allowed ... to augment and optimise his position there; in his business-suit style he ran it as Phipps & Co.'<sup>53</sup> It was only, in the framework of the reorganisation of the Arts Directorate that this split responsibility was removed.

The Head of Opera and Music Theatre is also the Lead Officer for the opera clients. The Royal Opera is, traditionally, dealt with by very senior officers, at times by the Secretary-General himself and, most recently, by the Director for Arts.

The Lead Officer attends Board Meetings of the opera companies (whenever invited or if there is a specific Arts Council funding issue to discuss), and Board Papers are regularly sent by the opera companies to the Arts Council.

#### **4 Relationship with Clients**

The Arts Council relationship with a client is based on:

- a funding agreement;
- continuous assessment and contact;
- an annual review meeting; and
- an in-depth appraisal once every five years.

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\* In an interview, Henry Little, the Head of Opera and Music-theatre at the Arts Council of England, London, 6.4.2001, described the decision-making process with regard to application for subsidies for touring as follows:

The officer:

- calls venues to hear why they think the programme will work; whether an audience can be developed, whether the finances are right and whether the dates set are agreed.
- works out the viability of the tour, including the external sources of funding, cross-checks statements made about 3<sup>rd</sup> party funding.
- prepares a report for the touring panel based on the above and on past experience and track record of the company.

The Funding Agreements stipulate that:

The Organisation must agree the procedure for making and renewing all senior appointments with the Arts Council. The Arts Council reserves the right to participate in the selection procedure.<sup>54</sup>

However, as the opera companies are separate legal entities, the decision is that of the boards of the different companies. The board of an opera company is unlikely to choose a new General Director who is deemed unacceptable to its main source of funding. The Arts Council is also careful not to act in a way which may result in it being considered to be a 'shadow director'<sup>\*</sup> of its client companies. This could be especially risky, where a client organisation becomes bankrupt, as directors may in certain situations be considered personally liable. The choice of a General Director of an opera company, can therefore not be considered to be one of the means at the disposal of the Arts Council to change the direction of a client company.

#### **4.1 Funding Agreements**

Since 1994, the mechanism by which the Arts Council formalises its relationship with its clients, has been the Funding Agreement. A *Creative Future*, the Arts Council strategy document published in 1993, developed the concept that the funding bodies should move to a contractual relationship with the arts organisations.<sup>55</sup> These Funding Agreements are not legally binding contracts, but rather simply set out the expectations of both parties.

Funding Agreements include the following elements:

- an explanatory foreword;
- a summary – setting out the key points of the agreement;
- details of the subsidy and the payment dates;
- the activities the client will undertake;
- the "target outcomes" from the activities;
- conditions of the grant and the Arts Council's requirements for information;
- and
- assessment principles.

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<sup>\*</sup> A shadow director is a person or other legal entity who is not a member of a company's board but, through his or her influence of other board members, has practical powers of a director.

Since funding agreements were normally finalised towards the beginning of the financial year, whereas planning, especially in the opera business, takes place up to five years in advance, they did not become practical instruments for implementation of Arts Council objectives. Instead, funding agreements tended to reflect the actual situation and plans of the opera company. A certain change can be expected as a result of the newly (2001) introduced three-year funding for revenue (core) clients. This arrangement agrees the grants for three years, (instead of annual grants). It is meant to give the companies more security and planning certainty and reduce the 'over-detailed annual control agreement [...] [so that] once the agreement is in place, the arts organisation should be free to get on with it.'<sup>56</sup> This may, in future, be extended to six year funding agreements for certain clients.

#### **4.2 Assessment of Clients**

In the early eighties, the Arts Council has defined the following criteria as those by which it assesses the work of its clients:

- a. quality of artistic product, including as appropriate, standards of presentation, performance, design and direction, and their relationship to the conception of the company's overall programme;
- b. actual and potential creative strength in relation to both new and established work;
- c. the extent to which stated aims and objects are realised;
- d. the fullest practicable use of facilities and the widest provision of the arts to the community;
- e. education policy in relation to the artistic programme;
- f. the employment and other opportunities extended to members of ethnic minority groups;
- g. overall value for money, including any success in extending audiences through other media;
- h. box office and attendance returns;
- i. the company's success in raising local authority support and other income;
- j. the efficiency shown in using available resources and the accuracy and control of budgeting;
- k. the urgency and nature of any fundamental financial problems;
- l. the adequacy and security of tenure of premises;



- m. the balance of provision between London and other regions;
- n. the Council's existing declared policies, particularly the emphasis which it places on full-time professional work.<sup>57</sup>

Sir Roy Shaw, Secretary-General of the Arts Council from 1975 to 1982, describes the situation with regard to client evaluation by Arts Council officers and advisory panel members and their failure to evaluate the four national companies (The Royal Opera House and the English National Opera, the Royal National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company). Shaw made the surprising comment:

Traditionally, the music and drama panels did not attempt to evaluate them, though I never discovered why.

[...]

A decision by the Arts Council staff and advisers that an individual's or a company's work is poor is always denounced as unfair, stupid or even politically biased. Successful applicants merely assume that bare justice has been done.[...][opera company representatives] seemed to regard even minor criticisms as somewhat impertinent.<sup>58</sup>

Sir Roy was Secretary-General for seven years, prior to which he was a member of the Council and chaired panels. The above confession, is therefore quite astounding. He was after all in charge. It was his responsibility to initiate an evaluation of the 'Big Four' and not to be bewildered by the lack of such an evaluation.

In 1983, Clive Priestley voiced the opinion that the Arts Council was inherently not equipped to assess national companies:

the assessment of a business of the size of a national company is neither a process in which the Arts Council is well versed nor one which conforms either to a longstanding interpretation of its function as a grant distributor or to the capacity it has available to undertake it.<sup>59</sup>

The Council itself did not believe in its power to challenge the national companies with regard to their artistic policy.<sup>60</sup> Even Sir William Rees-Mogg, the Council's Thatcher appointed (1982) Chairman, was of the opinion that the maximum that could be done was to exert pressure for change. The Council was frustrated by this weakness vis-à-vis the four national companies. It felt that it had enough expertise to be taken seriously even by the major organisations, which should not be treated differently from other clients.

This was not the case with regard to financial management. The Council discussed, for example, the fact that the ROH was refusing to operate within the funds available.<sup>61</sup> The Council agreed to inform the ROH that, in future, the Arts Council would not continue to advance funds on such a basis. The Council referred to the fact that both the ENO and the other opera companies were under severe financial strain and yet managed to reduce their deficits to manageable proportions.

Information gathered during the assessment process was taken into account in the allocation of subsidy for the first time towards the 1986/7 grants. This was based on the results of the 1984/5 assessments. Prior to that the review of the national companies had never been completed in time.<sup>62</sup> However, the Secretary-General considered that the Arts Council had still not found a wholly satisfactory method of assessing the work of the national companies.<sup>63</sup>

In 1989, the National Audit Office (NAO), the Government body which investigates and reports on government activities (and those of government agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies), published a report on the Arts Council. In this report, the NAO accepted the real difficulty there is in assessing artistic achievement:

assessing quality and standards of artistic achievement, and success in meeting artistic objectives, is notoriously difficult. It involves fine judgement in areas which are often subjective; there are many different perspectives on questions of creativity and talent; and tastes and fashions are subject to change. There may be conflicting views on such issues as the objectives and purposes of art and, [...] there are seldom any clear or commonly agreed and accepted measures of performance and impact.<sup>64</sup>

However, the NAO was critical of the fact that the Royal Charter objectives, which are expressed in broad terms, have not been translated 'into more detailed objectives and targets, set within specified time-scales, and linked to financial allocations and budgets.'

The NAO acknowledged the Arts Council's truism about the difficulty, bordering on impossibility, to measure the artistic value of the arts. Notwithstanding this, it insisted that it was necessary for objectives to be more detailed and easier to monitor.

According to the National Audit Office Report of 1990, the Office of Arts and Libraries had started to explore, together with the Arts Council, opportunities for the

latter to refine and improve performance indicators and generally to produce better quantified plans.

A year before the NAO 1989 Report demanded that instruments for accountability be introduced by the Arts Council, Richard Wilding, a former head of the Office of Arts and Libraries, was commissioned by the Arts Minister to produce a report on the structures through which central government money was used to support the arts in England. The *Wilding Report*:

strongly criticised the lack of clarity, cohesion and common purpose amongst regional and national arts funding bodies and called for an urgent review of the whole rationale and workings of grant-giving throughout England.<sup>65</sup>

As a consequence of the *Wilding Report*, Richard Luce, the Minister for the Arts, called for the development of agreed performance measurements.<sup>66</sup>

In response to the Minister's demand, the Arts Council co-ordinated a thorough and extensive process of consultations and deliberations, with papers produced covering a wide variety of issues connected to the arts and arts funding. The final result was the strategy document produced by the Arts Council '*A Creative Future: The Way Forward for the Arts, Crafts and Media in England*' in 1993. This document concluded that:

The use of measures and indicators of performance must be clearly circumscribed. They are substitutes for performance not the thing itself. They cannot be 100 per cent reliable and thus 100 per cent reliance on them is inevitably a mistake. [...] measures of performance are no more than 'material', to be used as critically any other in judging how well an arts organisation is doing.<sup>67</sup>

The reluctance of the Arts Council to measure its clients and to be measured by the Government is not surprising. The whole arm's length principle would be at risk if evaluation were to become formula-based. A formula could be operated by any layman and would not be dependent the arts-oriented professionals at the Arts Council.

And, indeed, a Policy Studies Institute (PSI) study, which was published twelve years after the NAO 1989 Report, has cast doubt on the value of state support for the arts and concluded that there is:

- a. an absence of reliable and consistent data amongst official bodies as to how money is spent and to what effect
- b. a serious lack of analysis, which impairs both decision-making and policy outcomes.<sup>68</sup>

This is notably similar to the findings of the 1989 NAO Report, which stated:

to date it has been difficult to establish on any consistent or quantified basis to what extent the substantial public funds granted to the Council have been used effectively in meeting its objectives. However, the Council has made and is making, a good deal of progress in these areas.<sup>69</sup>

Yet, there is continued political pressure on the Arts Council to create measurable performance indicators vis-à-vis its clients. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Quality, Efficiency and Standards Team (QUEST) has developed a Funding Agreement framework which incorporates performance measures. It expects the Non Departmental Public Bodies (such as the Arts Council) 'to integrate performance measures into their management processes and in documenting their progress with DCMS'.<sup>70</sup>

### **4.3 Annual Reviews**

Annual Review meetings are held with each of the regularly funded clients. The clients are required to complete a self-assessment submission. These submissions include: data on number of performances, venues, tickets sold etc., financial information about the company and a summary of the year's artistic activity.

The clients are normally represented by the General Director and the Director of Finance and Administration. The Arts Council representatives at meetings with opera clients are the Lead Officer (Head of Opera and Music Theatre) and the Director of Music.

One of the functions of the Annual Review meetings used to be to discuss the next year's funding requirements of the company. For those companies, which will now have three-year funding, that aspect, which gave an annual urgency to the meetings will disappear. These Annual Review meetings are, however, the occasion on which the Arts Council and their clients have a structured discussion, covering all aspects of the company's activities, its artistic direction, its achievements and any problems it

may have. As such, the meetings will continue to be of importance in the relationship between the Council and the companies.

#### **4.4 Quinquennial Appraisals**

In-depth appraisals of the funded organisations are held once every five years. All aspects of the appraised company are explored by the appraisal team, including:

- artistic programme;
- relationship with audiences (including education and outreach);
- financial profile; and
- board, management and staff.

It was only in 1989 that the Council decided that, as of 1989/90, the national companies should be subject to a process of appraisal in line with that of other clients.<sup>71</sup> Unlike the annual assessment reports, prepared by the Arts Council's officers, an appraisal team comprises of external members and Arts Council officers. It is a stated objective of the Arts Council that the appraisal should 'assist the organisation in reviewing the effectiveness of its operation'.<sup>72</sup> The appraisal report makes recommendations on the future development of the company to both the company and the Arts Council. It is presented to the Arts Council, after its draft has been shown to the company being appraised for their initial response. The reports are not published, but with the agreement of the companies, the Summary and Recommendations of each appraisal report are made publicly available. The Arts Council decides how it wishes to act on the report. The monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations is the responsibility of the Arts Council and would normally constitute part of the subsequent annual assessments and review meetings. In important and difficult situations special monitoring teams are established. Such was the case with the 1992 Warnock Appraisal of the Royal Opera House.

## 5 Conclusion

The decisions the Arts Council makes vis-à-vis opera are:

- General definition of objectives for all companies and specific objectives for each company;
- Amount of grant made to each company;
- Via touring grants, decision on regional venues to receive opera tours; and
- Participation in selection of General Directors of the company

Although opera benefits from a substantial proportion of Arts Council resources, the Arts Council has chosen not to have a separate panel dealing with opera issues and opera clients. Opera is dealt with by the Music Panel and by the Touring Panel. For many years the Arts Council did not carry out assessments of the big national companies (two of which are the London opera companies). Assessments and five-yearly appraisals are now carried out on all clients. As to performance indicators, for more than ten years the Government has been pressing the Arts Council to use performance indicators for its evaluation and decision-making process. The more exact and well-defined the decision-making mechanism will be, the more difficult it will be to maintain an arm's-length policy.

In theory the Arts Council has all the means it needs for the implementation of its policy and objectives. It has instituted a formal funding structure, including agreements, assessments and appraisals. The case studies will explore how the Arts Council has used the means at its disposal.

## **IV Arts Council Objectives in the Funding of Opera**

### **1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the objectives of the Arts Council with regard to the funding of opera, on which it has historically spent (and currently spends) a substantial proportion of its resources. Although the stated objectives of the Arts Council have been reviewed, the objectives vis-à-vis opera were only rarely, and often informally, set out. Therefore, particular objectives for opera and its funding have been distilled from the broader, general objectives as outlined in the Arts Council's Royal Charters, annual reports and other publications. However, even these suffer from 'an inherent reluctance on the part of arts councils and the artistic community to define objectives in rational and unambiguous terms.'<sup>73</sup>

### **2 The Establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain**

The eminent economist, who was also the initiator of the Arts Council of Great Britain and its first Chairman, Lord Keynes, in a BBC broadcast made in July 1945, (only two months after the end of the Second World War) spoke of the transition from war-time to peace-time Britain with regard to arts provision.<sup>74</sup> Of the war-time Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (C.E.M.A.), he said, 'The duty of C.E.M.A. was to maintain the opportunities of artistic performance for the hard-pressed and often exiled civilians.' Keynes then set out what would be essentially the manifesto of the newly established Arts Council of Great Britain:

A semi-independent body provided with modest funds to stimulate, comfort and support any societies or bodies brought together on private or local initiative which are striving with serious purpose and a reasonable prospect of success to present for public enjoyment the arts of drama, music and painting.

Keynes explained that the public exchequer had recognised their duty to support “civilising arts”:

The artist... leads the rest of us into fresh pastures and teaches us to love and to enjoy what we often begin by rejecting, enlarging our sensibility and purifying our instincts. The task of an official body is not to teach or to censor, but to give courage, confidence and opportunity.

[...]

New work will spring up more abundantly in unexpected quarters and in unforeseen shapes when there is a universal opportunity for contact with traditional and contemporary arts in their noblest forms.

Keynes covered both the provinces and the importance of the capital in his words:

We of the Arts Council are greatly concerned to decentralise and disperse the dramatic and musical and artistic life of the country, to build up provincial centres and to promote corporate life in these matters in every town and county [...]

But it is also our business to make London a great artistic metropolis, a place to visit and to wonder at.

The speech also refers to the importance of solving the shortage of suitable and adequate buildings, in post-blitz Britain and makes the following points about the Arts Council's aims:

Your enjoyment will be our first aim [...] it will be you yourselves who will by your patronage decide in the long run what you get. In so far as we instruct, it is a new game we are teaching you to play- and to watch. [...]

The purpose of the Arts Council of Great Britain is to create an environment to breed a spirit, to cultivate an opinion, to offer a stimulus to such purpose that the artist and the public can each sustain and live on the other in that union which has occasionally existed in the past at the great ages of a communal civilised life.

The significance of the Government's decision to establish the Arts Council and, for the first time in British history (excluding the war-time C.E.M.A.), to create a mechanism for the public funding of the arts, cannot be over-stated. It is especially notable, but perhaps also thereby explicable, that this decision was made at a time, when the country lay physically in ruins, its industry shattered, its economy depleted after the six year war. It was, perhaps, hard to find the means, but for the Attlee post-war Government, this was an essential component of the re-building of Britain. In this context, to a blitz-damaged country Keynes spoke about the building of theatres, and it is thus, that he recited to a country which has just come out of such a bloody war, about ‘enlarging sensibility’ and ‘purifying instincts’. The means are only



‘modest’, but they have been made available and everyone, according to Keynes, would reap the benefit. The Keynes broadcast also presented a strong democratic undertone. Decentralisation would ensure that the benefits reach ‘every town and county’ and the people themselves shall decide what they get.

A year later, the Arts Council was granted its Royal Charter. The first Royal Charter incorporated the Arts Council of Great Britain:

for the purpose of developing a greater knowledge, understanding and practice of the fine arts exclusively, and in particular to increase the accessibility of the fine arts to the people throughout Our Realm, to improve the standard of execution of the fine arts and to advise and co-operate with Our Government Departments [...].<sup>75</sup>

In a debate in the House of Lords, fifty years after the establishment of the Arts Council, Lord Annan, considered that, ‘after the Second World War one could argue that Britain was still a philistine country.’<sup>76</sup> The definition of the Arts Council’s tasks, in its Charter, seem to address precisely this issue.

The Charter referred clearly to ‘fine arts exclusively’. Contrary to the normal use of this term, which excludes the performing arts, with Covent Garden as its most significant client, this could not have been its meaning in the Charter. It is more likely that the purpose of the word ‘fine’ was Keynes’ wish to distinguish the arts which would be funded by the Arts Council and to ensure that the more popular and therefore not ‘fine’ arts would be excluded.

In 1967, the Royal Charter was amended so that the expression ‘fine arts’ was replaced by ‘arts’.<sup>77</sup> The other change in the new Charter was the deletion of the third objective ‘to improve the standard of execution of the fine arts’. The priorities had changed. By 1967, the Arts Council did not think that improving the standards was a first-order priority. In a debate, in the House of Lords on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1967, Lord Goodman, the chairman of the Arts Council, argued:

I do not say that our policy is any better, but it is different, in the sense that our major emphasis is on cultivating new audiences for the arts. The question of improving the standard and quality of those institutions which are still there is of great importance, but it is not our paramount consideration [...].<sup>78</sup>

This change in emphasis is considered in more detail in section 7.8 of this chapter, which deals with the Arts Council objective of education.

### 3 Lack of Policy

The Arts Council has not produced a policy document on opera. In over fifty years since the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain, no clear, explicit objectives appear in its annual reports for the funding of an art form which has in some years received up to 40% of the Arts Council's total grant-in-aid. Opera received the highest percentage during the years 1952 to 1965, after which the percentage has slowly, but materially, decreased and stood in 2000 at only 17%. The decrease reflected the introduction of additional art-forms (such as Jazz and ethnic arts) to those already funded by the Arts Council. It also reflected conscious decisions of the Arts Council, mainly in the 1980s, to lower the proportion of funds allocated to opera.\*

In 1989, Richard Luce, the Minister for the Arts, asked the Arts Council to co-ordinate a national strategy for the arts, crafts and media. A lengthy and meticulous process then began and a wide range of experts were commissioned to write discussion papers leading to a consultative document *Towards a National Arts & Media Strategy*, published in 1992. The final result of this process was the strategy document *A Creative Future : The way forward for the arts, crafts and media in England*. The authors of the discussion paper on opera, stated that their paper represented their own personal views and that it was not a chapter of *Towards a National Arts and Media Strategy*.<sup>79</sup> As the Arts Council itself has never defined what its objectives are vis-à-vis opera, it is of interest to quote in full their perception of Arts Council opera policy as it appeared in this discussion paper:

Though not enshrined in any specific document, it can be inferred (and has been confirmed verbally by officers) that ACGB opera policy is as follows:

- To support high-quality performances of worthwhile opera;
- To provide continuity of support to selected opera companies to ensure their survival and artistic development;
- To provide means, both direct and indirect, for training and developing opera singers;
- To monitor repertoire and standards;

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\* For example in *The Glory of the Garden*, see section 5 of this chapter.

- To enable most people throughout Britain to go to performances of opera should they so wish, taking into account the cost of attending a performance just as much as the geographical accessibility;
- To encourage financial support for opera from other bodies, especially from local authorities;
- To obtain high attendance at the box office;
- To increase the demand for and interest in opera by various forms of education;
- Not under normal circumstances to support performances by largely amateur forces;
- To encourage business sponsorship of the arts; and
- To encourage the development of new and experimental work.

#### **4 Apologias**

The Arts Council's annual reports, in addition to an Income and Expenditure account and a breakdown of the grants made, regularly include musings and thoughts of the Council's Chairman and Secretary General and information about the activities of the Council and about some of the work which had been funded. Although opera has been the recipient of a substantial portion of the Arts Council's total grant expenditure throughout the years, it normally received very little mention in the annual reports of the then Arts Council. In the cases when the annual reports did refer to opera they would usually give information about successful or interesting opera productions and, from time to time, offer an apologetic explanation for allocating such a high proportion of the grant-in-aid to opera. These explanations, details of which are given in this section, would normally make the following points:

- opera is very expensive to produce and cannot survive on box-office takings.
- the amount spent is not as high as people think.
- a substantial part of the amount spent is spent on touring and not just on London.

These explanations are all valid but the Arts Council's perception that it had to constantly defend its expenditure is notable. Lord Goodman, a solicitor and renowned political advisor to Government, in his capacity as Chairman of the Arts Council, wrote:

We are not a luxury; we do not cater for a small elite out of the pockets of a protesting multitude.<sup>80</sup>

It is unlikely that Goodman would have written this unless he considered it politically necessary.

As early as 1957, a suggestion was made by Lord Bridges,\* to separate the Arts Council's grant-in-aid for non-opera and ballet clients and for Parliament to vote a separate sum for opera and ballet.<sup>81</sup> The 1957-58 Annual Report referred to this suggestion:

The Arts Council arouses some criticism because so large a segment of its grant is applied to opera and ballet. Recognising the difficulties this obligation imposes on the Arts Council, Lord Bridges suggests that it should have two separate votes from Parliament: one for the expensive needs of opera and ballet, and for the rest of its activities in music, drama, visual art and poetry. On present levels the proportions of these separate votes would work out at almost two to one. In proposing this variation Lord Bridges said, 'the issue of how much money this country is prepared to spend on opera could then be settled without calling in question the extent and scope of the other activities of the Council.'<sup>82</sup>

The Arts Council, interestingly, referred to the money spent on opera and ballet as its 'obligation'. These art-forms thereby gained a standing which should not be assailable. What the term 'obligation' implied was that it was not a matter of choice and therefore the Arts Council was fulfilling its mission, not squandering money. Another significant point is that whereas Lord Bridges referred to both opera and ballet, he then spoke about 'how much money this country is prepared to spend on opera'. The Arts Council's *Opera and Dance Report* of 1983 also touched on the sensitivity to opera subsidies:

It is useful to ask at the start why these two art forms should attract public subventions at all. We will refer to opera first, since opera poses this question in its sharpest form.<sup>83</sup>

It was opera which seems to have been the real thorn in the public's side. There was a general perception that there was more public support for ballet than for opera. The report refers to the prevalent view that, 'opera is [...] the preserve of an elite',

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\* Lord Bridges, former Cabinet Secretary, was Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. In 1957, he made this suggestion in the *Romanes Lecture*, in which he gave an analysis of the relationship between the State and the Arts.

whereas for dance, 'the growth in audiences and audience appreciation has been astonishing. [...] Dance [...] has begun to bridge differences of background and education.' Anti-opera sentiment would come up regularly whenever increased funding would be proposed.\*

In contrast to one of its precursors,<sup>†</sup> which preferred not to refer to the issue ('We have not considered the philosophy of subsidy to be within our terms of reference'), the 1983 *Opera and Dance Report* endeavoured to elucidate its reasoning.<sup>84</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that the terms of reference of the Study Group did not include an examination of the reasons for funding opera, the study group chose to address this question, explaining that it was 'useful to ask at the start why these two art forms should attract public subventions at all'. By explaining that 'The Council's pattern of funding for both opera and dance has tended to develop *ad hoc*, in response to demand', the Report demonstrated that there was demand for opera and that money was not just being spent due of the whims of the Arts Council or just to please a few 'toffs'. Yet the Report went further and maintained that demand was not a good enough principle for public funding. With an approach which could be considered as patronising, the Report suggested that opera is so valuable that it should reach many more than it does. The Report stated categorically:

We would find it hard to justify the spending of so much of available public funds on an art form which was inherently and inescapably the province of only a few per cent of the population. We believe it has qualities which would make it a worthwhile experience for a much wider range of people, and such a wider range, far larger than at present, can in time be reached. We believe that opera is a most valuable and enjoyable form of art, one of the finest achievements of the Western artistic heritage, still capable of moving people deeply, whether or not they belong to privileged social groups. It is a mixed form, bringing together music, singing, drama and spectacle in great creative experiences which can also symbolically reflect on the more powerful dilemmas of human beings. It should be available to many more than at present enjoy it.

And concluded :

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\* The section on anti-operatic sentiment in chapter II includes some examples.

† The 1969 *A Report on Opera and Ballet in the United Kingdom 1966-69*.

On these grounds: that this is an art form we should value and that there are not only actual but much larger potential audiences, we should base the case for strong public subventions.

It is likely that the short history of opera tradition in Britain, which to a large extent was based on ad hoc organised seasons, and the fact that before the Second World War, 'the Grand Season was largely a social occasion', have helped to instil the perception that opera is an elitist pastime.<sup>85</sup> The Arts Council has consequently considered it expedient to produce explanations and justification for its expenditure on opera. Moreover, it suggested that rather than elitist entertainment, opera is an art form with large potential audiences.

## **5 The Glory of the Garden**

Only a year after the 1983 *Opera and Dance Report* put forth its strong conviction as to the value of opera, *The Glory of the Garden*, the important strategy document produced by the Arts Council in 1984, had only the following to say to justify subsidising opera:

The Council has always given major support to opera, which is a very important art form. That will continue.<sup>86</sup>

The Report was hailed by the Arts Council's Chairman, Sir William Rees-Mogg, as 'the first major strategic review of the Council's work in the 40 years of its existence.'<sup>87</sup> It dealt mainly with the inadequate funding of the regions by suggesting more involvement of local authorities in the funding of the arts.

*The Glory of the Garden* was a product of the newly-installed heads of the Arts Council. Sir William Rees-Mogg, Chairman and Luke Rittner, Secretary General, were both new appointees of the Thatcher administration. It reflected a change in philosophy from Lord Goodman's period (Chairman from 1965 to 1972), 'in the first place, the Council is concerned with artists' and 'a second major concern of the Council is the well-being of the great national institutions',<sup>88</sup> to that of Sir William Rees-Mogg (Chairman from 1982 to 1989), who explained:

Basically I came to the conclusion that arts funding had to be for the benefit of the audience and not for the benefit of the performer,<sup>89</sup> [and]

The quality of London itself as an artistic metropolis shows up the deficiencies of the arts provision in the rest of the country.<sup>90</sup>

The Report was subtitled '*The Development of the Arts in England: A Strategy for a Decade*'. The strategy was to change the existing imbalance. It referred to Keynes' undertaking, in his broadcast of 1945, 'to decentralise and disperse the dramatic and musical and artistic life.'<sup>91</sup> *The Glory of the Garden*'s plan was to create a national grid of thirteen major cities with access to the arts provided through subsidised transport. The grid was to be based on local authorities taking local responsibility of managing and co-funding the arts. To achieve this the Arts Council undertook a thorough review of all its clients. The review proposed the devolution of approximately 50 (of 160) clients from the Arts Council in London to its Regional Arts Associations. £5.5 million of its budget were to be made available to the planned development, by reducing or totally withdrawing funding from certain clients.

As the Arts Council had concluded that the proportion of its funds spent on opera was too high, the decisions of *The Glory of the Garden* were: to cease subsidising Opera 80, to initiate merger talks between Scottish Opera and Opera North and to redress the imbalance between spending on opera and spending on other music and dance.

Neither of the first two decisions was implemented. The attempt to withdraw funding from Opera 80 was reversed as a result of successful lobbying by the Company and its followers and the merger talks were aborted, as neither company was interested.\* However, the share of opera in the total spending of the Arts Council came down from 24.8% in 1984/85 to 17.7% in 1987/88.

London's share of the Council's total grant-in-aid fell from 48 per cent in 1984/85 to 40.5 per cent in 1987/88.

It is notable that in its 1985-86 Annual Report, the Arts Council acknowledged that it had to cut ten weeks of opera touring 'due to the escalating costs of opera production and constraints on Arts Council funds.'<sup>92</sup> Although the declared purpose of *The Glory of the Garden* was to increase funding for the regions, the reduction in opera funding shows that it failed to do so.

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\* See Chapter VII, section 4.

## **6 Committees and Study Groups**

The Arts Council has regularly established committees to examine an area of its activity and advise on matters of both policy and practice. Establishing committees to analyse and report an issue enables the ad-hoc gathering of different people, who are not necessarily part of an existing structure (such as Arts Council officers together with panel or Council members and external experts) to contribute to a solution. They thereby can ensure that a wider range of views and capabilities are represented in the search of a solution. Committees can, however, also serve another organisational purpose: They are useful, especially when things go wrong, to demonstrate that decisions were the result of committee recommendations and not personal decisions.

The first Arts Council committee to investigate the situation of opera provision was established in 1950. Since then, over twelve such reports have been commissioned by the Arts Council and/or by the Government. To examine what the Arts Council (or the Government) considered necessary of scrutiny, this section concentrates on the terms of reference of these committees. The main reports were:

### **6.1 Report on Opera and Ballet in the United Kingdom 1966-69.**

The terms of reference of this enquiry were as follows:

To consider the existing and to estimate the potential public demand for opera and ballet in different parts of Great Britain; and to consider how far, under existing policies, these demands are being or are likely to be met; and to make proposals regarding future policy, indicating the scale of financial support, both in respect of capital and recurring expenditure, which might be required to give them effect.<sup>93</sup>

### **6.2 Opera Working Party - 1972**

This report was a study into the problems involved in subsidising opera, which was undertaken by an internal Working Party consisting of officers of the Arts Council. The report was completed in March 1972. Its terms of reference were:

To review the provision of opera in England, Scotland and Wales, both in respect of home-based performances and of touring; and particularly to



examine whether the resources available were being used to the best advantage, and to report to the Council.<sup>94</sup>

### **6.3 Opera and Dance Study Group – February 1983**

This study group was established by the Arts Council of Great Britain to look solely into opera and dance provision in London. The terms of reference of the study group were set in November 1980 and extended in November 1981 to cover the whole country and not London only. They read:

To consider the future provision of opera and dance nationally in relation to need, supply, housing and funding and to report on long term policy.<sup>95</sup>

### **6.4 The Priestley Report 1983**

This report into Covent Garden and the Royal Shakespeare Company was commissioned by the then Minister for the Arts, Paul Channon, with the blessing of the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher. It is clear that this was the price the Arts Council had to pay for an additional five million pounds demanded in 1983-84 to write off accumulated deficits in the arts. ' [Mrs. Thatcher] interested Paul Channon in the scrutiny', Priestley has said, 'as he needed to get more money from her.'<sup>96</sup> This direct scrutiny on behalf of a minister was unusual. Lord Goodman, who was a director of both the ROH and the ENO, refused any co-operation from the ENO and tried unsuccessfully to swing the ROH Board against the inquiry.<sup>97</sup>

This was certainly an attack on the arm's length principle. A civil servant, who led the Efficiency Unit at 10 Downing Street and who reported directly to the Prime Minister, was appointed to report to the Government on two major clients of the Arts Council.

The *Priestley Report* does not include its own terms of reference and only states that:

The Minister for the Arts announced on 7 February 1983 a scrutiny of the financial affairs and financial prospects of the Royal Opera House and Royal Shakespeare Company.<sup>98</sup>

The Report further lists eight points as the 'scope of the scrutiny' of the Royal Opera House, which it says were 'determined by the Scrutiny team and agreed with the Minister and the Company. None of these points refer to Arts Council policy vis-à-vis

the opera company. The only reference to the Arts Council in these points is 'the negotiation of grants from the Arts Council'.

## **6.5 Opera Provision Outside London - Study Group – June 1985**

The Opera Study Group was established by the Arts Council in March 1985. Its terms of reference were:

To examine the present pattern of opera provision outside London; to review such developments as have taken place since publication of the Council's *Opera and Dance Enquiry*; and to make recommendations to Council, based upon an assessment of artistic and financial value, on the pattern of future provision, having regard for the Council's stated policy towards opera since publication of *The Glory of the Garden* and the likelihood that funds for this area of work may rise no more than 2% to 3% each year for the next three years.<sup>99</sup>

## **6.6 Lyric Theatre Review**

This report was commissioned by the Arts Council of England in 1994 to review lyric theatre provision in London, including arrangements for the proposed closures of Covent Garden and the Coliseum for refurbishment. The objectives of the review were:

To survey the current and potential audience for lyric theatre in London;

To assess the ways in which that audience's needs might be met in the long run; and

To consider the various options currently open to the two major opera companies for their closure periods.<sup>100</sup>

## **6.7 Review of Touring Opera Provision in England**

The Touring Board of the Arts Council of Great Britain requested a review of opera provision to venues with more than 800 seats. The terms of reference of the review, which was undertaken in 1994, were:

To consider the availability to regional audiences of subsidised opera. The Board was conscious of the lack of subsidised provision to certain population centres, and the significantly greater level of provision to others. The review

should consider why this was the case and whether the balance of opera availability should be altered.

## **6.8 Walker-Arnott Report**

Edward Walker-Arnott, a senior partner at one of London's leading law firms, was commissioned by the Arts Council in 1997, when public criticism was mounting about the Arts Council's handling of the £78 million lottery grant for the redevelopment of Covent Garden. Walker-Arnott described the uneasiness which had been apparent in the relationship between the Royal Opera House and the Arts Council for many years. He rejected the suggestion that the relationship had become too cosy, or that, indeed, there was a case of "regulatory capture" (in which a regulator develops such a close relationship with the regulated concerns that he identifies with their problems and loses his independence). Walker-Arnott also argued that the less control the Arts Council had over the Opera House, the more reporting it demanded. However, all this reporting did not yield any tangible improvement in the Arts Council's hold over ROH.

## **6.9 The Eyre Report on the Future of Lyric Theatre in London**

This report was commissioned by the government, rather than by the Arts Council. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, set the following objectives in his letter to Sir Richard Eyre, the former Artistic Director of the Royal National Theatre, dated 3 November 1997:

To ensure that the UK is able to sustain the highest standards of national and international excellence in performance;

To ensure that the distinctive artistic styles of each of the companies are protected and nurtured;

To look for ways in which the work of these national companies can become more accessible- through touring activity, education work, broadcast opportunities or by other means;

To ensure maximum public benefit from the use of public money. The issue is not about saving money, or cutting funding levels; it is about ensuring every pound of public funding that is invested works as hard as possible, and that its benefits flow back to as many as possible of the people who have contributed to it; and

To secure the financial stability of the companies and give them a firmer basis on which to plan, and efficient structures within which to operate.<sup>101</sup>

## 6.10 Review of Large-Scale Touring - 1998

The purpose of this review was to revisit the touring patterns established, as the previous review suggested that they should be looked at after three years. The defined objective of the review was:

To review current lyric touring patterns and amend them as necessary in order to create access for as many people as possible throughout the country to high quality subsidised lyric work.<sup>102</sup>

## 6.11 Conclusion

The terms of reference of these committees provide an insight into the priorities of those who established the committees and the questions that they address. Given the critical attitude towards money spent by the Arts Council on opera, it is interesting to note none of the committees, workgroups or reviewers were asked to investigate the *raison d'être* of opera funding by the Arts Council, or to suggest specific objectives or parameters for such funding.

The majority of the reports were concerned with the need to solve problems resulting from the insufficient funds for the perceived demand for opera and opera provision concepts of the Arts Council. Some of the reports were technical in their nature, dissecting the supply and demand and suggesting how to optimise opera provision within financial constraints. Other reports (for example the *Report on Opera and Ballet in the United Kingdom 1966-69*) were geared to serve the Arts Council's advocacy role and tended to give a wider picture.

Some reports looked at opera provision throughout the country, in certain cases with a request to suggest what future requirements there would be and what funding would be necessary. *Review of Touring Opera Provision in England* and *Review of Large-Scale Touring – 1998*, are two of the reports which were specifically concerned with the provision of opera through touring. *The Lyric Theatre Review* and the *Eyre Report* looked only at London. The two reports (*Walker-Arnott Report* and *Priestley Report*) which dealt with the Covent Garden situation, were by external examiners. They were either forced on the Arts Council (*Priestley Report*) or initiated by the Council to counter attacks on its handling of Covent Garden (*Walker-Arnott Report*).

## **7 Objectives**

Access and excellence were the basic objectives of the Arts Council of Great Britain and subsequently those of the Arts Council of England as defined in the Royal Charters which were granted to the Arts Council. The aim of this section is to find out whether any additional objectives can be detected in the plethora of annual reports, various other Arts Council publications and Reports and in speeches made by the Chairmen and Secretaries-General (later called Chief Executive) of the Arts Council. This section will map the findings in the various sources to conclude what may be defined as the Arts Council's objectives vis-à-vis opera. The case studies in the coming chapters will consider the extent to which the Arts Council has been successful in implementing these objectives.

The following objectives could be defined:

### **7.1 Enjoyment**

Keynes in his speech spoke about 'enjoyment' as an objective.<sup>103</sup> This objective was expanded upon in the 1965 White Paper of Jennie Lee, Minister for the Arts in Harold Wilson's Government.<sup>104</sup>

It was the duty, Lee declared, of an 'enlightened government' to respond to the needs of the populace for 'stimulus and refreshment [...] diversity, and adventure', which the arts can deliver and which are necessary as a counter balance of increased automation.

Lee warned of the risk of ignoring the revolt of the young against 'drabness, uniformity and joylessness of much of the social furniture [that Britain had] inherited from the Industrial Revolution.' She proposed that this revolutionary energy be mobilised 'into making Britain a gayer and more cultivated country.'

### **7.2 National Importance**

With much of the opera funding going to companies whose name already implied national significance (the Royal Opera Company, the English National Opera, Welsh

National Opera and Scottish Opera), the Arts Council's annual reports often place emphasis on the importance of funding institutions of national significance.

In the 1959-60 Arts Council's Annual Report, Secretary-General W E Williams wrote about the importance of maintaining a few national institutions in London (Covent Garden Opera, Royal Ballet, Sadler's Wells Opera and the Old Vic), it being the Arts Council's 'major responsibility'. He added:

Covent Garden is a unique national institution, comparable in its particular field to the National Gallery or the British Museum, maintained not only, or essentially, for Londoners but for a large provincial and cosmopolitan audience of visitors as well.<sup>105</sup>

Several years later an annual report explained that the money spent on Sadler's Wells and the Royal Opera House 'was intended, and has served, to make London a world capital – if not the world's capital – for opera and ballet.'<sup>106</sup>

The 1966-67 Annual Report suggested that the institutions which enjoy international reputation, form 'an international show-case' for Britain, adding 'It is, simply, essential that the capital city of a civilised country should have fine theatres.'<sup>107</sup> In 1971, the Annual Report spoke of operas which have 'added some glory to our national life'.<sup>108</sup>

### **7.3 Royal Charter derived objectives**

Other general objectives were derived from the original objectives in the Royal Charter granted to the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1946, which are:

1. To develop a greater knowledge, understanding and practice of the fine arts exclusively;
2. To increase the accessibility of the fine arts to the public; [and]
3. To improve the standard of execution of the fine arts.<sup>109</sup>

Innovation and education are covered by the first objective. Access and touring are covered by the second objective and training and developing the artists themselves are covered by the third objective, which seems to have been widened to include supporting the artists and their needs.

## 7.4 Excellence

An Arts Council publication, *The First Ten Years – The Arts Council of Great Britain 1946 –1956*, defined the pursuit of quality as the primary responsibility imposed on the Arts Council by the Royal Charter.<sup>110</sup> In the context of pursuit of quality, it was considered that, ‘the biggest effort so far [...] is the one to create, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, a national theatre for opera and ballet, and in this effort the Arts Council has been deeply involved from the start.’ Chapter V examines the special status the Royal Opera House has had from the very establishment of the Arts Council.

The importance of excellence as the characteristic of the subsidised world was made by Sir Richard Eyre, who juxtaposed the commercial world with the subsidised one:

the overriding priority in the commercial world is the need to make a profit and be good; in the subsidised one it is the need to be good.<sup>111</sup>

The 1961-62 Annual Report spoke of ‘high artistic standards’ in confirming that quality come before access. It explained that radio and television were the ‘natural agents of diffusion’ and that the Arts Council therefore did not need to put as much emphasis on diffusion.

High values in the arts can only be maintained on a restricted scale [...] there is a limited supply of first class talent [...].

The essence of the Arts Council policy nowadays is to sustain the best possible standard of performance at a limited number of permanent institutions. Several of these inevitably are based in London, the capital of the arts in Britain: Covent Garden, Sadler’s Wells [...]. This group of priority institutions are trustees of high artistic standard, the main line of defence against the debasement of values in public entertainment, and the Arts Council recognises a paramount responsibility to them.[...] If the power-houses were to fail there would be a black-out of the living arts in Britain.<sup>112</sup>

On various occasions, the high standards of the opera companies were mentioned in Annual Reports as a justification for their funding. In 1969, the Annual Report referred to the high costs of sustaining opera, for which considerable subsidy was required as it ‘would be wasted if it were insufficient to produce results of the highest quality.’<sup>113</sup> Several years later, the 1973/74 Report described the dilemma faced by the

Welsh National Opera due to 'problems of cost-escalation on the unpredictable scale confronting all major companies required by conditions of grant to maintain the highest artistic standards.'<sup>114</sup>

## 7.5 Access

The other main objective of the Arts Council is access. It is one of the objectives in the Royal Charters of Incorporation and it was raised in almost every Annual Report of the Arts Council.

There are three main aspects to lack of access:

- (i) Geographic – people who do not live in or near enough to the venue at which opera is performed.
- (ii) Financial – people for whom the combined cost of a ticket and travel is prohibitive.
- (iii) Social – people who feel that opera is an art-form for a higher social class, to which they do not belong, and therefore consider that opera is not for them.

In the first twenty years, the Arts Council made it clear that access came second to excellence. There was subsequently a shift in stated policy, although this was not necessarily reflected in a shift in real policy. In his *Report on the Future of Lyric Theatre in London*, Sir Richard Eyre said:

Those who pay for art through subsidy, must get access to the work. This means that the taxpayer, and the Lottery player, must be able to see performances at ticket prices which do not call for a second mortgage, in places which don't require epic travel over land and sea, in an atmosphere that makes them feel they belong and where they and their children are offered the chance to learn more about the work.<sup>115</sup>

A partial solution to the question of geographical access, was touring. A whole network of touring was set-up in the war years and further developed since the end of the war. However, the Arts Council was aware of the compromise on quality it was making with some of the touring opera which it provided in the regions. The 1963-64 Annual Report discussed 'Opera for All', the opera touring company established by the Arts Council in 1948.<sup>116</sup> They would often travel to small and remote places, as an ensemble consisting of only a few singers and a pianist to 'introduce opera to audiences and places where the real thing cannot be heard'. The Report considered



the question whether higher scale opera, higher than the standard of 'Opera for All', should not be provided for the provinces, only to conclude that finance and other practical problems would make it immensely difficult.

'Opera for All' was discontinued in 1978. The Arts Council announced in its 1978-79 Annual Report that television and radio, recordings and more regular provision of full-scale opera throughout much of the country catered for access and made this second-class\* product no longer worthy of subsidy.<sup>117</sup> It was replaced by 'Opera 80', a company established by the Arts Council in 1979. 'Opera 80' commenced its activities touring 'neglected areas' with a 26-strong orchestra.

'The Spheres of Influence' policy was developed by the Arts Council in 1978 to deal with the difficulties of opera provision in the provinces. All the major subsidised non-London opera companies (Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Glyndebourne Touring Opera and English Touring Opera) were allocated a primacy in a specified region.

With great pride the Arts Council reported in 1978 of the founding of English National Opera North.<sup>118</sup> It considered this to be of historical importance, to which end the Council had decided to fund the first seven months of its activities. It suggested that this founding of the first full-time opera company in England since 1946 could be the 'start of a really effective regional policy for opera and ballet.' Chapter VI below analyses the circumstances and the decision-making process of the founding of Opera North.

## **7.6 Development of Artists**

The Arts Council also set itself the objective of ensuring the training and development of performing artists and the creation of opportunities for them. When in 1945, the Council discussed the drafting of the Royal Charter, Sir Ralph Vaughan Williams suggested that one of the objectives should be, 'to improve and maintain the status of the artists'.<sup>119</sup> It may be that the solicitors who dealt with the final drafting of the Charter considered an undertaking to improve and maintain the status of the artist as too much of a risk as it could be construed to be an open-ended commitment, of which any artist could avail him/herself. In any case, the clause was

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\* It referred to 'truncated and piano-accompanied opera'

dropped. Various Annual Reports considered the status of the artist. The 1958-59 Annual Report, in referring to the expansion of Sadler's Wells, suggested that jobs for the artists was one of the positive outcomes that:

enabled the Trust to offer year-round employment to two complete companies and orchestras, thus providing much improved conditions for many artists who had hitherto only been able to secure seasonal work on a tour-to-tour basis.<sup>120</sup>

The 1961-62 Annual Report mentioned the underpaid and overworked national talent in the opera.<sup>121</sup> Several years later, Jennie Lee's '*A Policy for the Arts*' 1965 White Paper, which stated 'if patronage is to work, it must benefit artists', specifically proposed to help young artists, before they become established.<sup>122</sup> And yet, four years later, Lord Goodman confessed to the failure in this area: 'We have, perhaps, been most remiss in our failure to improve the living conditions of the creative and performing artist.'<sup>123</sup>

## 7.7 Innovation

The 1952-53 Annual Report was styled *A Pattern for Patronage* and it discussed the importance of state patronage, now that private patronage had all but disappeared:

No policy of diffusion can be sufficient in itself. Collective patronage must not only diffuse what does exist; it must also stimulate the creation of new expressions in the arts. [...] There must be replenishment, experiment, new soundings. Patronage cannot live on the past if it is to have a future. There are many ways of encouraging new expression in the arts, and the Council has still to discover many of these. Its present endeavours to stimulate new music, new painting, new plays, new poetry, are tentative; to some people they may seem, also, insufficient and timid.<sup>124</sup>

It was not until 1959-60, that modern opera was mentioned as a valued achievement. In reporting on New Opera Company (which had a £1000 grant compared with the £200,000 grant for Sadler's Wells) the following was said:

This company courageously adhered to its policy despite the financial hazards that beset the presentation of unfamiliar operas.<sup>125</sup>

Later the 1961-62 Annual Report called for more means to be available to innovate:

We devote massive subsidies to experimental and research work in science and industry, but what opportunities do we offer to young artists to discover new idioms and new styles in music or drama? <sup>126</sup>

The 1966-67 Annual Report tried to grapple with the question of supporting modern unpopular creations:

we ought not to waste our resources on enterprises which prove in practice to be quite unacceptable to the public. There is a level of persistent failure, in this sense, that must be regarded as definitive. [...] the Council must find the best compromise, encouraging promise wherever it is found, but not losing touch with reality. If the horse finally will not drink, it is a waste of effort to bring him water.

[...]

the Council acknowledges a duty to foster potentially interesting experiments. [...] We aim our subsidies to increase public appreciation of fine work. If the work comes from contemporary British artists, so much the better. <sup>127</sup>

In 1971 the Council reported that it planned a contemporary music network to provide programmes of contemporary works throughout the country.<sup>128</sup> It repeated its view that risks should be taken, and new work should be available to the public, as the artistic future of the country depended on such 'continuing refreshment.' A couple of years later, the Council confirmed that, whereas commissioning new work or providing outlets for new work was not the Council's responsibility, it was eager for its clients to do so. By making extra grants available for this purpose, the Council encouraged subsidised companies to commission and to produce new work. The 1973-74 Annual Report wrote:

It is argued, and justly, that they do not do enough that is new. It is Council policy to increase its present help for this purpose, but the performance of a new work adds considerably to the expense and sometimes reduces takings. <sup>129</sup>

In discussing new work at its various opera clients, the Council reaffirmed that it had a role to play in facilitating new work. The 1983 *Opera and Dance Study Group* recognised new work did not attract audiences and as a result, companies promoting new work were risking money.<sup>130</sup> However, the Report maintained that 'A country of this size [...] should provide opera of various kinds and styles, from the classical to the experimental.'

In the first year of his chairmanship of the Arts Council (1989), Lord Palumbo said:

If we are to expand the frontiers of art rather than to allow them to remain static we must focus particular attention upon experimental art; the equal of research and development in industry. We must give the artist the right to fail, we must invest, on occasion, in new and innovative work, knowing full well that the results may fall below the expectations of the artist and ourselves; but knowing also that we may be helping to nourish a masterwork.<sup>131</sup>

The chapter dealing with music in the 1988/89 Annual Report echoed that sentiment with regard to supporting innovation in music.<sup>132</sup> It proudly informed readers that both the Royal Opera and English National Opera had recently given first British performances of major contemporary European works.

## **7.8 Education**

Education is another objective the Arts Council has set itself. It appeared as the first objective in the Royal Charter 'for the purpose of developing a greater knowledge, understanding and practice of the fine arts exclusively.'

Lord Goodman, addressing a conference in the Guildhall in March 1966 said:

The major purpose for which we must use our money...is to cultivate new audiences for the arts. [...] you can't appreciate [...] good music without hearing it over a long period from relatively early childhood [...]. It must be made quite clear that one can appreciate simple things without effort and complicated things only by effort [...]. I believe the pop groups on the whole are winning the battle. [...] it is very necessary, if we are to be a civilised and cultivated nation, if the standards which mean something to you and something to me, are to be maintained, that we do win this battle, and we can only win this battle by teaching people what are the worthwhile things in life [...].<sup>133</sup>

A year later, Lord Goodman in a debate in the House of Lords continued with the same theme: the Arts will have a positive impact on the young. He suggested that:

once young people are captured for the Arts they are redeemed from many of the dangers which confront them at the moment and which have been occupying the attention of the Government in a completely unprofitable and destructive fashion. I believe that here we have constructive work to do which can be of inestimable value.<sup>134</sup>

Although education is a chartered objective of the Arts Council, Lord Goodman's sentiments seem to go further and they adopt a somewhat patronising tone. However, Goodman's argument should be considered in conjunction with the warning sounded

by Jennie Lee in her 1965 White Paper, in which she suggested that it was in the interest of the 'haves' to make the arts available to the 'have nots':

More and more people begin to appreciate that the exclusion of so many for so long from the best of our cultural heritage can become as damaging to the privileged minority as to the under-privileged majority. We walk the same streets, breathe the same air, are exposed to the same sights and sounds.<sup>135</sup>

This appears to be a concerted Government effort to diffuse a disgruntled underclass threatening to explode. This theme continued, throughout the sixties (not least in the Arts Council's annual reports) as if oblivious to the youth culture of the time.

In 1971, the Arts Council considered, for example, that its promoting of the Royal Opera and Sadlers Wells had succeeded in changing the pre-War view that, 'opera [...] was something suited to the taste of foreigners, or an elegant addition to the lives of a small and wealthy section of society.'<sup>136</sup>

In 1977 the Arts Council reported upon the appointment of an Education Liaison Officer.<sup>137</sup> Considering the fact that education appeared as the first objective in the Royal Charter, it is quite surprising that it had taken thirty two years to achieve 'a first major step in the implementation of our chartered duty.' The Arts Council itself saw the irony in the fact that the appointment was funded by a two-year grant from the private Gulbenkian Foundation.

The connection between education and innovation is made in the same Report:

it is perhaps even more necessary to bring those with conservative tastes to a better understanding and enjoyment of new developments in the arts.

This is re-iterated eleven years later by Kenneth Baird, the Music Director of the Arts Council, who set out his Department's objectives:

It remains one of our priorities to help bring the work of living composers to audiences, and to develop an understanding of the music of today. The education officers now working with almost every major opera company and orchestra are key people who, as well as encouraging an interest in the new, will make the work of these companies more accessible.<sup>138</sup>

## 7.9 Conclusion

The main issues, referred to in the Arts Council reports as explanations for its activities, are issues derived from the its Royal Charter. Most of them are different variations on the themes of access and excellence. The Arts Council has neither adopted, nor defined for itself, a mission statement or objective for its funding of opera.

The following objectives may be distilled from the various annual reports, committee reports and other sources examined:

1. Excellence and high standard of production
2. Access : geographical, financial and social
3. Development and nurturing of artists
4. Experimentation and innovation
5. Education
6. National pride
7. Joy and entertainment

There were very few statements which dealt purely with the possibility that the arts should be paid for by the public purse because they enrich society as a whole.

In a debate in the House of Commons in 1959, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury J.E.S. Simon gave a clear explanation for the Government's spending on the arts:

We are doing this not only because we feel that the interest of the people of Britain in the Arts has greatly increased and that we are thereby reflecting their general wishes, but also because we believe that our action will enhance the richness and variety of our national life.<sup>139</sup>

In 1998, Almost forty years later, Gerry Robinson, appointed by the Labour government to chair the Arts Council of England, seems - post Thatcher – to go back to basics. The following is taken from the Chairman's introduction to his first Annual Report:

The Arts Council believes that the arts enrich our lives in a variety of ways. They express what cannot be communicated by any other means. They enable us to explore our deepest feelings and values, our individual and shared

identities. They have enormous educational importance – and economic value, too, as one of the nation's largest and most successful industries. They promote the health and well-being of our communities and our society as a whole.<sup>140</sup>

## 8 Opera cannot exist without subsidy

There were occasions, in the 50's and 60's, when the Arts Council considered that by explaining that opera companies would not be able to exist without subsidy, criticism of the high proportion of Arts Council resources being allotted to opera, would subside.

The 1957-58 Annual Report noted that Sadler's Wells might change from a permanent company to one that has intermittent seasons, because of insufficient subsidy.<sup>141</sup> It warned that Covent Garden, 'the only national theatre we possess' may soon be closed, unless substantial increase in its resources could be found. These warnings continued in the next report.<sup>142</sup> Seventeen years later matters had hardly changed. The Arts Council was forced to argue that there was a financial return on the Government's expenditure on the arts, in the form of foreign exchange from tourism, and from the export of productions and, of course, there was the benefit of international reputation. But they warned:

Either the country keeps its achievement in opera and ballet of outstanding quality, or lets slip what has astonishingly been created in a mere thirty years. The Royal Opera House, for example, is now on any test the Arts Council can apply, run with the strictest regard for economy, and further cuts in expenditure could only mean less performers on the stage or in the orchestra pit, less touring of ballet, a repertoire going stale: and for all these reasons, smaller audiences. [...] All this could end in our ceasing to have a Covent Garden which houses its own companies of opera and ballet among the best in the world. The English National Opera Company is one of our great recent achievements, and faces identical problems.<sup>143</sup>

On the other hand, the Arts Council, which has often sought to present opera as a basic amenity, possibly to counter its general perception as a pastime for the middle classes,\* has also flirted with the notion that it has been forced to fund opera at a higher proportion than it would have liked. The following thoughts were aired in the

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\* The 1983 Arts Council's *Opera and Dance Report* (see section 6.3) referred to, 'the present correlation between social class and the taste for opera' and found that, 'far too many people are conditioned to think that opera is "not for them", that it is the preserve of an élite at the best or more likely, in the jargon, of 'highbrows and snobs'.'

1957-58 Annual Report of the Arts Council in connection with claims that the Arts Council's expenditure on opera and ballet was excessive:

If it were possible –or ever had been possible at a given moment - to lay down a plan of subsidy based on ideal requirements in terms of music, drama, opera and ballet, the structure of subsidy would doubtless be better balanced than it is.<sup>144</sup>

The Lords Harewood and Goodman, in their *Report On Opera and Ballet in the United Kingdom 1966-69*, have stressed that opera is expensive and that it cannot be funded by box-office alone, stating:

for good reasons, opera and ballet have to be heavily subsidised [and] opera and ballet cannot be conducted on commercial lines, even when tickets are priced at the highest level that the public can be expected to pay.<sup>145</sup>

A similar statement was made in connection with the Scottish Opera in its infancy. It referred to the emergence and rapid establishment of Scottish Opera as:

An event of the greatest importance to the Scottish cultural scene.[...][and] Opera is a very expensive art form and, if it is to be available at all, requires a high level of subsidy.<sup>146</sup>

## 9 Conclusion

The total amounts the Arts Councils spend on opera are substantial and the issue of opera funding remains contentious. Yet, the Arts Councils of England, Scotland and Wales had in 2001, between them only eight\* substantial opera clients receiving core funding. Of these eight companies, all except the two London companies included some domestic touring, and two did nothing but touring.

The Arts Council has in over fifty years of its existence set up or been party to more than twelve committees, working-groups and enquiries into questions concerning opera. None of these committees was asked to define objectives for the public funding of opera, although one of these committees endeavoured to do so of its own accord.

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\* Royal Opera, English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera and Opera North, Birmingham Opera Company, English Touring Opera and Glyndebourne Productions.



As the Arts Council has not defined specific objectives for its funding of opera, these were distilled from the Arts Council's general objectives, as described and referred to in various Arts Council publications. The substance of these objectives are the original objectives of the Royal Charter of the Arts Council: access and excellence. To suit the government of the day, other objectives were raised, but the core objectives have not changed.

# **V     Royal Opera House**

## **1   Introduction**

The public outcry surrounding the events at the Royal Opera House was the original trigger to this thesis. The Royal Opera House and its relationship with the Arts Council were, therefore, an obvious choice as a case study. The purpose of this case study is to establish what decisions concerning the ROH were made by the Arts Council and how they were made. The case study is based on Arts Council minutes, papers and Annual Reports, on the Warnock Report (the 1992 Arts Council appraisal of the ROH), the Eyre Report and the Priestley Report, on interviews of former Arts Council officers and books by a former Secretary-General of the Arts Council, a former General Director of the ROH and two arts commentators.

The Royal Opera House Covent Garden is different from any of the Arts Council's other clients.\* This uniqueness has made the relationship between the Royal Opera and the Arts Council a difficult one. It may also explain the criticism which is laid at the feet of the Arts Council in respect of its handling of the Royal Opera.

The focus of this criticism relates to financial management and control, although the issues of access and elitism have also been raised against the Royal Opera. This case study examines the Arts Council's relationship with the Royal Opera in its capacity as a funding body with objectives and mechanisms with which to assess clients. This chapter demonstrates that the Arts Council was hindered in its ability to fulfil this responsibility, mainly as a consequence of the powerful status of the Royal Opera House.

## **2   Background**

Covent Garden is unique in three main aspects, all of which are interconnected. The first point is the special treatment Covent Garden was given at its post-war inception,

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\* This is established in the following sections of this chapter.

as the Arts Council's most significant client. A client, which expects and receives special arrangements. A client, that –although not granted a Royal Charter – was granted permission by Her Majesty The Queen to be named the Royal Opera.<sup>147</sup>

The second point, which stems from the first, but by nature, gets a life of its own, is the strength of the Boards of Covent Garden. Such was the aura surrounding Covent Garden, that the 'good and great' were eager to be nominated and remain on its Board. Of the seventy men and five women, who served as Directors of the Royal Opera House between the years 1946 to 1997, a quarter were old Etonians, a further third went to other public schools, one third were peers, and forty per cent were knights. Thirty one of the Directors, have also sat on the Arts Council or its panels.<sup>148</sup> It may be trite to remark, but powerful people can reach whoever is necessary to further their cause.

The third point, is that Covent Garden more than any other client of the Arts Council, receives substantial donations from third parties. Such sponsorship leads to an agenda which can be different from that of the Arts Council.

It has been suggested by the arts commentator Richard Witts, that the only *raison d'être* of the Arts Council can be found in the needs of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden.<sup>149</sup> Proponents of this view and other members of this school of thought point to the personal interest of John Maynard Keynes, the initiator of the Arts Council of Great Britain, in the establishment of the Covent Garden Opera and, especially through his wife, Lydia Lopokova, in ballet. They suggest that this interest was given prominence by Keynes in his capacity as Chairman of both Covent Garden and of the Arts Council of Great Britain. However, it is difficult to imagine, that there was no simpler or cheaper means of subsidising Covent Garden. The Arts Council of Great Britain, after all, consisted of a funding infrastructure which also allocated money to other art forms. The Arts Council of Great Britain and the Covent Garden Opera House were created at the same time. This was a morale-building decision in a country, which after the Second World War was broke, its cities in ruins, and entering a long period of austerity.

The following letter was sent in 1946 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, to his predecessor, Sir John Anderson, who was about to become Covent Garden's first Chairman after Keynes's death. The letter is illuminating as to the standing Covent Garden had in the eyes of the establishment:

The assistance which the Covent Garden Trust receives from the Treasury will, of course, come to it through the Arts Council. [...] You will understand that in general I should wish the Council to feel themselves responsible for the allocation of the funds which Parliament puts at their disposal, and to plan their work ahead in the expectation of an assured but limited grant.

[...]

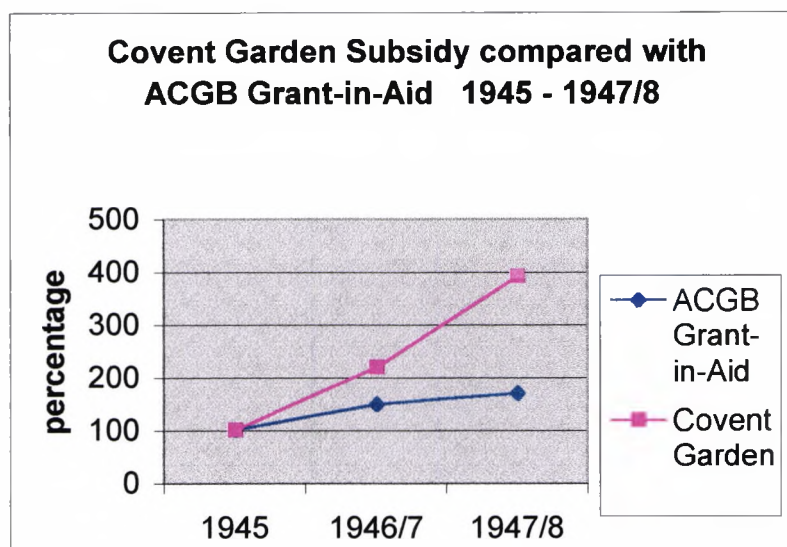
I recognise, however, that the magnitude of the Covent Garden undertaking and the difficulty in present circumstances of estimating its future needs places it in a special position, and that the State will be assuming a definite obligation to see to it that, subject to others playing their part, Opera is not let down. I do not therefore rule out the possibility that the fulfilment of this obligation might in certain circumstances make it necessary to increase the Treasury grant to the Arts Council still further than I undertook in my letter of July 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>150</sup>

This letter is unusual because it not only established that Covent Garden would be considered as a special case, it also created a circumvention of the arm's length principle, if necessary, in favour of Covent Garden. It is understandable that a letter such as this, seemingly without a time-limit, will have coloured the relationship Covent Garden has had with the Arts Council ever since.

The Arts Council's Annual Reports, from as early as 1946, reflect the special standing of Covent Garden (albeit including both the opera and ballet companies), in the eyes of both the Arts Council and the Government. The second annual report of ACGB shows that Covent Garden was already being treated differently from the other recipients of Art Council grants. For the year 1946-47 Parliament increased the grant-in-aid to the Arts Council, from £235,000 to £320,000. In addition, a supplementary grant of £30,000 was voted by Parliament to enable the Council to increase its allocation to the Covent Garden Opera Trust 'in process of building up its repertory'.<sup>151</sup> It is notable that Parliament chose to earmark the increase for Covent Garden separately, whereas other bodies received increased subsidies (though less substantial ones) without separately voted grants. Such earmarking of funds was another indication of Covent Garden's unique status. Thus the Covent Garden grant was increased from £25,000 to £55,000.

1947-48 saw another substantial increase to Covent Garden.<sup>152</sup> This is especially dramatic, as the increase constituted virtually all of the increase in grant-in-aid voted for the Arts Council by Parliament. Covent Garden Opera Trust's grant was increased from £55,000 to £98,000. Of this, £38,000 was a supplementary grant voted by Parliament in addition to the £360,000 grant-in-aid that year. £350,000 (320+30)

was increased to £398,000 (360+38), an increase of £48,000, of which £43,000 went to Covent Garden Opera Trust.



Confirming the theory that the Arts Council's main purpose was to act as a conduit of funds to Covent Garden, Kenneth Baird, a previous Music Director of the Arts Council expressed the view that the loss of Covent Garden as a client would probably result in the dismantling of the Arts Council.<sup>153</sup> Similarly, Lew Hodges, an ex- Finance Director of the Arts Council in discussing the National Lottery, has suggested that the need to find substantial sums for the redevelopment of Covent Garden played an important role in the Government's decision to establish the National Lottery.<sup>154</sup> His assessment is that Covent Garden probably had a 50% weighting in the decision. It seems bizarre, that the Lottery from which the arts alone received £1.4 billion in its first five years (the arts receive only one sixth of the 28% of the Lottery takings which go to 'good causes'), should be established to solve the £78 million need of Covent Garden.

There was unease about this special treatment of Covent Garden from early on. A Chapter titled *London versus the Rest* in the 1951-51 Annual Report commented as follows:

The recent news that the Arts Council has found it necessary to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for an additional grant for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, roused a good deal of discussion.<sup>155</sup>

The unease was also demonstrated by the repeated and unusual justifications of high funding for Covent Garden in the Annual Reports of the Arts Council. For instance, in a summary and description of the Arts Council's policies, included in the 1973-74 Annual Report:

From the date of the first Charter it was a basic assumption that substantial money would have to be provided to enable this country to have a permanent opera company and orchestra at the international level at Covent Garden.<sup>156</sup>

At a Council meeting in 1983, attended by Clive Priestley, who had been appointed by the Government to look into the affairs of the Royal Opera House and the Royal Shakespeare Company,\* Mr. Priestley asked why it was necessary to have an international opera company in London.<sup>157</sup> The Council expressed views ranging from a comparison of Covent Garden to the Royal Family, a symbol of Britain, which therefore had to be retained, to reservations about preserving Covent Garden merely for reasons of prestige. The general view, however, was that having a high quality international opera house in London was a necessity for a cultured country and that it should be the Council's aim to put right whatever went wrong at the ROH.

Fifty years later, at a House of Commons Culture, Media and Sports Select Committee meeting, which was discussing the Royal Opera House, Sir Richard Eyre, who was commissioned in 1997 by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sports to write a report, *The Future of Lyric Theatre in London*, would refer to the damage caused by Covent Garden's power-politics vis-à-vis the Arts Council:

I think the consistent attempts of the Royal Opera House in the past to subvert the arm's-length principle and to diminish the power of the Arts Council officers by going either straight to the Minister or straight to Downing Street are deeply depressing, and certainly from the perspective of other arts organisations I can say they are deeply demoralising.<sup>158</sup>

Eyre considered that the Royal Opera House, had become so arrogant and remote, that it seemed to have lost the connection between public funding and service to the public. He added:

Unless the ROH regards itself as an organisation that exists for the public good, and if they cannot change [...] there is no justification for them to continue to receive public funding.

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\* As described in Chapter IV, section 6.4.

In short, from early on the special status of the Royal Opera House was in need of justification. Moreover, fifty years after its establishment matters were only getting worse. The special status was also reflected in the Royal Opera House Board and in the extraordinary involvement of the Government in the Board.

### **3 Board and Appointments**

The Royal Opera House is managed by its Chief Executive (until 1997 the title was General Director), who according to Mary Allen,\* 'had responsibility without power'.<sup>159</sup> The formal power lies with the Board, who appoints the Chief Executive. Although membership of the Board has for many years been self-perpetuating, members electing new members and their own chairman, none of these appointments was made without regard to the government. When a new Chairman was to be elected in 1987, the art critic Norman Lebrecht maintains, 'someone Mrs. Thatcher trusted, but who would also stand up to her', was sought.<sup>160</sup> Since 1993, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for approving appointments to the Royal Opera House Board on the recommendations of the Chair, the latter having also consulted the Arts Council on suggestions for names. The Chair is chosen by the Board from among its members. According to Jeremy Isaacs, a former General Director of the Royal Opera House, Buckingham Palace is sounded out on both the Chairman and Chief Executive.<sup>161</sup>

When it came to the appointment of Mary Allen as Chief Executive in 1997, the then Chairman of the ROH, Lord Chadlington, secured the Secretary of State's approval, before getting Board approval for the appointment and before discussing the matter with the Chairman of the Arts Council, Lord Gowrie. This flouting of procedure and especially Ms. Allen's role in it were criticised by the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee in its 1997 inquiry into the Royal Opera House.<sup>162</sup> The next chairman of the ROH, was Sir Colin Southgate, chairman of EMI. He was

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\* Mary Allen was Secretary General of the Arts Council of England (1994 to 1997) and Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House for 7 months to March 1998.

formally elected by the ROH Board. However, according to Norman Lebrecht, the Board was 'not being offered a choice but an ultimatum' by the Government via the DCMS's permanent secretary, Hayden Phillips.<sup>163</sup>

Until 1987, the Secretary to the Board of the Royal Opera House was the Cabinet Secretary. For eight more years the post was filled by another senior civil servant. This arrangement was only discontinued by the Government in 1995.

So, whereas the Covent Garden Board was formally independent of the Arts Council and of government intervention, government was always heavily involved in the nominations.

#### **4 Third Party Funding**

Covent Garden enjoys a unique funding structure in comparison with other substantial Arts Council clients, as it benefits from substantial donations and sponsorship, which in 1999/2000 formed over 17% over their total income (compared to only 8.6% at ENO).<sup>164</sup>

Until June 2001, the main fund-raiser and a substantial supporter in her own right, Dame Vivien Duffield, had been deputy chairman of the Royal Opera House. Sir John (later Lord) Sainsbury, Chairman and Chief Executive of J. Sainsbury plc, whose family trust has made important donations to the Royal Opera House, was Chairman of the ROH from 1987 to 1991.<sup>165</sup>

The status of the Arts Council as the source of funds, is clearly different when there are other substantial sources and donors. Moreover, private donors and corporate sponsors, by their very nature, do not necessarily share the same agenda or have the same priorities as the Arts Council. Needless to say, this limits the freedom of the Arts Council in its role vis-à-vis the Royal Opera House.

Both the ROH and the Arts Council suffered much adverse publicity from the manner in which the redevelopment of Covent Garden was handled. After many years of planning, a 250 million redevelopment project was undertaken at Covent Garden. The funding of the project was as follows: £78 million funded by the Lottery (administered by the Arts Council), £70 million was raised through commercial use



of the Covent Garden property and £100 million was raised from donations. Inexplicably, neither the Board of Covent Garden nor the Council of the Arts Council opted to let property professionals manage the complicated and rather substantial property project. Instead, for several years, substantial time and energy of both these organisations went into redevelopment issues and to trying to monitor them. With those at the helm, with little or no experience, it is not surprising that the redevelopment was a fiasco, which resulted in the resignation of the ROH's chairman, the retirement of the Arts Council chairman, and the resignation of the Board of the ROH.

Leaving aside the redevelopment as a traumatic "one-off", the case study will concentrate on the means by which the Arts Council tried to monitor the activities of the Royal Opera House and to influence it.

## **5 Assessments and Evaluation**

Secretary-General of the Arts Council (1977 to 1983), Sir Roy Shaw, confessing to the Arts Council's failure in evaluating the big national clients, described the difficulty the Council had in dealing with the directors :

Sometimes it seemed that the attitude of those who ran the 'Big Four' (particularly the two opera house directors) was that their work was not only above reproach but was so obviously excellent that it was beyond assessment.<sup>166</sup>

### **5.1 Royal Opera Attitude to Evaluation**

In 1983 the Arts Council was concerned about the artistic and the financial aspects of the Royal Opera.<sup>167</sup> The Council may have been eager to pre-empt points which might later be raised in the Priestley Report. Fears were expressed about the artistic development of the Opera Company.

The Royal Opera House was one of the most virulent opponents of Arts Council appraisals, or even assessments.

A 1984 Paper for Council, which discusses the assessments of the four national companies, states that it was the Arts Council's internal policy that assessment

reports should be drafted in a constructive manner, in order to avoid a sharp reaction from the companies.<sup>168</sup> To this end, the Council was prepared occasionally to moderate a critical observation. The 1983/4 assessment of the Royal Opera House, rather than criticise the Opera company for the lack of activities and commitment to education, simply praises the two ballet companies at the ROH for the genuine commitment to educational work. The report is also critical of the Opera Board's lack of distinction in choice or style, suggesting that successes and failures were attributable to the individual artists rather than to the Company.

In December 1984, at a meeting held between the Arts Council and the Royal Opera House to discuss the 1983/4 assessment report, Sir John Tooley, the General Director of the ROH, criticised the Arts Council for 'the many inaccuracies and incorrect figures contained in [...] a disappointing document.' He considered the assessment report 'inconsistent [and] confused'.<sup>169</sup> It is noteworthy that the Arts Council did not insist on an improvement in the educational work of the ROH or on the development of a more cohesive artistic policy. It was definitely not suggested that future subsidy would be dependent on improvements in these areas.

The 1984/85 assessment reports were more pointed than the preceding assessment reports. The assessments were carried out by officers and not by the Finance and Policy Committee who had carried them out the previous year.

The artistic assessment speaks of a choice of repertoire which is safe rather than challenging. It comments on the fact that none of the non-repertory works were well-produced and makes the point that of 23 operas staged, only one dates from the post-war period, the newest otherwise being Puccini's *Turandot* (1926). The assessors maintain that to a core of thirty to forty operas, which are scheduled partly according to the availability of certain singers and conductors, the ROH adds a few works borrowed or co-produced with companies abroad, or mounted for anniversary reasons. The report concludes that the lack of a cohesive artistic policy remains a problem although it notes an increasing commitment to educational activity.

The result of this forthright assessment was a rather heated meeting with the ROH, which took place only two days after the report was sent to the ROH.<sup>170</sup> Sir John Tooley responded aggressively and suggested a meeting of all four national companies to discuss assessment. He doubted the competence of the Arts Council to carry out such reviews, questioned the validity of the assessment procedures and

complained about the late arrival of the report. Luke Rittner, the Arts Council's Secretary-General, was apologetic and conciliatory. The meeting, which covered the opera company and the two ballet companies lasted only an hour-and-a-half. It did not lead to any serious discussion of the Opera Company's artistic policy and led the Arts Council to retreat into blander reports for following meetings with the two national drama companies.

In a paper to Council in early 1987, the resistance of the national companies to their inclusion in the evaluation procedures of the Arts Council was reported.<sup>171</sup> This resistance had even led the ROH (and the National Theatre) to claim that the evaluation system duplicates the function of their Board of Directors. The Council considered the position and decided to leave it to the officers to deal with the companies on this thorny subject. Later that year, in the 1986/87 assessment of the ROH, the Council officers meekly stated, 'we would welcome confirmation that ROH endorses the principle and practice of an Arts Council Appraisal.'<sup>172</sup>

The 1988/89 Assessment congratulates the ROH on its commitment to major contemporary European work.<sup>173</sup> The assessors expressed the hope that the *Garden Venture*, an experimental laboratory for new music which Covent Garden had established in 1988 (it was discontinued in 1992 to cut costs), would develop further in the future. The standard of conducting, was considered by the assessors, to be rather variable.

The main point which is made in the 1989/90 Assessment is that the ROH had ended the year with a deficit of £2.85 million against a budgeted surplus of £20,000.<sup>174</sup> This is particularly interesting in the light of the fact that the previous year's assessment had praised the informative nature and high quality of the management reports. High quality management reports surely would have given warning before a full £2.85 million deficit is reported.

## **5.2 The Warnock Report**

1992 saw the first full appraisal of the Royal Opera.<sup>175</sup> This appraisal was part of the Arts Council quinquennial review which covered the Royal Opera House and its three companies (the Opera and the two ballet companies). The appraisal team was headed by Baroness Warnock, a former Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge. The other three external members of the team were a Director of the Salzburg Festival, a

composer and music professor at the University of Edinburgh and the managing director of a distillery and Vice Chairman of the Scottish Arts Council. The Arts Council's Music Director and Senior Finance Officer were the internal members of the team.

In addition to dealing with the feasibility of the planned redevelopment and with matters of finance and management, the *Warnock Report* made comments with regard to the Royal Opera's artistic achievement, which can be summarised as follows:

- (i) the work of the Company was variable and the Company was not generally considered a focal point of musical life in Britain;
- (ii) the Company had failed to develop a cohesive artistic policy for opera and the practice of importing productions from other opera houses was particularly criticised;
- (iii) the management and the Board of the Royal Opera should clearly establish an artistic policy for the Company for the next decade;
- (iv) the Company lacked an identifiable overall approach to opera production and that this had resulted in productions which ranged from the purely decorative to the radical;
- (v) the Company ought to redefine its policy on the development of principal singers; and
- (vi) neither the activity of the education department nor the *Garden Venture* were fully integrated into the work of the main Company. It brought the example of a joint project between the *Garden Venture* and the Royal National Theatre which had been placed in jeopardy because of the lack of £5,000, which was not available from the Royal Opera House's budgets.

The team was of the opinion that a broad, adventurous repertory with a commitment to new work was crucial for the future artistic development of the Company.

On the issue of repertoire, the team considered it wrong that contemporary work should be delegated entirely to the *Garden Venture*, as it considered the presentation of such work vital to the artistic health of the Company. The team recommended that the Arts Council should provide additional earmarked funds (half a million pounds per annum) to support the presentation of a major contemporary opera each year.

On the issue of access, the team considered that broadcasting is the most effective method of the Royal Opera's work reaching a large audience with a broader social and geographical make-up than could ever attend the House.

At about the same time, the Royal Opera House Board, which was worried about the recurrent financial crisis the company was in, commissioned a report from the management consultants *Price Waterhouse*. This was the first time the Royal Opera House was to be appraised by the Arts Council's appraisal team and the Board was apprehensive. It was useful to the Board to have a report of their own, to-if necessary- counter findings of the Warnock Appraisal. The *Price-Waterhouse Report* made various suggestions in the administrative and financial areas.

### **5.3 Post Warnock Report**

Following the presentation of the *Warnock Report*, the Arts Council set up a Working Group, comprising of three members of the Council (Peter Gummer (later to become Chairman of ROH), Mathew Prichard and Dr. William Brown) together with Council officers, to monitor progress on the implementation of the appraisal report's recommendations.

The terms of reference of the Working Group were as follows:

The Monitoring Group will be responsible for working with the Royal Opera House in developing an action plan which reflects the recommendations of the *Warnock Appraisal*, taking into account the appraisals of the three performing companies, and with specific reference to financial plans in the context of management and available resources. In addition the Group will report to Council the progress being made by the Royal Opera House in response to the recommendations of the *Price Waterhouse Report*.<sup>176</sup>

The Council concentrated on the non-artistic findings of the *Warnock Report*, and disregarded the rather serious artistic recommendations. It may be that this is still uneasiness in the relationship with a company which traditionally had felt that it need not accept recommendations (let alone criticism) from outsiders with regard to its core activity. Jeremy Isaacs, the General Director of the ROH, in referring to Lady Warnock, notably said that she 'knew nothing about opera and ballet.'<sup>177</sup>

Peter Gummer reported regularly to the Council on the satisfactory progress of the Working Group. Moreover, Gummer was of the opinion that working relations

between the ROH and the Arts Council were greatly improved by this joint project. Early in 1993, Gummer reported to the Council on the strengthened management structures and improved financial control procedures at the ROH.<sup>178</sup>

E I Walker-Arnott, a senior partner at one of London's large law firms, was commissioned by the Arts Council in 1997 to investigate the relationship between the Royal Opera House and the Arts Council. He concluded that the Arts Council, whilst increasing the demands for information, getting closer to management and prodding and probing in ever increasing detail over a period of at least fourteen years, had nevertheless failed to make any appreciable impact in the general and financial management of ROH. These comments were made five years after the *Warnock Report*. Walker-Arnott did not deal with the artistic aspects of the ROH.

It is interesting to consider the extent of the Arts Council's freedom with regard to the Company, and the only limited extent to which it was actually able to cut the Royal Opera's grant. In the 1983 post-Priestley discussions, the Council considered the merits and risks of earmarked funds.<sup>179</sup> These are funds which are earmarked by the Government for a specific purpose or for a specific client. Such an arrangement contradicts the 'arm's length principle', which both the Government and the Arts Council so "proudly defend". It transpired that the amounts granted to the four national companies actually appeared in the Supply Estimates which had been laid before Parliament. The then Chairman of the Council, Sir William (now Lord) Rees-Mogg was of the opinion, therefore, that the Council did not have the authority to withdraw funding from a national company. This, of course, is misleading, because the Council would not be cutting the funding to any client, let-alone a national company within a year. Rather, the Council has the formal power to decide not to include a particular national company in the next year's list presented to Parliament. It was in the same meeting, that Rees-Mogg made it clear that withholding subsidy from the Royal Opera House was 'a sanction which the Council would find difficulty in using'.

On the same issue, Lew Hodges, a previous Finance Director of the Arts Council said:

I think the Arts Council has been always afraid that its power would be diminished as soon as one of the national companies was withdrawn from them, particularly ROH. What would have happened is: the Company would have complained to Downing Street. Downing Street would have said: Look, this is not under control. We will fund the four national companies directly

from the Government in the same way as the Tate Gallery is funded [...] the Arts Council has always been very nervous that that would happen.<sup>180</sup>

## 6 Conclusion

The Arts Council has failed in its attempts to control the Royal Opera House. This failure was not due to lack of reporting channels or formal control mechanisms. In fact, it could be argued that there were probably too many reports demanded by the Arts Council. The Arts Council's participation at ROH Board meetings did not enhance its control. Indeed, the Arts Council was still surprised at being confronted by the ROH's large deficits.

This state of affairs has resulted in much negative publicity for both the Arts Council and the ROH. The primary explanation for this is the relative position of the ROH as unique among Arts Council clients in its establishment and in the standing and power of its Board. Consequently, this has distorted dealings between the two organisations.

Theoretically, the Arts Council could have tried to influence the nominations to the ROH Board and thereby shift the balance of power between the two institutions which, for many years, was in favour of the ROH. However, it is unlikely that the ROH will ever cease to attract the 'great and the good'. Indeed, the ROH is also unequalled in the amounts of private sponsorship it attracts. Some of the more substantial donors expect to be represented and to have their interests and views respected. This is different in the other companies, where the Arts Council is the only substantial source of funding.

Initially, the Arts Council stood in awe of the Royal Opera and were reluctant to impose upon them an assessment. When such an assessment was eventually introduced, its conclusions were stifled and not enforced. A combination of fear that it might lose the ROH as a client and real-politik acceptance of the powerfully connected Royal Opera House, motivated the Arts Council's policy of appeasement.

It was not the lack of criteria by which to measure the ROH, which was the problem, but the lack of power to impose its views or to bring about an agreed change. As a result, there was very little real decision-making to speak of by the Arts Council with regard to the Royal Opera House.

# VI Opera North

## 1 Introduction

The establishment of Opera North was characterised by the active involvement of the Arts Council, making it an interesting case for further examination. Jack Phipps, the Arts Council Touring Director at the time of Opera North's establishment in 1978, commented on the active role of the Arts Council in the establishment of Opera North:

we were certainly pro-active over Leeds, we set out to do something and we achieved it.<sup>181</sup>

Such involvement was quite unusual for the Arts Council, as reflected in the comments of Nicholas Payne, General Administrator of Opera North in the years 1980 to 1992:

one of the great, imaginative acts of the post-war Arts Council, was its backing of the founding of Opera North [...].<sup>182</sup>

The decision to establish a new subsidised opera company has resulted in increased Arts Council expenditure on opera. It is, therefore, relevant to the analysis of Arts Council decisions regarding the funding of opera provision. Because of its rareness, it is also important to establish whether the decision-making ensured that an optimal decision would be made. This chapter considers the objectives of the Arts Council with relation to Opera North, the extent to which these objectives were coherent with their general policy and the way in which they were realised.

This case study is based on Arts Council papers relating to the establishment of Opera North and on Arts Council policy documents such as the 1984 *The Glory of the Garden* and the 1972 *Report of the Opera Working Party*. Also used were the Arts Council's 1987 and 1993 appraisal reports of Opera North. An important source were the interviews held with the three main protagonists involved: English National Opera's Lord Harewood, the Arts Council's Jack Phipps and Opera North's Nicholas Payne.



## **2 The Need for Opera Provision outside London**

One of the main problems the Arts Council has with opera as an art-form is the issue of access. This section will establish the background to the Arts Council's need to establish an opera company outside London.

Opera provision outside London was dependent on small and middle-scale touring companies and on reluctance to tour by the English National Opera and to a lesser extent the Royal Opera. Although some of the Arts Council Committees recommended the establishment of house-based opera companies in centres other than London, there were never enough means for such an investment. Drama and opera use touring as a solution for the inadequate or the impracticality of local supply outside of London. The difference between the two is considerable. A travelling theatre company needs to transport the actors and the scenery. By contrast, a travelling opera company has to transport singers, chorus, orchestra, musical instruments and scenery. The Royal Opera, when it was still touring,\* used to move some six-hundred people to enable it to stage a production. Moreover, there are fewer halls which can accommodate opera than theatre. The result is that, to some extent touring opera has almost always to compromise artistically. Not surprisingly, the main national opera companies were less and less eager to undertake touring commitments. Lord Harewood, formerly General Manager of the ENO for thirteen years, is of the opinion that in building team-spirit, a little touring has a beneficial effect on an opera company.<sup>183</sup>

Discussions about this problem were held by the Arts Council and papers were prepared on this matter as early as 1958. In addition to the organisational and financial issues, these papers addressed basic underlying problems connected with the essence of touring and with the pattern of touring as it had developed. These included technical problems with scenery, with the venues and their adaptability, smaller audiences, and hardship for the members of the opera companies.

Scenery, may either fit one theatre but not another, or suit every venue but suffer from possible artistic compromise. Touring companies, very often found themselves performing in cinema halls, which are not built for live performances and have no changing facilities, or stage and poor acoustics. Many theatres have no adequate

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\* ROH last UK tour was in 1981.

orchestra pit. Conditions for rehearsals and personal study are often unsatisfactory in such venues. Many of the towns visited on the touring circuit are too small to have sufficient low-cost bed-and-breakfast rooms for the entire crew; while the salary does not allow the members of the opera companies to stay in even medium-sized hotels. Touring life also inhibits the artistic development of the singers, who are precluded from taking regular lessons.

The combination of growing interest in television as a source of entertainment and the inability of the touring companies to visit regularly, has resulted in the loss of audiences for opera in many of the smaller towns. The touring circuit, which covered many small venues one week per year, may have provided these towns with entertainment, but did nothing to develop the taste for opera. In a 1958 Paper to Council, the opinion of a senior figure at Sadler's Wells, which provided a substantial part of the touring in the fifties, is referred to: a one-week-a-year opera season that sought to create a new audience in a town would not meet its objective. The company had to resort to the old popular repertoire, to suit an audience un-attuned to opera. This, in turn, prompted criticism for never bringing interesting works. Sadler's Wells, which in London would not be offering 'light fare', was touring with an entirely popular repertoire, leaning heavily on operetta.<sup>184</sup>

Arts Council policy documents such as the *Report on Opera and Ballet in the United Kingdom 1966-69* conclude that the real solution for provision of opera in Great Britain was the formation of opera centres in the larger provincial towns. The attitude of the Council had been to further this concept, provided there was enough local interest backed by local authority funding. As early as 1969, the *Report on Opera and Ballet in the United Kingdom 1966-69* stated that touring could not be the long-term solution and called for the creation of an opera house in Cardiff and one in Scotland. With regard to English regions it added:

there appears no reason why a large regional conurbation should not have its own opera house with performances comparable in quality with anything to be seen in London.<sup>185</sup>

It emphasises that the establishment of an opera house in any English region should be based on, 'an emphatic call from within that region, demonstrated by its preparedness to make an adequate financial contribution [...].'

In the early seventies, there was some consideration given to linking Glyndebourne with Liverpool, thus creating a North West opera centre. Following the *Report on Opera and Ballet in the United Kingdom 1966-69*, a special investigation by a working party under the Chairmanship of Lord Rhodes studied the feasibility of a North-West Opera House. The working party recommended that a 1,650 seat opera house be built in Manchester. The idea was that the local authorities of Manchester, Liverpool, Lancashire and Cheshire should be asked to contribute to the building and to the operation of the new theatre and to commit to covering one-third of the annual costs. The other two-thirds would be covered by box-office revenue and by the Arts Council. A permanent opera company would be established.

However, like earlier proposals, such as opera houses in Cardiff and Scotland, this too never proceeded beyond the idea stage. The Arts Council required, that adequate local funding would be agreed, before any Arts Council funding could be committed. This, in turn, necessitated strong local interest and the political ability to pull it through, neither of which were forthcoming.

The 1972 *Report of the Opera Working Party* credits the *Report on Opera and Ballet in the United Kingdom 1966-69* with advocating this scheme and considers that 'potentially it is perhaps the most fruitful outcome of that Report.' It adds:

a company resident in its own house could eventually provide a finer service to the opera (and ballet) – going public in this densely populated area than the Scottish and Welsh companies, which probably will always be essentially touring organisations. (It is estimated that over eight million people will be within an hour's drive of the proposed building).<sup>186</sup>

However, the Working Party acknowledged that a North West opera company could not be supported by the Arts Council unless it either curtailed the activities of one of the other major companies, obtained substantial and continuing contributions to the revenue costs by local authorities (or private sources), or obtained an increase in grant-in-aid (or the proportion allocated to opera). Thirty years later there is still no opera house in Manchester.

### **3 A New Company is Born**

Having established the background to the decision, this section will describe the process of implementation. In the mid seventies, according to Jack Phipps, the Arts Council's Director of Touring, he came to the conclusion that increasing audiences from 55-60% to 80% (the average in London) could be achieved by creating permanent provincial companies which would tour in areas where they were well-known.<sup>187</sup> He floated the idea of the ENO setting up a base in Leeds. At the time, Lord Harewood, whose family home was outside Leeds, was General Manager of the ENO. Phipps correctly expected Harewood to have an interest in promoting the area.

The Grand Theatre in Leeds, which has a seating capacity of 1500, was considered one of the best in the country for lyric performances, although it lacked an adequate orchestra pit or even a rehearsal hall for the orchestra. In fact, at the time, the 1972 Working Party had already looked at the possibility of housing a second Royal Opera company and the Royal Ballet group at the Grand Theatre. Leeds had been considered preferable to Manchester since it already had a theatre, considered to be a very good base for an opera and ballet company.

The ENO was anxious to find a solution to its touring activity, which it was more and more reluctant to continue. At the time, the ENO was divided into two companies and according to Lord Harewood, one of the results were performances of unacceptable standards. The ENO found it difficult to find a sufficient number of suitable singers for all its touring obligations and considered that constant travel was putting too great a burden on the singers.<sup>188</sup>

In October 1977, Phipps reported to the Council on the possibility of establishing an English National Opera company at the Grand Theatre Leeds.<sup>189</sup> The purpose of Phipps' paper was to secure a decision to commit funding for the new opera. The concept was that the ENO would establish a subsidiary company in Leeds – English National Opera North (ENON) -, supervise and direct it, but that within five years the new company would become independent.

According to the paper, the original proposal for funding the company was to approach all the major local authorities, in whose areas the company would play, for support towards the company's basic costs. Discussions were held by the Arts Council with Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire County Council on the assumption that

the Arts Council would provide the necessary funding for the first seven months of the scheme. However, Government restrictions on local authority spending prevented both local authorities from committing themselves.

The Arts Council, in actively trying to further its plan for the establishment of ENON, prepared plans to spread the cost between additional local authorities and to that end Arts Council officers planned public relations activities to reinforce public opinion in the North in favour of the project.

A year later, the baby was not yet born. Notwithstanding support from the Arts Council and the ENO, the project was failing to get local authority support. The Arts Council decided to go ahead on the basis that it fully paid for the first seven months and that, if by the end of the extended period of subsidy, adequate support was not forthcoming from local sources, the Council's subsidy would have to come to an end.

It was not usual for the Arts Council to commit itself for more than one year. In this case, however, a special decision was taken by the Council, as the ENO needed an assurance of support over a longer period than seven months to start on the Northern project.<sup>190</sup> An undertaking was given to the ENO that the Arts Council would guarantee the continuation of the scheme for at least one additional year. This undertaking was given in confidence, so as not to compromise the efforts to involve local authorities in the funding.

Ten years later, Lord Harewood suggested that the founding of Opera North, 'may prove to have been the Arts Council's last positive inspiration.'<sup>191</sup> In an article about Opera North, Lord Harewood described the establishment of Opera North which, 'like so many English operations [was] a kind of a con-trick.'<sup>192</sup>

Lord Rees-Mogg, the Chairman of the Arts Council in the years 1982-1988, apparently also referred to the same con-trick. According to Nicholas Payne, Rees-Mogg considered, 'the connivance of the Arts Council in the creation of Opera North as one of its biggest mistakes in that now discredited decade.'<sup>193</sup>

One should bear in mind that Rees-Mogg was a Thatcher appointee and that a substantial part of the 'discredited decade' (the second half) was under a Labour Government.

This was the first time since the war that a permanent opera company was established in Britain, with a full orchestra, chorus, singers and staff. In November 1978, English National Opera North had its premiere with Saint-Saens' *Samson et Delilah*. Opera North rapidly developed into a flourishing company and proved, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, to be a rewarding project.

The fact that other cities, may also have wanted to compete for this Arts Council project is exposed by Jack Phipps' remark, 'Manchester was furious, how dare you go to Leeds, why are we not [...]'.<sup>194</sup> This raises the question of how the Arts Council made its decision and why it chose Leeds over other locations. Phipps confirmed that the project was planned from the outset as a Leeds project.

A decision where to establish a new house-based opera company, should be made on the basis of the following factors: catchment area, investment required and sources of finance. Calculations of population density and travel time and cost to and from the opera, can define the optimal location, all things being equal. The existence of a theatre in one city, against the need to build a new opera house in another, would be significant in calculating the investment required. The willingness of local authorities to contribute would be decisive as to the sources of finance. In the case of Opera North, the advantage Leeds had with the theatre and the Arts Council's perception that it was likely to succeed in convincing the local authorities to contribute, were the crucial factors in the decision. It produced a good result, but as no comparative analysis of alternatives was undertaken, it may not have been the optimal decision.

#### **4 Objectives**

This section looks at the objectives in setting up English National Opera North and the extent to which they were accomplished.

The need to relieve the ENO from its touring activity in Yorkshire and the North and the wish to avoid the problem of a second tier company touring, referred to in the previous section, were satisfied by the establishment of a Leeds-based company.

## 4.1 Access

Before Opera North was founded, ENO used to provide an average of 15 opera performances per year in Leeds. There are now on average 50 opera performances per year in Leeds. This substantial increase serves both Leeds and its adjoining areas. However, Opera North also tours and about fifty per cent of its performances are in venues outside Leeds. Nottingham, York and Sheffield are the main cities, which benefit from increased access to opera in comparison to the situation before Opera North was established. The following performance statistics have been received from English National Opera and Opera North. They demonstrate that Leeds and Nottingham are the only towns, in which the number of opera weeks was increased to more than one week:<sup>195</sup>

### **Opera Performances by English National Opera and by Opera North**

Venue	ENO	ENO	Opera North	Opera North	Opera North	Opera North
	1975/76	1976/77	1978/79	1979/80	1984/85	1996/97
Hull	6	6	10	13	8	5
Leeds	15	15	50	45	54	46
Manchester	10	14	5	0	13	15
Norwich	6	5	5	10	0	5
Nottingham	0	6	11	10	15	15
Sheffield	0	0	0	5	0	6
Sunderland	6	6	0	10	0	4
York	0	0	5	5	3	6

## 4.2 Employment

The company employs a 160-strong company, comprising 54 orchestral musicians, 36 choristers, a music staff of 14, a technical department of 36 and an administration of 20. It thereby has created employment in the opera sector for artists in the region.

### 4.3 Excellence

The standards of excellence of the Opera North were assured from the beginning. The 1987 Arts Council appraisal\* describes the development of the Company.<sup>196</sup> In its early years, Opera North did not undertake new work but with the encouragement of the Arts Council this has changed. With time, the company defined an objective that at least half of the repertory should be new to itself and its audiences. This came at a high price in terms of both production costs and attendance. In comparing the ticket yields of Opera North, Welsh National Opera and Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Opera North consistently achieves lower levels. However, both Glyndebourne Touring Opera and Welsh National Opera tend to tour with two popular core repertoire operas within any three-opera programme. Opera North generally tours with only one relatively popular opera. In those instances when Opera North toured with two popular operas, the box office results were materially better. The 1993 Arts Council appraisal team calculated that by replacing the production of a new double bill production (*Yolanda/Nutcracker*) with a revival of *The Marriage of Figaro*, Opera North could have bettered its finances by £250,000 in 1992/93.<sup>197</sup> (This would have reduced the deficit carried forward from £422,000 to £172,000). In 1991, Opera North was also awarded Enhancement Funding by the Arts Council to enable it to perform one commissioned opera or one little known Twentieth Century work per year.

The artistic review, in the 1987 appraisal, was full of praise for Opera North and also paid tribute to the educational and outreach work carried out by the company. The main areas in which the report found that it could suggest changes were in marketing, Board composition and financial control. It considered the major problem the wholly inadequate rehearsal and storage spaces available. It also suggested some development in the following areas: greater input from guest conductors, increasing the independent life of the orchestra and chorus, providing acting and movement technique training for the chorus and developing further opportunities for young British talent.

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\* In 1987 the Arts Council conducted a pilot appraisal of Opera North. This was one of the 18 pilot appraisals at that time to test new evaluation procedures which the Arts Council was introducing.



Six years later a full appraisal of Opera North was undertaken by the Arts Council.<sup>198</sup> The appraisal referred to the fact that many viewed Opera North as the most dynamic opera company in Great Britain. Of the twenty recommendations the report made, not one was in the area of artistic excellence, innovation, education or access.

The report notes that, with the exception of the elimination of the deficit, Opera North had successfully tackled all strategic issues raised by the previous appraisal.

#### **4.4 Experimentation and Innovation**

The 1993 appraisal team clearly endorsed Opera North's 'commitment to adventurous programming and now to new work.' When an Arts Council officer questioned the level of artistic and financial risks taken, Nicholas Payne, Opera North's General Administrator said:<sup>199</sup>

If I'd just gone for a cautious artistic policy, the company wouldn't have survived. It would have gone under in the *Glory of the Garden* reassessment.

Payne was referring to the Arts Council's decision, announced in *The Glory of the Garden* to investigate some form of merger between Opera North and Scottish Opera.<sup>200</sup>

#### **4.5 Local Authorities**

When ENON was being established, its artistic director, David Lloyd-Jones, expected the local authorities to support it. He said:

The Yorkshire and northern organisations are going to see the performances presented by the company for at least a year; then they are going to be asked to put their hands in their pockets and support it to the hilt.<sup>201</sup>

Opera North has managed to attract a relatively high proportion of the local authority funding ratio, which rose to 15% of the Arts Council grants within the first ten years and has since stayed at about that level. Although there are still many local councils which do not consider opera a worthwhile subsidy recipient, this local authority involvement is an impressive success.

## 5 Conclusion

This is a success story. The Arts Council in 1978 was pro-active in the establishment of Opera North in Leeds. Opera North produces high quality opera and both Leeds and the surrounding areas have access to many more opera performances.

The Arts Council has succeeded in creating a fifth large-scale, house-based (although, like Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera, it performs largely away from its home base) opera company in Britain. The North is receiving more opera than ever before. Jobs have been created for artists in the Leeds area. Interesting and creative opera is not only produced by Opera North in Leeds, but also brought to the population in their catchment area which, prior to Opera North, only received short annual stints of run-of-the-mill opera. In addition, local authority involvement and funding of Opera North is at a level none of the other opera companies have managed to achieve.

However, this was the last time the Arts Council was involved in the creation of a new opera company. Over the years, several Arts Council reports have suggested the building of opera houses and the creation of house-based opera companies in cities such as Cardiff, Manchester and Edinburgh. The Arts Council's decision to opt for Leeds was based on two good reasons. The existing theatre in Leeds was more suited to opera than the one in Manchester and the Arts Council believed that it would be more successful in convincing the local authorities in the Leeds area to contribute to the annual funding of an opera company.

The fact that Opera North was created by an almost sleight-of-hand does not lessen the purpose nor the achievement. It does, however, make one wonder about the ways and means an organisation such as the Arts Council has to resort to in order to achieve their chartered objectives.

In assessing the quality of the decision-making process in this case, the immediate question is the extent to which other alternatives were examined. The case study has revealed that there was no discussion of options. It is therefore possible to conclude that the decision to site Opera North in Leeds was a good decision, but not necessarily the optimal one.

## VII Kent Opera

### 1 Summary

Over the years various Arts Council enquiries and committees recommended the withdrawal of funding from various touring opera companies.

In spite of this, Kent Opera, which was one of the important providers of touring opera in England, was the only opera company which had its subsidy withdrawn. This happened in 1989, prompting the company's closure.

The company was considered by critics and opera professionals a good, innovative and interesting opera company. The decision to withdraw funds, was taken at a time when the Arts Council was struggling with a funding shortage. This chapter will analyse how the decision was taken and will demonstrate that it is not compatible with Arts Council objectives. It has left a sour taste in the 'arts world', which has not yet evaporated.

When, in 1989, Kent Opera had its funding withdrawn, it was the recipient of only three per cent of the total Arts Council subsidy to opera. Peter Jonas, who was General Manager of the ENO at the time, described the withdrawal of funds:

The problem with the Kent Opera story was that there was a lot of dirty business going on and that it wasn't cleanly done. So in the end it didn't save very much money . [...] Kent was a relatively successful opera company artistically. But there was no doubt in everybody's mind that they knew at that time that other regional opera companies could take over the role of Kent Opera as far as touring was concerned. The fact was that they didn't do it cleanly. They hummed and hawed about it for a very long time; by the time they did it they had run the company down by under-funding it for a fairly lengthy period of time. So it was a very cruel thing to do to the opera community, they created divisiveness, didn't save too much money, and it was extremely harmful to the image of opera companies who had struggled to get along.<sup>202</sup>

Before the process of withdrawal is scrutinised (in section 5), Kent Opera and its activities are examined (section 2), the trauma caused by the closure of Kent Opera is

considered (section 3) and the underlying financial pressures, which led to the withdrawal of funding, are explained (section 4).

The case study is based on interviews held with: Senior Arts Council officers, including the Secretary General of the Arts Council and the Head of Music and Head of Touring at the time of withdrawal of funding; The Director of Kent Opera, Norman Platt; Nicholas Payne, at the time General Administrator of Opera North; Peter Jonas, at the time General Director of English National Opera; and the Earl of Harewood. Documentary sources used were: Minutes of Arts Council meetings; Reports of Arts Council committees and working groups; and articles in the press.

## **2 Analysis**

Arts Council criteria for the funding of opera clients were considered in a previous chapter.\* These included:

Excellence and high standard of production;  
Access: both geographical and financial;  
Development and nurturing of artists;  
Experimentation and innovation; and  
Education.

A systemic appraisal system was only introduced by the Arts Council in 1987. There were, however, no formal Appraisal Reports of Kent Opera. And yet, regular visits and reports of officers, should have given the Music and the Touring Panels the information necessary for an accurate assessment of Kent Opera. This section demonstrates quite clearly that Kent Opera was highly regarded in the various categories which were relevant to the Arts Council.

### **2.1 Excellence and High Standard of Production**

When the Arts Council officers first suggested to the Council the withdrawal of subsidy to Kent Opera in 1987, the artistic achievement of the Company was not

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\* Chapter IV, Section 7.9.

implicated.<sup>203</sup> However, when the funding was cut in 1989 the Arts Council Press Release stated:

In the opinion of Arts Council advisors and officers the standards of performance have deteriorated to becoming patchy and volatile. Some have been excellent (Night at the Chinese Opera); others have been second rate (Peter Grimes).<sup>204</sup>

Yet, the Arts Council reports over time reflect nothing but praise for the artistic standards of Kent Opera. For example, the 1983 *Opera and Dance Report* says of Kent Opera:

we found equally attractive the policy pursued by Kent Opera, typified by an economy of approach towards the realisation of clearly identified objectives.

[...] Kent Opera too should be encouraged to strengthen and develop its existing policies which were referred to earlier. We would like these regionally-based companies to benefit from any redistribution within the present proportion of funds devoted to opera.<sup>205</sup>

In 1984 the Arts Council published a general strategy document, which referred to the 'high artistic standards' of Kent Opera.<sup>206</sup> A 1985 *Opera Study Group* of the Arts Council reported that 'The Company has excelled in performing the more obscure operatic repertoire [...]' The report which suggested that one opera may have to have its funding withdrawn added:

It would be impossible to recommend, on artistic grounds, which company should be singled out for subsidy withdrawal. Whilst it is true that every company will produce good and bad work, the overall artistic standards of all the companies under review is extremely high.<sup>207</sup>

This positive feedback was also reflected in the critics who thought much of Kent Opera and referred to its 'vital young orchestra, which as the current *Magic Flute* confirms is a first-rate musical ensemble.'<sup>208</sup>

Sir Michael Tippett, the distinguished composer, wrote in *The Guardian* that the withdrawal of the Arts Council subsidy to Kent Opera, which according to him had gained 'a first league position' was a grave mistake.<sup>209</sup> Rodney Milnes, the editor of *Opera Magazine* said about Kent Opera, 'They are a really valuable, slightly puritanical, very serious company.'<sup>210</sup>

In a plea to save Kent Opera, which was published in *The Independent* on 8 December 1989, Simon Rattle, Nicholas Hytner, Andrew Parrott amongst others wrote, 'We have no doubt as to the overall quality of Kent Opera's work and its future potential.'<sup>211</sup>

## 2.2 Access

Touring was the main Arts Council solution for the access problem.\* There was no criticism of the touring pattern of Kent Opera. Moreover, it was the Arts Council that pressed Kent Opera to increase ticket prices.<sup>†</sup>

## 2.3 Nurturing Talent

South-East Arts, in a Press Release issued on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1989, after the final withdrawal of funds from Kent Opera said of Kent Opera that it had been a seed bed for young singers, providing an opportunity for new talent to flourish. Nicholas Hytner wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Guardian*:

Kent opera [...] has an extraordinary record for developing young singers and conductors and Jonathan Miller and I are not the only directors to have mounted our first operas for the company.<sup>212</sup>

## 2.4 Education

According to the 1985 *Opera Study Group Report*, Kent Opera played an important part in education:

The company was founded in 1969 by Norman Platt with the aim of creating directness and simplicity on the operatic stage. It has since become the major provider of opera in the South, South East, South West and East Anglia. The company has excelled in performing the more obscure operatic repertoire and has been instrumental in creating audiences for baroque opera. It has been a forerunner in developing a comprehensive education programme to complement its main activity and has greatly contributed to the negation of the myth that opera is an elite art.<sup>213</sup>

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\* See Chapter IV, section 7.5.

† More details in section 5 of this chapter.

Norman Platt contested the point made by the 1987 Touring Working Party that Kent Opera's educational work had become 'increasingly conventional' and asked Jack Phipps whose view on the Arts Council that represented. According to Platt's minutes of their meeting, Phipps' response was that the assessment had come from South East Arts which in 1985, had expressed its anxiety about Kent Opera's education department.<sup>214</sup> However, since then a new education officer had been appointed and South East Arts had an increasing admiration for the work of the company. Phipps confirmed that South East Arts would be writing to Sir William Rees-Mogg to confirm this. Jack Phipps apologised to Sir William Rees-Mogg for the inclusion of the unwarranted criticism of the education work of Kent Opera, although he maintained to Norman Platt that he was not responsible for the original criticism.

### 3 Trauma

The depth of the trauma which the withdrawal of funds from Kent Opera caused can be gathered from what was said in two very different interviews, held ten years after the event.

Jack Phipps, the Touring Director at the Arts Council, at the time, said in response to a question about Kent Opera:

Kent Opera was a marvellous, really fabulous organisation, that was run by Roger Norrington, and Norman Platt was there to keep the whole thing together.. and then Roger left and Norman took over and he simply wasn't good enough, he didn't have it, Roger could bring in Jonathan Miller, people like Nick Hytner, these sort of people would do the productions, whereas Norman was doing them himself, Norman is a sweet old thing, and the show was gradually going down, they have done a terrible Peter Grimes, and they weren't getting the box offices, they were overextending themselves financially, and we suddenly had a call from their chairman, Lady Northbourne, who I have a great admiration for, saying that 'we desperately need help' 'we need to be re-organised' and so they appointed Ivan Fisher as their Music Director and Ivan came up with an extraordinary plan where the company was going to live for three months in Paris, and this was going to pay for their English work, and I didn't believe a word of it frankly, and nor did many other people [...] But it is quite wrong for people like Rodney Milnes to say that we set out to kill Kent Opera because once Kent had gone I had the most terrible hole in my touring pattern covering a whole lot in medium scale venues that were very valuable.

Rodney hasn't spoken to me since. Actually it is quite wrong, I wasn't the initiator of it, it was initiated by one of the then members of the Arts Council who was asked to do a paper for the Council, who came back and said that 'it

was an unsound operation which we should not be subsidising, which we should not continue to subsidise, in fact I don't have faith in the artistic level of it or in its business administration.' In fact they had just appointed a very good and young man who might have been able to pull it through. [...] it would have been saveable I think, if Norman had gone, [...] Lady Northbourne could well have insisted that he did resign, but you see all that Board down there were devoted Normanites, they have grown up with him, [...] It had faded very badly, [...] once Roger had gone, Roger could contain Norman, [...] I have always been upset that the finger was pointed at me for destroying Kent Opera, that's simply not true.<sup>215</sup>

Many of the points made by Phipps in justification of the withdrawal of funds from Kent Opera were incorrect.\* It is understandable that Phipps should wish to both justify the Arts Council's decision and to point the finger at others. The heat of Phipps' discourse and his many wrong claims demonstrate how unusual the decision was and how uncomfortable Phipps still is, ten years after the event, to have been involved in the decision.

The other interview was with Lord Harewood:

They have only ever wound-up one company, which was Kent Opera, which caused a great outcry, which was wheels within wheels. It had a much more complicated behind the scenes reason than were ever given to the Press. The Press, rightly, made a great fuss. It was a good company, but it was very small. It had a small orchestra and a tiny chorus, and I think no principals. Almost everyone was brought in for the season; people suffered, but nobody was out-of-work, in a sense that they had no income, nobody or very few.

[...]

the company had quite certainly promised the Arts Council it could get out of its difficulties, which were accumulated deficit plus running things, by doing small-scale foreign tours, which were already there, which were agreed. It wasn't true, it just wasn't true. The tours weren't there and, if they were, they didn't make any money. So this was something they had made absolutely clear, it was part of the agreement between them and the Arts Council.<sup>216</sup>

These comments were made in response to questions in connection with Arts Council policy in general, and no mention had been made of withdrawal of funding or the case of Kent Opera in particular. Lord Harewood, who considered Kent Opera productions to have been 'all very good', believed that there was a behind-the-scenes story and that the press weren't told the truth. Possibly someone at the Arts Council

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\* Examples of inaccuracies are: Kent Opera was run by Norman Platt, who was also Artistic Director and not by Roger Norrington, who was the company's Music Director; Arts Council documents and many arts professionals contradict Phipps' claim that the company was going down; Nick Hytner was recruited by Platt and not by Norrington; Ivan Fischer was made Music Director in 1982 and not in 1989. Platt resigned two months before funding was withdrawn and Fischer was appointed Artistic Director.



had related that story to Lord Harewood, without telling him of the protracted process by which the Arts Council tried from 1985 onwards to cut funding to Kent Opera, only to do so in one fell swoop in 1989.

These two interviews were held in 1999, ten years after the closure of Kent Opera, and yet they reflect the depth of emotion and myth which surround the event.

Adding further to the mythical atmosphere surrounding Kent Opera, it should be noted that the paper prepared for the Chairman of the Arts Council at the time, Lord Palumbo, on the final decision on the future of Kent Opera, is nowhere to be found in the Arts Council. This, given that the Arts Council's papers are immaculately maintained, may be purely chance but may also reflect the sensitive nature of the decision made. It could be that, following the post-withdrawal trauma, the authors of the paper preferred to remain anonymous.

#### **4 The Arts Council Under Financial Pressure**

In the second half of the 1980's the Arts Council was under pressure from the Government to curtail its spending. This section establishes how the Arts Council dealt with its predicament with regard to the funding of opera.

In 1972, an internal Working Party of Arts Council officers included in its suggestions the recommendation to phase out the subsidy to Glyndebourne Touring Opera.<sup>217</sup> According to the Working Party's analysis, Glyndebourne Touring Opera's figures did not compare favourably with those of other touring companies. The report refers to the fact that the Touring Company is a separate company from the Glyndebourne Festival Opera and that the Touring Company's public is being offered second best. This was also reflected in falling attendance figures over the preceding three years.

The conclusion was that Glyndebourne Touring Opera was too expensive for the product it offered and that the funds spent by the Arts Council would be better spent in supporting Welsh National Opera or Scottish Opera. This recommendation was not implemented.

Twelve years later, *The Glory of the Garden* report was of the view that Opera 80, a national small-scale touring opera company that because of its *modus operandi* was

precluded from carrying out educational and outreach work, did not represent 'the wisest artistic or strategic choice'.<sup>218</sup> The Arts Council therefore decided to cease subsidising Opera 80 as of 1 April 1985. This would save £235,000 in 1985/86. This decision was subsequently cancelled by the Council, after a concerted lobbying action by backbench MPs organised by Opera 80.<sup>219</sup>

Kent Opera was a small to medium-sized provincial opera company. Established in 1968 by the tenor Norman Platt, it toured mainly in the South of England. The productions were partly produced by Norman Platt and partly by external producers. In its first years, all operas were conducted by its Music Director Roger Norrington. Professional soloists and musicians for the orchestra were recruited on a freelance basis. The repertoire was chosen so as to avoid the need for a substantial chorus. Luke Rittner, the Secretary-General of the Arts Council, wrote in an article in which he tried to explain the Arts Council's decision to withdraw funds from Kent Opera:

Kent Opera took opera where, in many cases it had never been before. The work was of the highest standards, using some of the brightest young talent of the day. <sup>220</sup>

The company was being subsidised by both the Music Department and the Touring Department of the Arts Council. Arts Council subsidies started in Kent Opera's first year of activity and gained momentum from 1975 as the following table shows:

### **Kent Opera's Performance Pattern**<sup>221</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Performances</b>	<b>Attendances</b>	<b>Operas [New Productions]</b>	<b>Number of Venues</b>	<b>Arts Council Grant</b>
1970/71	6	2,976	2[2]	3	£1,500
1971/72	9	2,209	4[3]	3	£3,600
1975/76	N/A.	N/A.	N/A.	N/A.	£119,500
1978/79	N/A.	N/A.	N/A.	N/A.	£335,000
1981/82	50	32,368	8[5]	8	£520,000
1982/83	51	36,353	5[4]	11	£600,000
1983/84	50	32,983	4[3]	8	£606,000
1984/85	52	32,638	5[3]	10	£693,000
1986/87	43	34,404	5[3]	10	£743,500
1987/88	39	35,964	5[3]	7	£743,500
1988/89	42	27,915	4[3]	9	£757,600
1989/90	37	22,946	3[2]	9	£1,263,000 (Closure Expenses)

In February 1985, the Regional and Music Directors of the Arts Council presented a paper to the Council, having defined a perceived dilemma between two conflicting policy documents.<sup>222</sup> The 1984 *The Glory of the Garden* which set limits to opera expenditure and the 1983 *Opera and Dance Report* which set artistic and operational aspirations based on growth. They suggested that a short term Enquiry be established to examine the present pattern of opera provision outside London and to make recommendations based on assessment of artistic and financial value.

In fact, there was no real conflict between the *Opera and Dance Report* and the recommendations of *The Glory of the Garden* with regard to limiting funds to opera. Although the 1983 report planned for growth it was also realistic and recommended:

we argue that the proportion of Arts Council funds allocated to opera should not increase. Therefore, since overall funds for the Arts Council are not likely to increase significantly during the next few years we suggest that, if necessary, touring by metropolitan opera companies be held back so that money may be released for the further early strengthening of the regional companies.<sup>223</sup>

The Council rejected the suggestion that a short-term enquiry be established, mainly because it felt that it was too wide in its brief and that it might raise the hopes of opera companies with regard to funding.<sup>224</sup> Although the Council decided not to have an enquiry, a report was, in fact, written and three months after the Council's rejection of the suggestion to establish an enquiry, the enquiry's report (*Henson Report*) was tabled.<sup>225</sup> The enquiry was headed by one of the Council members, Dr. Ronald Henson. The *Henson Report* was clear in its recommendation that their first course of action should be to change the balance in the funding of opera provision between London and the Regions.

The *Henson Report* analysed the problem resulting from the limits set by the 1983 *Opera and Dance Report* and *The Glory of the Garden* on the proportion of the Council's expenditure that should be committed to opera. The *Henson Report* assumed an annual inflation rate in opera of 5% and an annual increase in the grants of only 3%, creating a growing deficit in the funds needed to keep up the touring activity.

The *Henson Report* concluded that in those circumstances there were only three options:

- to press the special case for opera with the Government for additional funds;
- to move funds from London to the regions;
- to rationalise the pattern of provision by concentrating subsidy on fewer companies servicing only major centres of population. This would involve the withdrawal of support from at least one company.

The *Henson Report's* first recommendation was for the Arts Council to bid for more funds from the Government. Should that bid fail, the Report's clear recommendation was to move funds from the ROH and the ENO to the funding of opera in the regions:

Where we do challenge present policy is in its assumption that the balance of opera provision between London and the rest of Great Britain is either correct now or will be right in future years as regional provision for the arts is increased.

[...]

While recognising the importance of ROH and ENO, any transfer of resources from London to the regions can only come about by reductions in the future allocations to one or both of these companies. Perhaps understandably, Council backed away from any such recommendation being made by *The Opera and Dance Enquiry*. We, however, do not see how such a major issue can be avoided.

[...]

We conclude that if subsidy continues to fall behind cost inflation, opera expenditure in London must fall in actual terms and be redirected without. This notion is consonant with the philosophy expressed in *The Glory of the Garden*.

If Council is minded to reject our first option, we reluctantly suggest a new, reduced pattern of regional provision.

In this plan, the *Henson Report* suggested a merger between Kent Opera and Opera 80, adding that failure to find a joint solution might result in withdrawal of funding from one or both. It also confirmed that such a merger would solve the problem for only one year and that unless index-linked grants were introduced, there would be a need for further cutting. If this were the case, they would recommend cutting Scottish Opera's English touring and the withdrawal of funding from Glyndebourne Touring Opera.

The *Henson Report* was circulated by Luke Rittner, the Arts Council's Secretary-General, to all the opera companies.

Richard Clayson of the South East Arts Board considered the suggestion to merge Kent Opera with Opera 80 in a paper commenting on the Henson Report.<sup>226</sup> Clayson explained that such a merger did not make any sense. Opera 80 toured throughout England with small-scale productions of medium and large-scale operas, by scaling them down to enable their production by a small team in small venues. Kent Opera stated that it considered the fulfilment of the composer's demands without compromise essential. Opera 80 used producers and soloists of a lower order than were acceptable to Kent Opera and performed in smaller venues and required smaller stages. Indeed, neither company was interested in such a merger.<sup>227</sup>

Although there was some evidence of a united front,<sup>228</sup> in which the various regional opera companies (Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Opera 80 and Kent Opera) co-ordinated their response, Kent Opera was under no illusion that such a united front was inviolate and also acted to fight its own case independently.<sup>229</sup>

Kent Opera issued a press statement which was apparently unpopular with Luke Rittner.<sup>230</sup> Kent Opera was informally advised by senior officers of the Arts Council to adopt a conciliatory approach and to ask the HRH the Duke of Kent (Kent Opera's Patron) and Sir Michael Tippett (Kent Opera's President) to write to Rittner and to emphasise the venues which would lose touring weeks.

In a meeting between the Arts Council and representatives of Kent Opera and Opera 80, David Pratley, then Regional Director of the Arts Council, who at the time was in charge of touring, confessed that the merger idea had not really been thought out.<sup>231</sup> He added:

The present state of affairs is that if the reprievals [sic] continue there will be no money for the second year of *The Glory*. The Council has been unable to free up the necessary money.

Kent Opera hired a public relations firm to help it in formulating a strategy and a response to the Report.<sup>232</sup> The campaign, which was targeted at Luke Rittner, covered all the members of the Council, Members of Parliament, local authorities, education authorities, journalists and the British Council.

In September 1985, Council decided to postpone its decision until the grant from the Government was known. It also noted that a voluntary merger between Kent Opera and Opera 80 was unlikely.<sup>233</sup>

In July 1986, Jack Phipps, Controller of Touring at the Arts Council, wrote to Norman Platt suggesting that Kent Opera draft a three-year plan, which would include a phased increase of its grant by £300,000, adding that it would, however, be fairly difficult to achieve a major increase in 1986/87.<sup>234</sup>

At a meeting, which took place at the Arts Council in October 1986 the Arts Council representatives made it clear that the limited increase of the Arts Council grant-in-aid, meant that there would be very little available to increase Kent Opera's subsidy.<sup>235</sup> Jack Phipps said that the solution would have to be found in increased funding by local authorities. But, Phipps also stated that the Arts Council did not expect Kent Opera to have to justify its worth; that it was fully aware of the contribution which Kent Opera was making and that the only reason it could not respond positively to the suggested development ideas of Kent Opera was the lack of resources.

In October 1986, the Arts Council discussed the immediate situation of Opera 80 and the projected financial deficits in 1987/88 of six other opera clients of the Council.<sup>236</sup> It was feared that these difficulties were likely to become even more acute if predictions concerning the 1987/88 Grant-in-Aid proved to be correct.

Opera 80 was granted an extra £25,000 to complete its scheduled winter tour in view of the fact that it had contractual responsibilities, had made every effort to manage and control expenditure (in a year when its subsidy had been reduced) and was committed to touring in the regions. The Council also discussed the £1-2 million forecast deficit of the Royal Opera House and the issue of whether in the final analysis the Council was funding too many clients.

By November 1986, the Arts Council had been informed that the projected deficit of the Royal Opera House for 1987/88 stood at £3.3 million.<sup>237</sup> At a meeting, which took place in the same month, with representatives from all British opera companies, Luke Rittner argued that the Council did not have enough money to maintain what it had built.<sup>238</sup> The only solution was to maintain fewer companies and to restructure opera provision. Sir John Tooley of the ROH and Peter Jonas of the ENO were the more

aggressive participants at the meeting. The only suggestion which was agreed at the meeting was Luke Rittner's proposal that all companies might write a letter to the newspapers.

Five months later, the Council was again discussing financial difficulties of major opera clients.<sup>239</sup> The bleak financial outlook for the ENO, even after achieving the recommended economies, was recognised. The Council was sympathetic to future funding needs and regretted its inability to enter into further funding commitments at that stage. Officers were asked to begin discussions with the ENO with the aim of achieving a balanced financial position over the next three years. The Council was also aware of the dichotomy in the achievement of the Welsh National Opera. It was both producing outstanding opera and committed to touring the regions. Its financial situation, however, was extremely precarious. The WNO was also asked to produce a balanced budget for 1987/88.

This section has illustrated the financial pressures of the Arts Council and its 'need' to find an opera company from which to withdraw funding. It also has pointed to the failure of the Arts Council in dealing with its dilemma. The Arts Council especially failed in harnessing the opera companies to a joint lobbying action to alleviate the Government's pressure on the Arts Council. Such joint activity could also have led to more consultation by the Arts Council with the opera companies, thereby avoiding the divisiveness the Arts Council caused.

## **5 Process of Withdrawal**

The withdrawal was a protracted affair. It started in 1987 and ended in 1989. The formal decision-making process started in April 1987 with a report to Council of an internal opera touring working party. The report was styled "Report to Council on Action Required to Halt the Decline in Opera Touring Weeks for 1988/89 and Beyond".<sup>240</sup> The report, dated March 1987 and signed by Jack Phipps, was based on the 1985 *Henson Report*.

At about the same time, the Chairman of Kent Opera Company's Council of Management, Lady Northbourne, was told by an unspecified person (later identified by Norman Platt to have been Jack Phipps<sup>241</sup>) at the Arts Council, that unless Norman Platt was removed from Kent Opera, the Arts Council would cease funding it. The



criticism was that Kent Opera had not been as exciting in the last years as it had been in the previous decade. Norman Platt demanded an explanation from Luke Rittner. In his letter, he mentioned that he had already announced his plans to resign in 1990 and that he hoped soon to be able to propose a solution to the question of a successor.

Luke Rittner responded, concerned that any member of the Arts Council staff should have suggested the above.<sup>242</sup> He did however, confirm the Arts Council's concern at:

certain shortcomings mainly related to the management and marketing side of the company's recent work, but as you know an offer of grant has been made to the company for 1987/88 which depends only on our being satisfied that a satisfactory programme of work can be provided on the money available and that proper arrangements are being made to deal with your outstanding debt.

[...]

For my part you will know that I have long admired the achievements of the Company [...].

The letter ended by agreeing that choosing a successor will not be easy but 'is clearly the right course to take at this time.'

According to the Working Party, each of the companies was able to undertake additional weeks of touring at progressively falling costs. Moreover, all the companies suffered in terms of morale and maintenance of standards from periods of inactivity. The Touring Working Party 'reluctantly' agreed that the withdrawal of subsidy of one company and the redistribution of its funding and workload amongst the remaining companies was the only practicable course of action. There was general agreement that the preservation of full-time companies was an all-important principle which assured the continued existence of the Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera and Opera North, leaving Kent Opera, Glyndebourne Touring Opera and Opera 80 as candidates for the withdrawal of funding. Glyndebourne Touring Opera was described as an 'enormously prosperous venture'. The Report suggested, without explanation, that the disappearance of Glyndebourne Touring Opera could have a serious effect on the Glyndebourne Festival itself. Indeed, Glyndebourne Festival was not a client of the Arts Council. Opera 80 was defined as 'unique in the services it provides' and Kent Opera as the most vulnerable.

The Report referred to Kent Opera showing 'signs of running out of artistic steam' and that 'there are doubts about the strength of its present management team', though it does also mentioned Kent Opera's considerable achievements. Additionally,

the Working Party argued that Kent Opera's educational work 'is thought to have become increasingly conventional' and that the company had not achieved sufficient local authority support. The Report described the fact that Kent Opera performed the majority of its work outside the region as proof that there was not enough local interest and support for the company in Kent. This was a misleading characterisation, however, as touring venues were agreed in advance with the Arts Council.\* This criticism is also interesting as the Report itself referred to Opera 80's 'effective action to meet criticism of its standards and [that it] has recently strengthened its Board structure'. This opportunity to restructure and improve, granted to Opera 80, was never offered to Kent Opera.

In April 1987, at a meeting with Kent Opera, Sir William Rees-Mogg said that the problem of having five companies when they could only afford four was pressing, but that the Arts Council would not base its decisions on economic reasons alone.<sup>243</sup> He also said that Kent Opera's subsidy per seat compared favourably with the other companies:

Welsh National Opera	£30
Scottish Opera	£32
Opera North	£34
Glyndebourne Touring	£11
Kent Opera	£22

The Report was sent to Norman Platt in the first days of May 1987, only after the Council discussed it in late April. Surprisingly, Richard Luce, Minister for the Arts in the Office of Arts and Libraries wrote at the same time to a local MP from Kent, Janet Fookes MP:

I was able to see a performance by Kent Opera last summer and am well aware of their excellent work and high artistic standards. I very much hope that the company will be able to continue in being.<sup>244</sup>

No criticism of Kent Opera was raised by the Arts Council. Jack Phipps said that Council would probably not be able to come to an immediate decision at its coming

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\* The Arts Council's Spheres of Influence Policy for Opera has formed the basis of opera touring since the 1978/79 season. Under the terms of this policy the country has been divided into areas for which responsibility is taken by specified companies. The policy is implemented through the Arts Council Touring grants.

meeting. Both Norman Platt and Lady Northbourne explained that leaving the matter open would create problems with regard to fund-raising, relations with its bank and most importantly Kent County Council, which was trying to organise funding from the County and District Councils, from other Councils and from sponsors. Other music administrators, including Nicholas Payne, have confirmed how damaging such an approach can be. Payne referred to the situation Opera North was in when *The Glory of the Garden* had recommended that it be amalgamated with Scottish Opera:

it did this company an immense amount of damage. In the 18 months that followed, neither Scottish Opera nor Opera North managed to attract a single major sponsor for any event. The building process after that was slow [...].<sup>245</sup>

In response to Jack Phipps' request that Kent Opera should refrain from attacking the Arts Council, Norman Platt said that the campaign, which would be constructive, would have to continue until 29 April, the date of the Council Meeting.

The Council, in its meeting, postponed its decision.<sup>246</sup> The Council felt that further consultation should take place, especially with Kent County Council. It accepted the concept of Opera North, Scottish Opera and Welsh National Opera as important flagships and also added that the possible withdrawal of subsidy from Kent Opera was based on economic reasons and that 'no criticism of the artistic achievement of the company had thereby been intended.' A press release to that effect was issued by the Arts Council the next day.

At a meeting Norman Platt had with Luke Rittner, Platt protested to Rittner pointing out the quality of Kent Opera's performances. 'We are not concerned with quality', was Rittner's response. Quickly followed by 'Oh dear, perhaps I shouldn't have said that'. Platt tried a different argument that Kent Opera was vastly more economical than any other opera company, to which Rittner replied: 'I don't understand figures'.<sup>247</sup> Rittner, who accepts that he is 'not good with numbers', does not believe that he would have made the remark about quality.<sup>248</sup>

In a subsequent meeting of the Arts Council with the six regional and touring companies, Graham Marchant, the Director of Arts Co-ordination of the Arts Council, said the Arts Council was looking at redistributing the touring weeks without losing a company. Moreover, he added that he would rather lose a big company at that stage to cover a five-year period until the next election, than first lose Kent Opera and another opera company two years later. Both Marchant and Phipps were critical of

the companies for not doing more than merely contemplating a letter to the papers. They expected the companies to lobby politicians and to bring about a public outcry at the possibility that opera provision would be reduced. The companies were asked to participate in an analysis of increased ticket-prices, local authority support and reduced cost. Although, this was meant to be only a hypothetical exercise, it was implied that any evidence of unwillingness to co-operate would be held against the company concerned.

During that period the lobbying activity which Kent Opera had organised was bearing fruit. According to Platt, the Chairman of the Council and its Secretary-General were inundated with letters from MPs, public figures and from the general public. The Art Council had a file with over one thousand letters of support for Kent Opera.<sup>249</sup>

In the beginning of May, Jack Phipps instructed Kent Opera to concentrate its efforts in the largest possible venues, cutting out anything below 1500 seats, and to increase ticket prices by 25%.<sup>250</sup> Graham Marchant prepared a paper for the Council's meeting in June 1987, in which it was reported that all companies were asked whether they could find ways of increasing audiences, raising seat prices, increasing local authority contributions and maximising sponsorship. Additionally, the companies were asked to look at staffing levels and to re-examine their expenditure.<sup>251</sup>

The paper included a response from the Working Party on Regional Opera Touring which reiterated the recommendation made in April to withdraw funds from Kent. It asserted that:

The companies are being extremely optimistic in the assumptions they have made in the responses' [and that] 'as the current situation is inherently unstable, Council may well be faced with a more serious crisis if action is not taken now.

At the Council meeting, however, Marchant recommended that Kent County Council be given more time to try to raise the additional £200,000 needed each year.<sup>252</sup> The Council was divided and a decision was taken which gave Kent Opera a reprieve until March 1988. Failure to find the additional £200,000 would lead to a notice of withdrawal from 1 April 1989.

The Council next discussed Kent Opera, six months later, when it was informed by Luke Rittner, that further funds from Kent County Council would probably be forthcoming.<sup>253</sup> The Arts Council's policy of encouraging local authorities to subsidise opera had been successful in Leeds with regard to Opera North. In line with the policy set out in *The Glory of the Garden*, the Arts Council endeavoured to achieve local authority contribution for Kent Opera as well.

The pressure put on Kent Opera to raise such substantial funds from local authorities, should be seen in the context of the local authority funding other opera companies were getting. In 1983/84, the ratio between local authority support to opera companies and that of the Arts Councils was just over 7%. Most companies had very little local authority funding. Opera North was an exception. English National Opera was also still receiving a high local authority grant (subsequently drastically cut with the abolition of the Metropolitan County Councils in 1988). In 1990/91 the figures for local authority funding were:

**Arts Council and Local Authority Grants to Opera 1990/91**<sup>254</sup>

<b>Opera Company</b>	<b>1990/91 Arts Council Grants (£'000)</b>	<b>1990/91 Local Authority Grants (£ '000)</b>
Royal Opera House	7006	0
English National Opera	9103	160
Welsh National Opera	4957	188
Scottish Opera	5063	0
Opera North	3055	923
Glyndebourne Touring	507	57
Opera 80	543	0

In 1987/88 the aggregate ratio between Arts Council and local authority funding for opera companies was 3.8%.<sup>\*255</sup> Yet, immense pressure was being put on Kent Opera, who were getting seven hundred fifty thousand pounds from the Arts Council to produce more than £200,000 from local authorities.

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\* for the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Opera North, Glyndebourne Touring Opera and Welsh National Opera.

At the various meetings between Kent Opera and the Arts Council, the only issue that had been raised was that of attracting an additional £200,000 each year from local authorities.

Although the formal decision of the Council set a March deadline for Kent Opera, the issue was not brought to the agenda of the Council until July 1989. In the July and September meetings, the Council was informed that a new business-plan had been received from Kent Opera and that it was being studied.<sup>256</sup>

On 20 and 21 November 1989, a two-day Council Meeting of the Arts Council took place at Leeds Castle. On the first day it was reported that Council officers had doubts about the viability of the plans submitted by Kent Opera. The next day an oral report was made by Mr. James Cook, an external consultant, who, with a group of officers and members, had briefly looked into the Kent Opera situation. The result was that the Council authorised the Chairman to take appropriate action after receiving documentary briefing.<sup>257</sup>

Only several weeks before the decision, Dartford Borough Council, one of the local authorities in which Kent Opera was performing, had managed to raise from its resources and from three local companies an amount of £100,000 for Kent Opera. On 24 November, Lord Palumbo wrote to Dartford Borough Council's Chief Executive and informed him that Kent Opera was discussed at the Leeds Castle Council meeting 'as a topic of considerable importance' and that the Council was studying the company's business plan before deciding the level of support for the future.<sup>258</sup>

On 29 November, a scheduled meeting of the Arts Council's Music Panel took place. Nicholas Kenyon, a member of the Music Panel, confirmed that the agenda did not include Kent Opera and that to the surprise of the participants, Kenneth Baird, Music Director of the Arts Council, raised the subject under 'Any Other Business'. Baird gave the Panel members an oral explanation of the company's financial situation. The members were not given any papers, nor did they have any time to study the matter.<sup>259</sup> Yet, the Panel members did not object and at that same meeting the Panel recommended that all subsidy be withdrawn from Kent Opera. The lengthy process, which was led by Arts Council officers, needed the formal recommendation of the Music Panel. The Music Panel provided the officers with their requirement, and

thereby made a recommendation for a withdrawal of all subsidy from an opera company purely on the basis of verbal information.

On the same day Kent Opera was informed by the Arts Council's Secretary-General of the decision:

I have to tell you therefore that the Council has decided Kent Opera's performance, in particular in terms of a dwindling utilisation, inconsistent artistic quality and high subsidy per seat, can no longer justify a grant from the Council. Furthermore the Council has looked at your three year proposals and, regrettably, we find the forecasts unrealistic. The Council has decided that it will not provide subsidy for Kent Opera after November 1990.<sup>260</sup>

On 14 December, four days before the Council met to confirm the decision, already made by the Chairman and announced to the general public, Lord Palumbo and Luke Rittner met with a delegation representing Kent Opera.<sup>261</sup> The delegation was led by the company's Patron, HRH The Duke of Kent, and included the chairman of the company, The Lady Northbourne, Ivan Fischer, its new Artistic Director and David Pickard, its new Managing Director.

Kent Opera maintained that the business plan was prepared with the blessing of Jack Phipps, the Arts Council's Director of Touring, that the audience figures were the result of restrictions imposed by the Arts Council's touring department against appearing in larger venues, and that problems with Norman Platt as Artistic Director of the company had made it difficult to build a better relationship with the Arts Council.

According to Kent Opera's Minutes of the meeting, Jack Phipps was called in to the meeting.<sup>262</sup> He admitted that the increase in performances over the next three years (which were the basis for the business plan considered "unrealistic" by the Arts Council) was something that the Touring Department had recommended to the Company. In response to Lady Northbourne's question why he had recommended the application for incentive funding, Phipps responded that though he had recommended the Company apply, he had not guaranteed that they would get the money.

Kent Opera pleaded for one year's grace. Lord Palumbo said that he had taken note of the meeting and that he would relay the feelings to the Council, saying that 'Kent

Opera would get a fair hearing.’ Luke Rittner added that ‘he was very committed to the Company.’

At the December 1989 Council meeting, Lord Palumbo informed the Council that he had decided to withdraw funding for Kent Opera as of December 1990.<sup>263</sup> The members of the Council were given copies of a document from Kent Opera appealing the decision, however, the Chairman came to report his decision, rather than propose further discussion. The Council reaffirmed the Chairman’s decision, having concluded that ‘the Company’s combination of artistic and financial problems left no alternative to the decision to terminate Arts Council funding’.

In its press release, announcing the withdrawal of funds from Kent Opera, the Arts Council gave misleading information.<sup>264</sup> For example, it referred only to Kent Opera’s accumulated deficit of £335,000, without seeking to place this figure in the context of deficits that other companies had accumulated (such as the 1989/90 £2.85 million deficit of the Royal Opera House). In reference to subsidy per seat, the press release stated that Kent Opera was costing the Arts Council £24.25 per seat, versus the range of high quality opera which cost the Arts Council much less: from £8.70 for Opera 80 to £25.20 for the Royal Opera House. However, subsidy per seat is a criterion which normally favours performances in big venues. Opera companies, which by definition perform at small venues, will always need higher subsidy per seat. Moreover, the data given by the Secretary General was not even accurate. The subsidy per seat at the time was as follows:<sup>265</sup>

Royal Opera	£24.13
Opera North	£24.45
Scottish Opera	£28.81
Welsh N. Opera	£39.68

Notably, when the process to withdraw funding from Kent Opera started, the Chairman of the Arts Council told representatives of Kent Opera that Kent Opera, as far as subsidy per seat went, compared favourably with the other opera companies.<sup>266</sup>

Robert Ponsonby, former BBC controller of music, resigned from the Music Panel in protest. He had been unable to attend the Panel meeting and said:



I am personally disillusioned about the Arts Council advisory system. On this particular occasion, the music panel was not briefed at all about a major item, it was not on the agenda, and this is by no means the only time that the music panel has been mishandled; I don't really want any more voluntarily to give time to the Arts Council when one is not properly briefed, one's advice is often rejected or ignored, and one is misrepresented. That's not good in my mind, and I've had enough of it.<sup>267</sup>

Nicholas Kenyon, then arts critic and Music Panel member wrote of the procedure:

Some of us who serve on that panel came to the rapid conclusion that our presence was required only to give artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald business decision already made in principle by the Council in its session at Leeds Castle. Our suspicion that major strategies are now being decided by the Council and its management without any reference to its advisory structure was strikingly confirmed at the same meeting.<sup>268</sup>

## **6 Conclusion**

In 1989, the Arts Council decided to stop funding Kent Opera, thereby causing its dissolution. Kent Opera was a medium-sized touring company, which performed mainly in the South of England and in East Anglia. It was considered by professionals and critics to create exciting, innovative, and high quality opera and impressive education work. When its funding was withdrawn, Kent Opera was receiving £750,000 in annual grants from the Arts Council, amounting to 3% of the Arts Council's expenditure on opera.

In the mid 1980s, the Arts Council was under intense pressure from the Thatcher Government which wanted to reduce government spending and bring in other sources of funding. It is with this pressure on the one hand and the ever-increasing costs of opera production on the other, that the Arts Council's decision has to be evaluated.

The decision-making process described in this case study clearly shows that Arts Council funding was not withdrawn from Kent Opera because of a critical appraisal. The study has demonstrated that Kent Opera did not fail the important Arts Council objectives of access and excellence. The reporting language to the Council, however, included allusions to falling standards and diminishing educational work. This was never mentioned to Kent Opera, who were only told about the Arts Council financial straits.

Different Arts Council committees had suggested other solutions to the funding squeeze. The Arts Council failed to implement alternatives, such as reducing the funding of the ROH and ENO. This was not only the key recommendation of one of the Arts Council's own committees, it would also have been in keeping with Arts Council policy to redress the existing imbalance in the provision of opera in and outside of London.

Nicholas Kenyon, a member of the Music Panel, wrote an article attacking the decision-making process but defending the decision itself on the grounds that it had 'lost its impetus'.<sup>269</sup> He conceded, however, that other opera companies have had similarly poor records. The Music Panel had in all those years not initiated a discussion of the alleged failing standards of Kent Opera, This would have been the role of the Music Panel, which could have demanded improved standards before threatening the withdrawal of the grant. The withdrawal process brings out the failure of the Arts Council's advisory panels. Not having had any involvement over the years, they rubber-stamped decisions put to them by Arts Council officers.

In such difficult circumstances, personalities and personal likes and dislikes and interests frequently play a disproportionate role. Norman Platt, the autocratic director of Kent Opera was apparently not liked at the Arts Council. According to Norman Platt, Phipps had, it seems, said to an acquaintance that he now had greater freedom of action which he intended to use to secure Norman Platt's resignation and the closing down of Kent Opera.<sup>270</sup> Opera magazine wrote:

Kent Opera has been a "rogue" company ever since it was founded [...] They are a really valuable, slightly puritanical, very serious company. But they never fitted in with the Arts Council, they were bloody-minded and individual, and Norman Platt was no diplomat.<sup>271</sup>

Similarly, Graeme Kay, then editor of Classical Music wrote:

it has been common knowledge in the music profession for years that the Council found Kent Opera –its artistic independence fiercely guarded by its now-retired founder Norman Platt – to be an anomaly in the structure of regional opera, of which it would rather be rid.<sup>272</sup>

With the Arts Council's funding for opera becoming ever tighter, competition for funding was stiff. Nicholas Payne, at that time General Administrator of Opera North, confirmed that the companies knew that the funds which would be withdrawn from

Kent Opera would be divided amongst them.<sup>273</sup> Sir George Christie, the Chairman of Glyndebourne Productions Ltd, which competed with Kent Opera over touring allocations, happened at the time to be Chairman of the Art Council's Music Panel.

Two important points contributed, in 1984, to the suggested policy and recommendations of the Arts Council policy document, *The Glory of the Garden*.<sup>274</sup> Awareness of the Government's wish to curtail its expenditure on the arts and the Arts Council's own objective of shifting some of its funding away from London and towards the other regions.

*The Glory of the Garden* proposed to cease subsidising Opera 80 and to initiate merger talks between Scottish Opera and Opera North. The Arts Council's two attempts to merge opera companies had failed and neither decisions were implemented.

The pressure to find a company, whose funding would be curtailed, did not abate. An examination of the decision-making process of the Arts Council demonstrates its faults. The pattern was as follows: a committee would suggest a solution (the withdrawal of funding from one company), when the company was successful in fighting that decision-off, another committee would suggest that a different company should be curtailed. This continued until one company was not strong enough in its lobbying efforts and the process came to an end. It was the weakest link, which failed, but not the artistically weakest, but the one which in its power-base was weakest.

The decision achieved almost nothing. Very little money was saved at the cost of a company, considered by all its peers to be an outstanding opera company. Moreover, in the decision to cut a touring company, the previous decisions to move weighting from London to the provinces had also been disregarded.

It seems that, in the decision to withdraw funding from Kent Opera, the political will to prove to the Government and to the other Arts Council clients, that Arts Council funding should not be taken for granted and that the Council is capable of withdrawing funding from revenue clients, took-over and became more important than any Arts Council objective.

The number of opera companies in Britain is rather small. In the atmosphere created by the Arts Council, with its solution-seeking committees, instead of bringing about co-operation between the companies, they created divisiveness. This was neither productive in the search for a solution, nor positive in the general atmosphere created in the performing arts environment. There was never any concept of a joint solution to the problem of financial pressure and, as a result, each company quietly hoped that the guillotine would drop on one of the other competing companies.

The pressure to curtail funding subsided with the real increases in the Arts Council's grant-in-aid in the years 1991/92 and 1992/93. How the Council would have dealt with a need to make further cuts is therefore, unknown. Based on the Kent Opera precedent, the signs are they would not have dealt with it well.

## VIII Germany's Cultural Policy Structure

Germany was chosen for this study because of its long history of public funding of culture, its long opera tradition and its federal structure.\* This general chapter describes the history of arts funding in Germany and its present structures. However, culture is within the competence of the States (*Länder*) and Historical, Constitutional and other issues which are specific to Frankfurt, Bavaria and Berlin, are analysed within the case studies.

### 1 History

Germany in its present form was established in 1949, after the Second World War. It comprises eleven *Länder* (states) which made up the Federal Republic of Germany plus an additional five *Länder*, (the area of which formed the German Democratic Republic), which were reconstituted as *Länder* of unified Germany in 1990.

Germany is a Federal Republic, in which the power and authority are shared between the Federation (*Bund*) and the 16 States (*Länder*). The history of Germany as a unified country is, however, young. It became unified as a nation in 1871, prior to which it was a loose conglomeration of feudal entities. The unified German Empire was established as a federal state and it continued as a federal state after the abolition of the monarchy in 1919.

According to the sociologist, Dr. Volker Kirchberg, Culture (*Kultur*) has for most of Germany's history been considered by the Germans as a specifically German tradition, which sets Germany apart from other nations.

There was a belief that:

to behave culturally meant to belong to a people with better traditions and moral stakes. The German bourgeoisie strongly distinguished "civilisation" (every other European nation is civilised) and "culture" (only the Germans have "*Kultur*").<sup>275</sup>

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\* See Chapter I, section 2

Part of the German tradition has its roots in the days when Germany was still a loose association of countries with separate kings, princes and dukes and each of these local potentates maintained court theatres and court operas. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries every small *Residenzstadt*, had its own theatre and very often its own opera. Thus, prior to the First World War, Germany had: 20 royal theatres, 74 city theatres leased to theatre companies, 13 city repertory theatres, 116 private theatres, 112 summer and spa theatres, 84 touring companies which covered some 350 localities.<sup>276</sup>

Other cities, such as Frankfurt, were proud burgher cities, whose citizens wanted to have their own institutions and developed citizen-initiatives, including opera houses. This was also the case for the *Charlottenburg Oper* (today's *Deutsche Oper* in Berlin) which was founded by the burghers of Charlottenburg in 1912 who wanted to have their own opera, rather than the existing 'court -opera', the Berlin *Hofoper Unter den Linden*.

After 1919, once royalty had been abolished, together with the combination of Constitutional changes and impoverishment of the middle classes, the *Länder* and local authorities assumed responsibility for the theatres. These were run as subsidised entities until 1933 when the Nazi regime took full responsibility for running and funding of the theatres.

## **2 *Kulturstaat***

The concept of *Kulturstaat* (Culture State), which still exists today, goes back to the German notion that *Kultur* was something uniquely German. The responsibility once that of the ruling prince or duke subsequently became that of the burghers and now is in the domain of the state. Similarly what started out as a court-opera, run by the local prince or duke for his own aggrandisement, became a burgher-opera and is in its present form a state-opera. However, contrary to the previous era when the ruler decided about the arts to be produced in his opera, the present state has the obligation to fund opera without the right to interfere in the artistic decisions.

Germany's recent history, where culture was used by the Nazis to further their ideology, explains the great care taken in referring to the state's role vis-à-vis culture

in the Constitution. The one oblique reference to culture in the Constitution is in article 5(3), which states:

Art and science, research and teaching are free. Freedom of teaching does not absolve from loyalty to the Constitution.<sup>277</sup>

This clause only ensures the freedom of the arts and does not say anything explicit about the promotion of culture. It represents the two contrasts to what culture had been during the Nazi regime. It was promoted by the state but not free.

Twenty five years later, in 1974, the German Constitutional Court decided that this was to be interpreted not only as a guarantee of artistic freedom, but that it should be considered an active task of the state. The court determined that it is the role of the modern state, which defines itself as a *Kulturstaat*, to maintain and to promote a liberal artistic life.<sup>278</sup> This concept, has since been referred to as the *Kulturstaatsprinzip* (*Kulturstaat* principle).

A German Government publication explains its role in promoting the arts as follows:

The Federal Republic of Germany is a *Kulturstaat*. It must preserve its substantial cultural heritage and has to promote and protect the development of art and culture both in the present and the future.

[...]

the constitutionally-based state, founded on German soil at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has always considered itself as a *Kulturstaat*.

[...]

the culture-political consequence of this constitutional concept of the *Kulturstaat*, which ensures the autonomy of the arts and their free development, is that man and artist with their creative power are in the fore

[...]

[...]

The task [...] also includes the encouragement of new and experimental forms.

[...] As far as state policy can have an influence – art and culture as an expression of human interaction should be accessible to all members of society.<sup>279</sup>

It could be argued that Germany, with its traditional concept of culture destroyed in the Nazi period, feels a special need to define itself as a civilised and free society. This historical depiction, skips over the Nazi years, in which the arts were subservient to the state and goes back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to stress Germany's history as a *Kulturstaat*. The reference to the autonomy of the arts and to the primacy of the individual, can also be understood in the context of Germany's recent history.

The *Länder* have dealt with culture in their Constitutions in various ways. Of the eleven former West German states, Bavaria makes the clearest reference to culture as a state objective. It is not surprising that the states which were created after unification with East Germany have stressed culture as a role of the state to a greater extent than most of the West German states. The former East Germans were proud of the high level of cultural provision in their country. They were worried that as a result of West Germany's taking over, their traditional wealth of culture would be eradicated. A special clause in the 1990 German re-unification agreement deals with culture and specifically binds the German government to preserve the level of cultural essence and availability in the new states.<sup>280</sup>

The following are examples of how the various *Länder* dealt with the responsibility vis-à-vis culture in their Constitutions. Bavaria is very clear in defining itself as a 'State of law, a social State and a cultural State'.<sup>281</sup> Nordrhein-Westfalen's Constitution states that 'Culture, art and science have to be maintained and supported by the State and the communities'.<sup>282</sup> Niedersachsen determines that 'the state, the communities and the regions preserve and promote art and culture'.<sup>283</sup> In 1994, the state of Sachsen introduced the *Sächsisches Kulturraumgesetz*, (the Cultural Zones Act of Sachsen), a law (limited at first to ten years) which makes local authority expenditure on cultural matters compulsory.<sup>284</sup> It divides the state into several cultural zones so that neighbouring communities will participate in the costs of cultural institutions. The law states that 'In the Freestate of Sachsen, the care and encouragement of culture are the duty of the communities and regions.'

Sir Peter Jonas, Staatsintendant of the Bavarian State Opera and former General Director of the English National Opera, spoke about the centrality of culture to the German state:

The role that these cultural institutions play.. is different than in the United Kingdom. A much more central role, it is much more crucial to the state profile and crucial to the way the state feels about itself, the way society feels about itself. These companies have been around for a very long time. This company (*Staatsoper* in Munich) has been around since 1653.<sup>285</sup>

Clearly, Jonas considers the centrality of culture a basic German characteristic and not only a matter for the Constitution, nor only a political issue.



### 3 *Bund vs. Länder*

The autonomy of the *Länder*, in post war Germany, is defined and safeguarded in the German Constitution (*Grundgesetz*). The Constitution defines those functions which are the competence of the *Bund*. Any area or responsibility which is not federal, is defined as a *Länder* responsibility. Culture, which is not defined in the Constitution as *Bund* responsibility, is therefore a matter for the *Länder*. Consequently, the funding for culture in Germany is divided as follows: 5% *Bund*, 35% *Länder*, 60% cities and local authorities. The assignment of responsibility to the *Länder* stems from the norms set by the structures that existed in pre-1918 Germany.

The relatively short history Germany has as a unified country, combined with the division of power which is guaranteed by the German Constitution, has resulted in a strong sense of local patriotism in the different *Länder*. This is particularly noticeable in, although by no means limited to, the attitude of Bavaria to the *Länder*, such as Berlin, which occupy areas that used to belong to the Prussian Monarchy.

The *Länder*-level politicians in Germany are traditionally very sensitive to issues connected with their sovereignty. In 1983, a government committee looked into questions of state-objectives and suggested adding a 'culture clause' to the Constitution. This was never achieved, as the *Länder* feared that the mere existence of such a clause in the *Bund*'s Constitution could signify a transfer of jurisdiction from the *Länder* to the *Bund*.<sup>286</sup> The issue was raised again after re-unification. There was much debate regarding whether to add culture as a state-objective, just as the Constitution defines Germany as a democratic state bound by constitutional order and a social-state.\* This did not happen for the same reason as before. But, the German parliament did make the following statement in 1990:

Art and culture form a basis for the individual identity, for one's self-realisation and self-development; moreover, art and culture are a bond between the citizens, a bond of the over-reaching human, social and state relationships; this way they have effect beyond national borders.<sup>287</sup>

In the discussion about federal funding for Berlin cultural institutions, and the contribution of other states to the fund which finances the former Prussian cultural

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\* Article 20 of the German Constitution: (1)The Federal Republic of Germany is a democratic and social federal state. (3)The legislature shall be bound by the constitutional order, the executive and the judiciary by law and justice.

assets, the Bavarian Minister for Science, Research and Art, Hans Zehetmair, said:

The Bavarian position is clear: there is no national culture. And it does not take place in Berlin. [...] It is a fact that Berlin has no money. Similarly it is a fact that Bavaria finances its culture itself, without holding its begging cap to the *Bund* or to the other *Länder*. This is the reality of cultural diversity in Germany.

[...]

Bavaria is not the estate-administrator of the Prussian Cultural Heritage [...] tell that to the North Rhein Westphalians and other *Länder*, who used to be areas of the Prussian state. They should manage the Prussian heritage. Bavaria has virtually no connection to Prussia.<sup>288</sup>

To some extent, this statement reflected negotiations regarding demands for increased payments by the *Länder* for Berlin's cultural needs. Moreover, the declaration that Bavaria is not the trustee of the Prussian heritage, may reflect Bavarian historical pride and craving for independence.\* However, the rejection of the concept of national culture, was also a means to reiterate the general concept of *Länder* sovereignty.

#### 4 Cultural Policy of the *Bund*

As a result of the prominence of the *Länder* in the administration of culture, there was no Federal Ministry of Culture until 1998, when the newly elected Chancellor Gerhard Schröder created a *Bundesbeauftragter für Angelegenheiten der Kultur und der Medien*. (The English title is Federal Commissioner for Cultural and Media Affairs). This is still not a Ministry, but more of an Authority, which is part of the Chancellor's office and headed by a *Staatsminister*, a junior minister, rather than by a *Bundesminister*.

The new authority has the following mission:<sup>289</sup>

- (i) improvement of the conditions for the development of art and culture;
- (ii) building and support of cultural establishments of national significance; and
- (iii) preservation and care of the cultural heritage.

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\* In the post-War negotiations leading to the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany, there was considerable opposition to the idea of a federal state in Bavaria.

The Ministry's budget for 2000 was DM 1.6 billion (roughly £500 million), of which approximately 900 million were earmarked for the budget of the *Deutsche Welle* (the German equivalent of the BBC's World service).

Parallel to the establishment of the Authority, the German Parliament also created a Committee for Culture and Media. The public announcement of this new Parliamentary Committee stressed that arts policy is fundamentally a matter for the *Länder*.<sup>290</sup> It then listed some of the areas which the committee would consider:

- The National Holocaust Memorial;
- A new law for foundations;
- Promotion of the arts in the former East German *Länder*;
- Supporting the Fixed Book-price agreement in EU negotiations;
- Issues of modern communication society;
- German film promotion;
- Memorials for both German dictatorships of the 20th Century; and
- Foreign culture-policy.

The Committee had to tread carefully to avoid disturbing the *Länder's* sensitivity to their sovereignty in matters of culture. It was, therefore, not easy for the Parliament's Culture Committee to mark out its territory and define the areas of its activity. In analysing the eight areas the committee has selected, it is apparent that five of them should be self-eliminating. The Holocaust memorial and the memorials for the German dictatorships, a new foundations law and the fixed book-price agreement and even the promotion of the arts in the new *Länder*, could all have been matters for an ad-hoc committee. That leaves the promotion of German film and foreign culture-policy as well as the more meditative question of chances and risks of the modern communication society. In any event, the independence of the *Länder* was not violated.

The loyalty to *Länder* independence in matters of culture is combined, however, with a growing wish for federal funds. (Ideally what the *Länder* would like is funding from the *Bund* with no strings attached). Especially Berlin has a concentration of cultural institutions, reflecting its historical status, the city's population cannot, and is not expected to, fund on their own. This has been considered a justification for *Bund* funds to be made available. The Foundation of Prussian Cultural Heritage (*Stiftung*

*Preussischer Kulturbesitz*), which is funded jointly by the *Bund* and the *Länder* was established in West Germany in 1957 to be responsible for the maintenance of a number of cultural institutions. Additional institutions from East Germany were entrusted to the Foundation after re-unification and it now manages 17 museums, the Berlin State Library, several research institutes and archives. Bonn received funding during all the years it was Germany's capital although now this is being phased out. West-Berlin received substantial federal funds during the Cold War years as a presentation and propaganda window of the west and of western culture against East Berlin. Berlin funds have since been cut and, as capital, it now gets much less federal funding, than it used to.

A conference of Ministers of Culture of the sixteen *Länder* in a meeting which took place in December 1993 considered that an institution or project would need to be of supra-regional significance to qualify for federal funding, and that it would require:

- Artistic and cultural quality;
- Innovative and cultural significance;
- Uniqueness or outstanding status of its kind; and
- European/international diffusion.<sup>291</sup>

This decision represents the *Länder*'s wish to maintain independence. Moreover, it also reflects their unwillingness to agree to some (but not all) *Länder* benefiting from *Bund* funds for activities which could be funded by those *Länder* themselves.

## **5 Attitudes to Opera**

The notion that German traditional perception considers opera and theatre and their subsidy a necessary and unquestionable part of cultural life was tested after the Second World War, when some politicians attempted to reduce the high level of subsidies to theatres. After 150 staff dismissals in the theatres in 1949, both Frankfurt theatres were closed in February 1950. A popular protest of 50,000 citizens successfully demanded that theatres be reopened.

The growing prosperity of Germany in the 1950s and 1960s enabled politicians to embrace the consensus regarding cultural policy. The social turmoil in the late sixties

also included a critical look into theatre and its legitimacy.<sup>292</sup> According to the authors of the Frankfurt Opera magazine, this revolution considered opera, 'hopelessly reactionary, not capable of development, an appendix of bourgeois culture, which should simply be cut off.' However, it left less of an impact on opera than it did on the theatre. In fact, the legitimacy of opera, and its funding, was reinforced by continued sold-out performances throughout this period.

The recession of the early seventies brought the issue of the high cost of subsidies to opera to the fore. Discussions were held about public funding of theatres in general, but more pointedly about the funding of opera. In 1975, the *Institut für Projektstudien* in Hamburg carried out an in-depth research project into the conditions of opera in Germany.<sup>293</sup> The report, which referred to the populist 'hospitals versus opera pub-philosophising' on the one hand and the critical attitude which called opera 'the culinary narcotic lacking any kind of depth', refuted the idea that opera is an elitist pastime, which the general population does not believe should benefit from public funding.<sup>294</sup>

Sir Peter Jonas, former General Director of the English National Opera and now Intendant of the Bavarian State opera said:

There's still a broad consensus here that opera is really something that makes life worth living and that, far from being a luxury, it is one of the cornerstones of the German cultural tradition. So, whereas if a politician in Britain gets up and says grants for the ENO or Covent Garden should be cut, there are plenty of people who will say, "Jolly good thing, too, why should we subsidise seats for the toffs?" In Germany the majority still think it's right and proper for the state to support opera.<sup>295</sup>

Indeed, in 1993, when Frankfurt was under severe financial pressure, there were calls for cuts in the opera and ballet budgets. This did, however, not become a populist attack on the public funding of opera.\*

## 6 Objectives

The term 'subsidies' normally refers to grants given to third parties. The British system, in which the cultural institutions are independent, rather than run by the

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\* In 1993, the SPD and the Greens called for cuts in the city's budgets for culture and for funds to be diverted to social institutions. See Chapter IX, section 10.2.

Arts Council, allows for subsidies to be paid to such organisations and entities. The German system differentiates between organisations which are part of the government and are therefore run as government departments and private organisations. Private organisations occasionally get subsidies. Where cultural institutions are fully run by the state or commune, some prefer not to refer to the running cost as subsidies, which they consider has negative connotations associated with failing companies.<sup>296</sup>

In a debate in the German Parliament, the reasoning given for funding of culture is that inner peace in the country is substantially dependent on the state of the country's culture and that a country which neglects its culture sends its citizens into a lack of orientation.<sup>297</sup>

Hans-Heinrich Grosse-Brockhoff, the Culture and Schools Director of the City of Düsseldorf, wrote about the need to redefine and legitimise public spending on culture.<sup>298</sup> He referred to the loss, in a pluralistic society, of the ability to reach a consensus on priorities in the public and especially in the communal tasks. Grosse-Brockhoff considered the following to be the primary objectives of public funding of culture:

- Ensuring the freedom of the arts, especially through venues and availability of free display;
- Ensuring the freedom of communicative self-determination especially through venues and availability of aesthetic (self) education;
- Ensuring the promotion of art which the art-market does not consider fashionable; and
- Ensuring the cultural memory of society.

Sieghardt von Köckritz, was the Head of the Culture Department of the German Ministry of the Interior before the Culture function was transferred into the newly established Authority for Cultural and Media Affairs. In a speech von Köckritz gave in 1995, he suggested the following tasks for German arts policy at the end of the 20th century:

- To instil, to a greater extent than previously, the significance of art and culture in the political consciousness of the democratic decision-making bodies;
- To explore the necessary legislative, organisational and other steps which would

then be jointly implemented by the *Bund* and by the *Länder* each according to their jurisdiction;

- To challenge culture to come up with its own constructive proposals for savings; and
- To lay open a durable, meaningful and long-term perspective for culture and cultural institutions.<sup>299</sup>

The development of public spirit was referred to as a main reason for supporting cultural activities by Christina Weiss, the *Kulturdezernentin* (Culture Councillor) of Hamburg:

If our society fails to recognise its responsibility for culture and its care, then it deprives the individual of the main opportunity (it has) to develop public spirit.<sup>300</sup>

Andrè Schmitz, the Managing Director of *Deutsche Oper* Berlin explained:

Culture [is] a very important point for the German mentality; since the days of Goethe and Schiller and onwards, art has always had the mandate – the wrong one perhaps – maybe those who are culturally creative delude themselves that art ennobles man; that culture encourages the true, the beautiful and the good in people.<sup>301</sup>

An important objective, according to the Cultural Secretariat of the *Land* Nordrhein-Westfalen is the support for the struggling arts:

Support where it is most needed [...] This is more than just a motto. [...] Sensitivity for that which has the greatest difficulties and courage to discontinue the merely popular and to support that which is not liked.<sup>302</sup>

Clearly, the tendency in Germany is to discuss objectives of arts funding on an almost philosophical level. Germany's background of considering itself to be a *Kulturstaat* and that this is a specifically German trait combined with a population which was getting used to a high level of arts provision by a state, wealthy enough to afford it, meant that there was almost no need to think about justification. The Director of the *Deutscher Bühnenverein* (German Stage Federation), explained that communal and state funding of culture was an old tradition and therefore it has never been necessary to define objectives in laws, set up committees or have reports written.<sup>303</sup> That gave the *Kulturpolitiker* the luxury of debating matters such as inner peace, prevention of

possible lack of orientation, development of public spirit or the encouragement of the true, beautiful and good in people.

The financial crisis of the 1990s brought about a move from the rather ethereal explanations for public funding of the arts to a search for more down-to-earth objectives. Politicians in Berlin and Frankfurt promoted the economic advantages of cultural activity (*Standortfaktor*) in the public discussions about budgets and subsidies for culture. In 1995, a symposium on the 'Objectives and Responsibility of Cultural Politics' (*Ziele und Verantwortung der Kulturpolitik*), was held by the *Bertelsmann Foundation*, to discuss whether and for what purpose culture was needed. True to the changing times, the symposium spent much of its agenda discussing funding and organisational structures for the arts.<sup>304</sup>

In times when budgets were being cut, Albin Hänseroth, the Intendant of the *Hamburgische Staatsoper* said, things would be simpler if politicians were clearer about their priorities.<sup>305</sup> Politicians, however, demand as many performances as possible, a wide repertory from Rihm to Mozart, and, in addition, high self-generated income and reduced cost. That, Hänseroth said, was impossible.

## 7 Quality Assessment

The ministries funding performing art institutions in Germany do not consider evaluation and assessment of quality to be their responsibility. When questioned, the response normally is that they would not be qualified to make such evaluations.<sup>306</sup> The Culture Councillor in the City of Frankfurt suggested that public-opinion acts as efficient and sufficient quality control.<sup>307</sup> Consequently there are no mechanisms and staff employed for this purpose. Theatres which are part of the system (i.e. owned and run by the state or by a city) are themselves in charge of their quality. The *Land of Hessen*, which, together with the relevant municipalities, funds the state opera companies in Wiesbaden, Kassel and Darmstadt, has no procedure for formal assessment of the theatres. According to the contract with the Intendant, each of these theatres has a *Besucherrat*, (a Visitors Council), composed mainly of artists, which meets twice a year and advises the Intendant.<sup>308</sup>

The Berlin administration decided in 1997 to subject the seven private theatres, which it was subsidising (DM 14 million in 1997) in addition to the various state



theatres, to quality control.<sup>309</sup> In 1998, the administration has introduced an evaluation procedure for these grant decisions.

The demand for quality control or evaluation and assessment was made in a populist fashion by Berlin's Mayor Eberhard Diepgen in March 2000,<sup>310</sup> as well as by the Culture Councillor of Hamburg, Christina Weiss, who described the problems due to the inflexible structures:

The legitimisation of culture has become so lacklustre, soundless and faceless [...] because the *Kulturpolitiker* have withdrawn behind the claims of the bodies representing cultural organisations and the condition-heckling demands of the employees in the arts: predominantly due to fear of disputes over quality.<sup>311</sup>

Weiss bemoans the fact that politicians who are not allowed to interfere and who have no artistic qualifications find refuge in pandering to small cultural requests of their electorate. This leaves the state responsibility vis-à-vis the arts unfulfilled. She calls for professionally competent bodies, such as arts juries, commissions and evaluation boards to be created. Politicians, says Weiss, should not shirk away from the term 'quality'.

Hans Maier, a former Bavarian Minister of Culture, in an attack on the interpretation of the Federal Constitutional Court, which makes art provision by the state a duty of the state, complained:

The state today, as guardian of the freedom of the arts, denies itself any perception of what it safeguards. The state makes art free, without - other than in a few exceptions - setting it any tasks. The Federal Constitutional Court, has, with German seriousness, radicalised this self-denial of perception, the state must protect art – but may not ask what art is.<sup>312</sup>

Theatres and their representative bodies, as well as some of the politicians, continue to object to these views, which have come from different directions, to introduce quality assessment of the funded work. According to its Director, Rolf Bolwin, the *Deutscher Bühnenverein*, which is funded by all the theatres, but also by the cities and states in their capacity as stakeholders in theatres, will object to the introduction of formal assessments and evaluation of the funded theatres.<sup>313</sup>

## **8 Structural Issues**

Two structural issues have a bearing and an influence on the development of opera funding in Germany and on some of the problems and their possible solutions. The one concerns the legal structures of ownership and the resultant contractual obligations of the opera companies and their owners. The other is an artistic matter with structural ramifications; the selection of repertoire, stagione or semi-stagione system by an opera house.

### **8.1 Public Employees**

The legal and formal structure of the performing art institutions in Germany, where virtually everybody on the payroll is a civil servant, prevents the companies from dismissing members and employees. In practical terms, this means that if a city needs to close a theatre for financial reasons, all the theatre's employees have the right to alternative jobs in the city administration. They can only be fired, if the city can prove to the court that there are no adequate jobs for the employees in question. Klaus Schultz, Staatsintendant of Munich's *Theater am Gärtnerplatz*, has argued that this very structure plays a similar role to that of the subsidies themselves in ensuring the continued existence of the theatres.<sup>314</sup>

The fact that the theatres and opera companies are run as city institutions, in which the Intendants are given long-term contracts giving them veto power over structures, often prevents the city, which owns, runs and funds the theatres, from executing possible changes in policy.

### **8.2 Stagione versus Repertoire**

Opera companies are managed in three different operating systems: the repertoire system; the stagione system and the semi-stagione system. Historically the norm in Germany has been to have a Repertoire opera house. In the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a movement away from this system, which was especially controversial in Frankfurt. A short description of the different systems is given because of their place in some of the conflicts which will be referred to in the coming case studies.

### 8.2.1 Repertoire

The repertoire system is one where the opera company plays a different opera each night, from its repertoire of 35 to 50 operas. In fact, there are very few nights without performance.

The main advantage of this system is the daily availability of opera and the offer of a very varied opera programme during a lengthy season. This makes economic sense in cities with a large population and/or with a high proportion of tourists or visitors. However, the repertoire system has very much become an expected norm in Germany, so that even small towns in Germany run repertoire opera, with often rather low ticket sales.<sup>315</sup>

A repertoire system requires an ensemble capable of covering the different voices for the different operas in the repertoire. Occasionally, guest singers will be invited, but the original idea entails all roles sung by the members of the ensemble. This system started eroding in the sixties, when more and more of the operatic stars and conductors began to accept assignments in other opera houses. Opera houses, which could previously rely on the full cast and the conductor to know the repertoire and to have performed the operas together many times, found themselves having to plan performances around travelling schedules of soloists and conductors. Moreover, even when companies had in-house soloists, often, guest conductors or directors would stipulate specific soloists, which then would have to be contracted as guest-singers.

### 8.2.2 Stagione

The stagione system is the opposite of the repertoire system. An opera production is prepared and then performed for several consecutive nights. Then the opera house is kept closed whilst the next opera is being prepared.

Operating a stagione system enables an opera company to reduce substantially fixed salary costs. There is no need for an ensemble and soloists are contracted as and when they are needed for specific productions. As the company rehearses and then performs only one opera at a time, there is no need for daily and often twice daily change of sets, thereby saving on technical staff.

Additional financial advantage can be gained by the ability to exchange productions with other opera houses, thereby dividing the production costs between two or more houses.

The move to more director-based productions, means that it is not enough for singers “simply” to have a good voice, substantial acting is also required. The cast needs more rehearsal time to prepare the productions as a team.<sup>316</sup> Other artistic advantages in the stagione system are: the whole house and team collectively work towards one production; the freshness of the production; the same cast with which the opera is produced also performs it; the ability of the director to work throughout the production-phase on the stage, which if necessary can be modified and changed as the company rehearses.

In addition to the fact that cities which want to be able to offer visitors a choice of opera performances cannot do so with a stagione system, the big drawback of the stagione system is obviously the limited number of performances. If each production is performed ten times followed by a period of three to five weeks preparing the next work, there are fewer than 100 opera nights per year. This may also result in the subsidy per performance becoming rather high.

### 8.2.3 Semi-Stagione

Semi-stagione is a combination of repertoire and stagione. New productions are meticulously rehearsed, then performed five to eight times within a short time-span and then left to rest. After one or more years, the same production is brought out, the same cast, or with some changes, rehearses it again and another ‘block’ of performances appears. A season is prepared which includes one or more new productions and several revivals, which need less preparation time than a new production.

The opera company will have an ensemble, but a limited one, which is then complemented with guest-singers. Some of the technical costs of the repertoire system are saved, if rehearsals do not take place during performance periods. Due to the concentrated blocks of performances of the same opera, some of the advantages of the stagione system are retained in the semi-stagione system. On the other hand, this system enables the opera company to perform more often and to give a more varied programme within shorter periods.

Many opera houses have quietly moved to the semi-stagione system.<sup>317</sup> As the semi-stagione maintains the semblance of repertoire, it has been possible for companies to adopt this system without provoking the emotion evoked by a desertion from the repertoire tradition into the 'alien' stagione system.

## 9 Conclusion

For most of its post Second World War years, Germany was able to, and comfortable in spending substantial amounts on culture in general and on opera, in particular. The long run of a successful economy Germany enjoyed, enabled its politicians to fund opera companies which were becoming increasingly expensive to finance.

As a result, the two issues which have been at the centre of public opera funding debates in Britain, have hardly been an issue in Germany. (Definition of objectives in the funding of opera and system of assessment and evaluation of the subsidised companies). In Germany, the main discussion regarding the funding of the arts surrounds the level of involvement of the *Bund* (the Federal Government). This has at times focused on the level the *Bund* should undertake and on other occasions what level should be permitted.

The results of its long tradition, the need to prove to itself and to the world that Germany is once again a 'civilised' country and the comfortable economic position Germany has enjoyed since the end of the war have enabled the various cultural institutions to bloom. However, the German unification process has been long and very costly. Money is tight and the system which never defined objectives and ways of measurement is finding it hard to deal with the new fiscal and political realities.

## 10 Case Studies

The three case-studies chosen for Germany and considered in the following chapters are Berlin, Frankfurt and Bavaria.

Germany's capital, Berlin, is one of the country's three city-states.\* Since unification, the city has been in deep financial trouble and has not yet found a formula to deal with the needs of its rich cultural scene. It has three opera houses which it is struggling to maintain. This case study analyses the Berlin administration's endeavours to deal with its opera funding problems in the post-unification period.

Frankfurt is the biggest city in the *Land* Hessen, but it is not its capital. Frankfurt has been an independent burgher-city ever since it acquired its 'free' status from the *Kaiser* in 1372 and was hence styled *Freie Reichsstadt*. As an independent city it has always been proud to be autonomous in the funding and running of its institutions. The case study covers a thirty year period (1970 to 2000). The first twenty years were exciting and transforming times for Frankfurt whereas the next ten-year-period was one in which everything seemed to be falling apart. The case study compares these two periods and their impact on the Frankfurt Opera.

Bavaria has a long and proud history in which culture was considered to be a core content of the state. A substantial part of Bavaria's cultural budget is spent on Munich, its capital. Compared to Frankfurt, which receives only 7% of its cultural funding from the *Land*, Munich gets 57% of its cultural expenditure from the state.<sup>318</sup> And yet, even Bavaria, which is more comfortable financially than Frankfurt and Berlin feels the drought. According to Sir Peter Jonas, the Intendant of the Bavarian State Opera, although the existence of state opera companies has not yet been questioned, the amount of subsidy and possible increases have now become issues for debate.<sup>319</sup>

As culture in Germany is not a Federal (*Bund*) responsibility but the domain of the *Länder*, there is no Federal policy-making body similar to the Arts Council in Britain. The case studies for Germany, unlike those for England, include Constitutional and structural content and definition of objectives that are pertinent to the *Land* or city.

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\* The other two are Hamburg and Bremen.

Funding of the performing arts, including opera, is considered an obvious role of the state in Germany and there has, therefore, not been such a need for policy documents and committees to make recommendations on policy. As a result, the German case studies are more interview-based. Additionally, the situation in Berlin and Frankfurt with their protracted crises brought about extensive press coverage. Considerable information for these cases studies was also obtained from newspapers articles.

# IX Frankfurt

## 1 Introduction

Frankfurt makes a fascinating case study because of its history and of its post-War (2<sup>nd</sup> World War) development. The thirty years considered in this chapter are particularly revealing as, in the first twenty years of that period, Hilmar Hoffmann, one of Germany's most important culture-politicians was Culture Councillor of the city. The Hoffmann years were exciting and transforming times for Frankfurt whereas the period post-Hoffmann was one in which everything seemed to be falling apart.

Linda Reisch (SPD) replaced Hoffmann in 1990. She had hoped to be able to continue the impressive work carried out by Hoffmann, although after the long Hoffmann period in which access was the main objective, Reisch chose to emphasise artistic quality. Her misfortune was that she came to Frankfurt at a time when money had run out. Lacking both political and management skills, this ensured her failure.

The Frankfurt Opera in that period has been described by the newspaper *Die Welt*, as exciting and of European significance during the 1970's and part of the 1980's and as meaningless and 'provincial' in the 1990's:

There was a time, when the Frankfurt Opera was one of the most distinguished, exciting and important music-theatres of Germany, indeed Europe. Every premiere was a hit [...] until 1987 when Michael Gielen left his job as opera director. From then on it was downhill.

[...]

In the meantime the opera has fallen into insignificance. "Provincial" is one adjective used regularly to describe Frankfurt's Opera.<sup>320</sup>

This case study investigates a thirty year period and the decisions which were made by the Frankfurt administration with regard to its Opera. The case study juxtaposes the relatively smooth management during the first twenty years, in which the Culture Councillor had full support from the mayors and in which the city had a thriving successful opera company, with the turbulence and breakdown of internal communication in the last ten years. It scrutinises the manner in which the



Frankfurt administration, because of its financial constraints, tried to enforce budget cuts on the opera and the resultant provincialisation of the Frankfurt Opera.

The sources used for this case study include minutes of Parliamentary discussions and speeches made in Parliament, as well as a policy document written by Culture Councillor Reisch in 1993. Interviews were held with the present Music Director of the Frankfurt Opera and with two of the three Culture Councillors of the period examined. Other interviewees were: two members of the 1996 *Everding Commission*, which looked into the controversy surrounding the Frankfurt theatres, the spokesman for the Green Party in Frankfurt on cultural affairs and the Head of the Theatre Section at the Ministry of Culture of *Land* Hessen. The problems at the Frankfurt Opera and the power struggles in Frankfurt were widely covered by the press. Newspaper archives were searched and supplied an important source of information for this case study.

## 1.1 Background

Jean-Christophe Ammann, for twelve years the Director of Frankfurt's *Museum für Moderne Kunst*, suggests that Frankfurt's problem lies in its history. Big problems have no solution, according to Ammann, only a past. In driving away and killing its Jewish population, the city has torn out its own roots:

Frankfurt has no idea about culture, as the city has no longer got a traditional middle class [...]. By driving away and murdering the Jews, Frankfurt has destroyed its cultural traditions, it has torn out its own roots.<sup>321</sup>

The Frankfurt Opera was established in 1792 as a company limited by shares by citizens of the city. Many of Frankfurt's institutions, such as the University, the *Städel* Museum, the *Senckenberg* Natural History Society and Museum and most of the city's hospitals are private trusts, going back to the days when Frankfurt was a proud 'burgher-city'.

In the post-Second World War years the city went through an unattractive period of land speculation. In the sixties, Frankfurt was often referred to as *Bankfurt* or *Krankfurt*,\* it was considered a city sunk in indolence and a stronghold of property speculators.<sup>322</sup> That is also why Frankfurt was one of the focal points of the student-

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\* *Bankfurt* refers to the city's status as Germany's banking centre; *krank* is German for sick.

movement riots which took place in Germany in 1969. The writer Gerhard Zwerenz called Frankfurt 'as uninhabitable as the moon'.<sup>323</sup>

Hilmar Hoffmann, Frankfurt's Culture-Councillor in the years 1970-1990, would later say that it was precisely the miserable image of Frankfurt which as a politician he found such a challenge, adding, 'Here I came across unfarmed land, in which one could lay new tracks'.<sup>324</sup>

## 1.2 Summary

This summary is an overview of the period, which is covered in the Frankfurt case study.

The three *Kulturdezernents*\*, spanning the period 1970 –2000, displayed very different styles. Hilmar Hoffmann (Councillor from 1970 to 1990) was unusual in the German scene in the extent to which he defined not only the role of the theatres, but also the methods of achieving his desired results. Normally in Germany, politicians achieve this only indirectly, if at all, through the choice of the Intendant. Hoffmann was fortunate with Christoph von Dohnanyi, the Music Director (*Generalmusikdirektor*), already in place when he arrived, whose thinking he respected and whom he promoted to Intendant, and whose contract he then renewed. However, Hoffmann's big success in the opera field was the choice in 1977 of the conductor Michael Gielen as *Generalmusikdirektor* and Intendant. The nomination in 1987 of the conductor Gary Bertini as *Generalmusikdirektor* and Intendant, however, was less successful. Hoffmann argues that Bertini was everybody's favourite but the appointment was his own decision.

Reisch had to deal with the problematic end of Bertini's period, his early departure and the consequent interim solution. Her choice of Sylvain Cambreling as *Generalmusikdirektor* and Artistic Intendant proved to be a failure. This might have been foreseen, considering Cambreling's strong support for the stagione system,<sup>†</sup> which neither Reisch nor the CDU party supported.

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\* Culture Councillors, Heads of the Culture Department of the city and members of the *Magistrat* which is the governing body of the city. They are elected by the City's Parliament for periods of six years.

† Described in Chapter VIII, section 8.2.2.

Hans-Bernhard Nordhoff (SPD) replaced Reisch, who was ousted from her job in an unusual process in 1998. Nordhoff came to Frankfurt after the seven Reisch years. His experience in theatre had been mainly in organisational matters. Nordhoff was central in ending the reign of Martin Steinhoff. Steinhoff's replacement, Bernd Loebe of the Brussels Opera *Theatre Royal de la Monnaie*, was announced in April 2001.

## 2 Hilmar Hoffmann and his Policy

For twenty years the *Kulturdezernent* in Frankfurt was Hilmar Hoffmann (SPD), now considered to be one of Germany's foremost culture-politicians.\* Hoffmann's time in Frankfurt can be divided into two main periods. The first years were driven by a strong social belief and commitment. Then in 1977 when, CDU's Walter Wallmann became Mayor, Hoffmann turned his ambitions to making Frankfurt a cultural metropolis.

Hoffmann, who would later brand the motto '*Kultur für alle*' (Culture for all), was brought to Frankfurt by the Mayor-Elect, Walter Möller in 1970. According to Hoffmann, at their first meeting, they quickly agreed that the underlying basis of their work would be: culture and the arts in the service of enlightenment.<sup>325</sup> Möller wanted 'to give the city a soul' and expected Hoffmann to come up with the initiatives. There were five specific tasks Möller had for Hoffmann:

- The rebuilding of the *Alte Oper* (Frankfurt's pre-War opera house, which had been lying in ruins since the war);
- Creating a cultural centre in the *Römerberg* area;
- Developing community further education facilities;
- *Mitbestimmung* (co-determination, i.e. joint decision-making) in the municipal theatre; and
- The construction of fountains throughout the city.

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\* After leaving Frankfurt, Hoffmann became President of the *Goethe Institut*, the German body handling the dissemination of German culture abroad. (similar to the British Council).

## 2.1 Access

The importance of reaching new audiences was stressed by Hoffman in a presentation marking the completion of his first year in office.<sup>326</sup> Hoffmann considered access to be cultural policy's foremost objective. In his book '*Kultur für alle*', which was to define cultural political thinking in Germany for many years, Hoffmann wrote:

The formula "culture for all" slips off the tongue rather easily because it represents a convincing democratic claim.

[...]

This book calls for unrestricted access to the arts, to "culture for all". [...] Every citizen has to be placed in a position to be able to obtain cultural provision in all areas, and at all level of specialisation. [...] The provision must not confirm existing privileges, nor may it create new, insurmountable barriers of privilege.<sup>327</sup>

## 2.2 Education

Education was considered by Hoffmann as a main objective of cultural policy:

A democratic arts-policy is not only the provision for everyone; it should consider cultural development itself as a democratic process.<sup>328</sup>

Within a few days of his nomination as the SPD candidate, and before he was formally elected by Parliament, Hoffmann began to give interviews to the media, advocating his views.

Art must come out from the catacombs of the initiated. [...] Culture may not be the reserve of the educated middle-class who, by virtue of their social background, automatically have access. Indeed, it is especially the 'underprivileged' who must be brought into the fold, through live exposure with modern art, as active, communicating partners.

Theatre must acquire new audiences. This requires a new programme structure and new forms of presentation. A pre-condition is co-determination at the theatre; not just rhetoric, it should be real and practised.<sup>329</sup>

Hoffmann spoke of 'de-tabooification of art' and decentralisation of art by getting art to follow the population which moved from city centres to the suburbs. A month after his election, Hoffmann gave a keynote speech to the city Parliament, the title of which was 'Cultural Work Today is Practical Educational Work.'<sup>330</sup> In this speech, he spoke of the need structurally and conceptually to change the city's theatres.

Hoffmann believed that theatre was in a crisis as a result of its feudal structure and that its programmes were only geared to please the audience. Hoffmann considered it a problem the extent to which theatres had simply to satisfy the subscription audience. He developed his thinking to the point of considering full subsidy of theatres to enable them to be independent of the sale of tickets.

Can one really not expect the subscription-holders to see more than one controversial sample per season? Any experimental or provocative contemporary works, beyond that, are cradled by the Intendants in the exclusive area, apologetically called... Here, according to experience, only few will watch, who are interested and who will not complain. But this audience of those who agree, is exactly those we are not after!

[...]

Theatre in the Federal Republic of Germany, will very soon have to decide whether by slavishly following the recipe of success, only what pleases fills the tills, it does not destroy its own historical role to be an important, world-changing forum.

The speech, which covered various aspects of communal cultural politics, commanded respect even from the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.<sup>331</sup> An editorial in the paper suggested that after Frankfurt's sterile and helpless cultural politics, some turmoil might prove to be fruitful. Other commentators were more worried about the new dialectic. *Die Welt* suggested that Hoffmann was trying to inaugurate a Frankfurt socialist culture avant-garde.<sup>332</sup> Hoffmann also managed to irritate the president of the *Industrie und Handelskammer* (Chamber of Industry and Trade), Fritz Dietz, who was worried by the symposium organised by the city entitled 'Can the City Made in Capitalism be Made Habitable?'<sup>333</sup> Hoffmann rejected the suggestion that under Peter Palitzsch, the new Intendant for the theatre, there would be only political theatre on offer in Frankfurt, but re-iterated that both classics and modern classical plays would be staged in new interpretations rather than as museum-pieces.<sup>334</sup>

Hoffmann's concept of theatre as education did not enjoy the support of the conservative CDU party. 'Theatre as an evening class will not have our applause. We want to see art.'<sup>335</sup> In summing-up Hoffmann's first ten months in office, the CDU speaker on cultural affairs in Frankfurt, Hans-Ulrich Korenke, said that cultural life in Frankfurt did not have much in common with Hoffmann's plans. In the big institutions, the plans had not yet been implemented.<sup>336</sup>

Unlike the first time Hoffmann was elected to become Culture Councillor in 1970, when all three parties voted for him, the CDU made it clear that it would not vote for Hoffmann in 1976, when his six-year term was up. A CDU spokesman conceded that Hoffmann livened-up cultural life in Frankfurt, but contended that to Hoffmann, cultural initiatives were secondary to his political objectives.<sup>337</sup> Nevertheless, as the SPD, which supported Hoffmann, had a majority in Parliament, he was re-elected for a further six years (against the votes of the CDU and the FDP).

In 1977, the SPD lost its majority in Frankfurt's Parliament and a CDU Mayor was elected. In spite of the fact that Hoffmann's activities had featured in CDU propaganda during the election,<sup>338</sup> coupled with calls in the party to relieve 'the Marxist Hoffmann' of his job,<sup>339</sup> the new Mayor, Walter Wallmann, left Hoffmann in his job.\* The chairman of the CDU faction, Dr. Hans-Jürgen Moog, warned, however that there would have to be an end to 'ideological indoctrination', adding that cultural-politics should not be allowed to be a vehicle with which to propagate socialist beliefs.<sup>340</sup> If Hoffmann would not recognise the new power structure in Frankfurt, the CDU threatened to bring him down from the 'socialist sky'. In his book '*Kultur für alle*', published in 1979, Hoffmann tried to distance himself from party allegiances:

The politician among those working in the arts should not be committed to party politics in the narrow sense. S/he should act in the interests of all layers of society and, thus, not accept imperative mandates of a party.<sup>341</sup>

Clearly, Hoffmann was flexible and understood the change in Frankfurt's political map. As a result, a period of successful co-operation between him and the newly elected Mayor Wallmann ensued.

## **2.3 The Role of Opera**

In '*Kultur für alle*', in which Hoffmann sets out his cultural political philosophy, there is a chapter that deals with the history of opera and concludes with the refutation of various pre-conceived notions of elitism and irrelevance, the continued

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\* The power to dismiss a *Dezernent* is with the city legislature (*Stadtverordnetenversammlung*) and not with the mayor. The mayor can, however, decide the areas the different *Dezernents* are responsible for and can, if s/he likes, leave a *Dezernent*'s office void of responsibility.

existence of which, he argued, might bring about irreparable damage by the political decision-makers.<sup>342</sup>

Hoffmann considered the question of the traditional primacy of music over lyrics in opera significant. To him, lyrics and music should have the same importance.

The objectives which Hoffmann set and which had relevance to opera were the educational role of opera and access to it. This would be achieved through the choice of the right Intendants who would accept that lyrics are as important as music in opera, and produce experimental and contemporary work. The opera house had to be more democratically run with *Mitbestimmung* (co-determination) and an independent Intendant (not part of a powerful Generalintendant of all the city theatres).

### **3 *Mitbestimmung* Not Implemented**

One of the first decisions taken by the city administration, after Hoffmann's arrival, was to implement *Mitbestimmung*, i.e., giving the artistic and non-artistic staff joint decision-making power in the running of the company. This was intended to be introduced in all the city theatres. It was never, however, applied in the Frankfurt Opera. Meanwhile, the theatres, which initially applied it, turned away from it after several years. Only after *Mitbestimmung* faltered, it turned out that the format in which it was set-up was not legally admissible.<sup>343</sup> The opera, at the time run by Christoph von Dohnanyi, adopted a lesser form of the policy, which rather than giving the staff decision power, gave them *Mitsprache*, i.e. the right to be heard. Channels were established to enable the staff to inform the Artistic Advisory Council of their views. This arrangement worked well under Dohnanyi and under his successor Michael Gielen. Not so under Gary Bertini.<sup>344</sup> Twenty years later, Hoffmann explained:

It was high-time for co-determination then. These were still the consequences of the 1968 years, it was the legacy of Claus Peymann, Peter Stein and Dieter Reible.<sup>345</sup>

In this way, Hoffmann justified his decision to introduce a concept which, twenty years later, he considered outdated. He added that co-determination should be seen

in the context of its period and as part of the legacy of these well-known theatre directors.

#### **4 Continuity under Christoph von Dohnanyi 1970 - 1977**

The *Generalmusikdirektor* of the opera, nominated in 1968, was Christoph von Dohnanyi. At the time the opera was part of a combined theatre-ballet-opera company, the Generalintendant of which was Ulrich Erfurth. Hoffmann separated the three companies and made Dohnanyi Intendant of the opera. Hoffmann considered the breaking down of the powerful role of the Generalintendant an important factor in the restructuring of the crusted structure of the Frankfurt theatres.<sup>346</sup>

In Dohnanyi, Hoffmann found an Intendant who suited his own thinking. Dohnanyi had started to reduce the ensemble in order to free resources for guest singers. He engaged unconventional directors such as Volker Schlöndorff and Hans Neuenfels and was the first to employ Peter Mussbach to direct opera. Dohnanyi was turning the traditional opera house into a modern music-theatre. His contract which was due to expire in 1972, was extended by Hoffmann for a further five years. In describing the uncomplicated extension negotiations with Dohnanyi, Hoffmann mentions [for example] Dohnanyi's willingness to contract to undertake 240 performances per year.<sup>347</sup>

When in 1973 economic constraints put budgets under pressure, Hoffmann and Dr. Hermann Glaser, the Culture Councillor of Nürnberg, wrote an open letter to the German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, asking for Federal support for the theatres.<sup>348</sup> The Frankfurt SPD warned that unless state (*Land* Hessen) funds for city theatres were forthcoming, it would be necessary to limit the music-theatre as of 1975. In a letter to Hoffman, Dohnanyi warned him of the danger that the Frankfurt opera might deteriorate from the first league of German opera companies to the level of companies in Kassel or Wiesbaden. Hoffmann was adamant that he would not be party to cutting the opera budget. 'Personally, I am not prepared to become responsible for a provincial music-theatre', adding that it would be preferable to close the opera altogether, than to cut its budget and thereby turn it into a provincial theatre.<sup>349</sup>



Neither federal funds nor *Land* funds were granted to Frankfurt for its theatres. The total culture budget of the city was cut for one year (from DM 93.4 million in 1972 to DM 91.3 million in 1973). Nevertheless, the budget for the opera was not cut. Thereafter the economic pressure subsided.

An interviewer asked Hoffmann in 1975 how it was that the man who, previously as Culture Councillor in Oberhausen did not shirk from closing the opera, enabled the Frankfurt opera to run in a format which seemed to contradict everything he stood for. There was no *Mitbestimmung*, no teaching theatre and no Marxist viewing of history. Was not the opera reassuring the population and thereby misleading it? Hoffmann responded by referring to the *kulinarisch* or culinary\* nature of opera. This expression was first used by Bertold Brecht to describe the palatability, in fact the sumptuousness of opera as an explanation of its popularity. It was this popularity mobilised by opera's culinary nature that would bring about society's regeneration:

It is the very culinary aspect of the music, which with the aid of the former impact-capability of music-theatre – namely, the bacchanalian sensuality – is able to mobilise the sensitivities of the listener and spectator, and thereby significantly contribute to a regenerative sensitisation.<sup>350</sup>

The main decisions Hoffmann made with regard to the opera, in the Dohnanyi period, were to make Dohnanyi Intendant, not to establish *Mitbestimmung* at the opera and to grant Dohnanyi a second five-year term. As a result it was run in a more culinary fashion than his educational concept would have allowed for.

## 5 Michael Gielen's Challenging Opera 1977 - 1986

After nine years of Christoph von Dohnanyi, Hoffmann contracted Michael Gielen, the Musical Director of the Brussels Opera to run the Frankfurt Opera. The contract with Gielen was signed whilst the SPD still had a majority in Frankfurt and before the 1977 transfer of power to the CDU. Considering the dramatic changes the opera would go through in Gielen's time it is remarkable that, according to Gielen 'nobody of that party, not even the Mayor, ever tried to interfere or question our subsidy'.<sup>351</sup> In an interview, Hoffmann maintained that Gielen was unlikely to endanger Dohnanyi's

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\* The term 'culinary' was used by Bertold Brecht to describe opera in '*Brecht on Theatre*', p.33, London, 1978.

success with questionable modern changes, although there would be a few daring excursions in the contemporary direction:

It cannot possibly be the intention of Professor Gielen to jeopardise the prevailing success, which, with a 95% occupancy rate, has proven to also be an eminent success with the audience, by introducing questionable modernistic changes to the programme. All the same, there will be the one or other daring in the direction of further development of the contemporary opera literature: Nono, Antonio Bibalo, Geisler (DDR) or Kagel, for example, are some of the possibilities –overlooked up to now- to acquaint the audience with the latest developments.<sup>352</sup>

Gielen, however, contends that his views were quite clear and that the Frankfurt administration was aware of them when they brought him to run the opera:

If the city of Frankfurt engages me to manage the Opera here, then they know who they are getting, .. that I am not the right instrument for the middle-way, the average taste or the usual delight in the arts.

[...]

I do not begrudge anyone their relaxation in the evening: but not necessarily in the theatre that I manage, the greater enjoyment is to become engaged oneself and to follow and feel the puzzle that emanates from the stage: I know the piece well and suddenly my attention is captured by it, for the first I am interested!<sup>353</sup>

Hoffmann indeed confirms that before engaging Gielen, he assured himself that Gielen shared his opinion that 'the music is not more important than the lyrics'.<sup>354</sup> Hoffmann knew that it was necessary to allay public apprehension due to Gielen's reputation. Hoffmann's decision to use Gielen's "Professor" title, in an interview, would also implant Gielen in the public consciousness as an acceptable, trustworthy member of the system:

there were already those concerns in the 'papers, which I naturally had to squash in order to install Gielen. It then also led to many cancellations of subscriptions. Yet, we have survived this together [...]. When the Gielen era was over, he was no longer controversial, he was only controversial in the beginning.<sup>355</sup>

The change in style, produced by the Gielen-Zehelein\* team at the Frankfurt opera, resulted in a change in the audience. Older, middle-class citizens were less in evidence, while younger people from the intellectual-academic world and the

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\* Klaus Zehelein was brought by Gielen to become dramaturg at the Frankfurt opera and is now Intendant of the Stuttgart Opera.

'alternative' culture audiences, grew in numbers.<sup>356</sup> The extent to which this change was problematic is described by the music critic Tom Sutcliffe:

The Frankfurt company acquired a pretty revolutionary reputation. The audience began to complain and to absent itself. Ticket-sales fell dangerously. Gielen's repertoire was unusual. The approach to staging and design was unpopular. Only after some years did a different public arrive to replace the more conservative ticket-holders. Fortunately the city fathers and Hilmar Hoffmann, their cultural advisor, were ready to wait. First nights were often riotous. The conservative element turned out armed with whistles and football rackets to disrupt the applause. But when Gielen left in 1987, a new audience had by and large become enthusiastic devotees.<sup>357</sup>

Against the wishes of the orchestra, for whom he was too tough a taskmaster, Gielen's contract was extended in 1981 for a further five years.<sup>358</sup> In support of the opera's success, the city had agreed to enlarge the orchestra and the choir by ten members each. Hoffman justified the extension of Gielen's contract on the basis of the following points:<sup>359</sup>

- Gielen's significance in the continued development of the Frankfurt opera into one of Europe's leading stages;
- The development of a new orientation of the opera medium through stronger interpretative direction, a trend already started by Dohnanyi and continued by Gielen;
- Gielen performed more 20<sup>th</sup> Century works; and
- The public has not shirked away from either the experiments with traditional opera or from 20<sup>th</sup> century opera. The average attendance rate was 97%.

By the time Gielen left Frankfurt, he felt that running a repertoire opera was no longer feasible since there was too much pressure on quantity, which made quality difficult to achieve. Gielen said:

I am giving up my position as opera director because I no longer wish to live as an opera director lives. The system of the repertoire-theatre is truculent and does not guarantee results. The fixed dates for premieres, just like the fixed number of performances per season (250 in Frankfurt), undermine quality. Turnover in the orchestra causes frustration to which I do not wish to be subject any longer.<sup>360</sup>

The issue of a repertoire rather than a stagione system, which was never introduced by Hoffmann as an objective, was first raised by Gielen, who came to the conclusion that running a repertoire model opera was no longer feasible.

Hoffmann had definitely achieved his main educational objective during the Gielen era. Through the introduction of challenging productions, by avant-garde theatre directors, whilst maintaining a very high musical standard, Hoffmann reached new younger audiences. As undertaken by him when he first came to Frankfurt he thus ensured that opera would acquire new audiences and that it would no longer be 'the reserve of the educated middle-class.'<sup>361</sup>

## **6 Gary Bertini 1987-1990**

Hoffmann's move in bringing the conductor Gary Bertini to Frankfurt as the opera's *Generalmusikdirektor* and Intendant was rather surprising considering that Bertini had hardly any experience with opera and none whatsoever as a manager of a big company. Hoffmann used the same method of appointment which already used for Gielen. He invited six important music-critics to discuss a list of twenty serious possible candidates for the job. According to Hoffmann, this 'unofficial search-committee' soon agreed that Gary Bertini was the favourite.<sup>362</sup> Bertini was also the orchestra's preferred choice. In making the music critics part of the decision-making process, Hoffmann gained the crucial support of the press.

Hoffmann agreed that Bertini would enjoy a DM 9 million increase in the budget of the opera (over the 1986 budget basis of DM 64 million) to enable the opera to double the budget for guest singers and to increase the budget for the management team and an increased orchestra.<sup>363</sup>

And yet, by the time Bertini had gone, critics said that not only did he not have management skills, but that he also lacked artistic vision.<sup>364</sup> Bertini engaged experienced directors, who worked in Frankfurt as external experts. 'The house drew-in initiatives but emitted no impulses'. The general view was that Bertini tried to impress with expensive soloists, but that he lacked a genuine concept:

A new "Frankfurt dramaturgy", comparable with the radical new-viewing of the repertoire undertaken by Michael Gielen, is not in sight. Bertini would like to please everyone: the media-spoilt opera audiences by getting in renowned soloists, critics by employing well-known directors and the subscription-holders with a proven diet.<sup>365</sup>

Bertini's contract ran from 1987 to 1994. In January 1990, notwithstanding substantial dissatisfaction with his management style which resulted in the collective

resignation of the Artistic Consultative Council (consisting of representatives of the choir, orchestra, ballet, technical staff and soloists), Hoffmann extended Bertini's contract to 1996.<sup>366</sup> The contract extension, which was met with criticism by the press and the public, was justified by Hoffmann that after the 1987 fire,<sup>\*</sup> he had promised Bertini two additional years in the new opera house.<sup>367</sup>

Hoffmann's last year in Frankfurt was in the new administration headed by Mayor Volker Hauff (SPD) and with a Parliament which had an SPD and Green Party coalition. This so-called red-green majority had different priorities than the previous administration. It decided to cut DM 2.5 million from the budget of the established theatres and to add DM 6 million to the smaller arts groups and the alternative arts scene. The *Schauspiel* (Frankfurt's main theatre) decision to cancel a planned Heinrich Heine production in reaction to these planned cuts, was considered by Klaus Sturmfels, the SPD speaker on cultural matters, as an unacceptable protest. Sturmfels warned Ulrich Schwab, the General Manager of the theatre, that unless this decision was retracted it would lead to a serious conflict with the SPD.<sup>368</sup>

## 7 Conclusion of the Hoffmann Era

The Hoffmann modus-operandi was described by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* as:

The thing which was important to Hoffmann was the determination for the city to be a city of culture. The co-operation between the heads of the city's culture, building and finance departments worked because, in the CDU-led *Magistrat*, the Mayor backed the programme of cultural expansion.<sup>369</sup>

However, that very modus-operandi soon came under attack. Less than a year after Hoffmann's departure, the Green Party in Frankfurt attacked his policy and the manner in which he carried it out. In a statement, they said that 'after years of old gentlemen's secret diplomacy', it was high time Frankfurt cultural politics and its financing was brought into open debate.<sup>370</sup> According to the Green Party, Hoffmann's policy was promoting a questionable representational culture which had partly

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<sup>\*</sup> An arson attack in November 1987 caused the closure of the opera house, which stayed closed until April 1991. During the period of closure, opera performances took place at the adjoining *Schauspiel* building.

turned into a chequebook culture, to which recipients shamelessly helped themselves.<sup>371</sup>

Hoffmann's colleague from Nürnberg, Hermann Glaser compared Frankfurt in the Hoffmann years to other German cities, which suffered from feeble thinking and prevarication leading to inaction:

Frankfurt invariably had the courage, and additionally the resources, sometimes even the *Chutzpah*, to go in directions which led to great results.<sup>372</sup>

Hoffmann was Culture Councillor in Frankfurt for twenty years. He was brought to Frankfurt by an SPD Mayor and together they planned to liberate the theatres from their old structures. *Mitbestimmung*, which was to be the main tool in this process, was never established in the opera (and later also repealed at the theatre). The educational objective did achieve a dramatic change in reaching new audiences and turning from a safe and comfortable entertainment for the middle-aged middle class to a challenging theatre attracting the young and the intellectuals.

Hoffmann was fortunate that during most of his time in office, money was generally available. This also enabled Hoffmann to mount an ambitious museum-building spree during Wallmann's mayorship. It also meant that, in addition to the regular increments in the funding of the opera, there were occasions when substantial increases for specific purposes were approved. In 1981 and 1989 the opera orchestra and chorus were enlarged, guest budget and management team increased. Thus, Hoffmann was generally spared the tortuous decisions which accompany budget reductions.

In the matter of choice of Intendant, Hoffmann made six decisions during his tenure. He made Dohnanyi, Gielen and Bertini Intendant and then extended each one's contract. Hoffmann used music critics as a sounding-board for his decisions on Intendant selection and although he used the same method for both conductors, Gielen turned out to be a success and Bertini a failure. For Gielen to be deemed a success, he needed strong support which Hoffmann supplied. Similarly, Hoffmann gave Bertini his backing, when he was under attack and even extended his contract during that period. Hoffmann, however, left at the end 1989.

## 8 Linda Reisch

Economic changes, in the late 1980s and early 90s, meant that city revenues from business taxes were substantially lower and expenditure on social budgets higher. At the same time, maintenance of the institutions which were created and developed in the days of abundance were a heavy burden on the city's cultural budget.

The next Culture Councillor was Linda Reisch. Reisch came to Frankfurt from Bonn, where she had run the *Kulturforum* of the SPD. According to Bernd Wagner, of the *Deutsche Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft*, Volker Hauff, the Mayor of Frankfurt who proposed Reisch, did so without the support of the Frankfurt SPD, who preferred a local candidate. They objected to Reisch who had helped Hauff with his election campaign and who was seen as having been 'parachuted' into the job by her SPD national connections.<sup>373</sup> Daniel Cohn-Bendit,\* with impressive foresight, gave Reisch a pair of boxing gloves as a welcome present.<sup>374</sup> Not having the support of her own party, would later turn out to be a major disadvantage. Hauff himself resigned only a year into his office and was replaced by Andreas von Schoeler. Already during Hauff's term in office, Reisch's position began to be eroded even by her own colleagues. Her weak position was reported extensively in the press. According to the papers, she was even unable to arrange a meeting with the city's *Kämmerer* (Finance Director), a member of her own party. She had to ask her predecessor, Hoffmann, for help and mediation. Museum directors and others would bypass Reisch and approach Hoffmann when they wanted to get something done.<sup>375</sup> The *Frankfurter Allgemeine* wrote:

The unsupportive silence of the mayor comes-over as almost unfair, so that the Reisch-opponents are drawn to their wishful idea that he may secretly wish for the failure of his own Culture Councillor.<sup>376</sup>

## 9 Reisch's Objectives

At a meeting with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Reisch said, 'I want to produce an enlightening mass-culture.'<sup>377</sup> Reisch said that she did not consider

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\* Daniel Cohn-Bendit, was a central figure in the '68 movement in France and later also in Germany. He was for many years a representative of the Green Party in the Frankfurt Parliament and also a *Dezernent* in the Frankfurt *Magistrat*. He now represents the Green Party in the European Parliament.

herself to be a left-wing Culture Councillor and that for too long the left-wing had neglected popular culture. She added that cultural politics should be the domain of the *Dezernent* and not the Mayor. Trying to present herself as the person-in-charge and juxtapose herself with the Mayor and the city's Finance Director proved to be politically unwise. Reisch said she had three priorities, which she would promote:

- to develop the jazz scene;
- to create an Academy of the Arts, an aim which was particularly close to her heart; and
- to focus attention on the *Literaturhaus*, a centre for smaller cultural events, exhibitions, intellectual gatherings, which had lost direction.

She stated that she would continue Hoffmann's work, but where necessary consolidate and consider new organisational structures.

As to the decision of the coalition partners (SPD and the Greens) to transfer funds from the big institutions to the independent scene, Reisch said that she considered such support necessary, on the condition that it avoided the hazards of the watering-can principle (in which all recipients are given the same level of support, without prioritisation.) Grants, according to Reisch, should be made on the basis of fixed criteria and supported by a professional report of a jury of experts.

The only reference to the Frankfurt opera made at the meeting was in response to a question about the high cost of guest artists, which Reisch said she would investigate. She spoke about the fact that the city's theatres lacked financial control and that turning them into a limited company might be a solution. Reisch considered implementing structural changes in the three companies (theatre, ballet and opera) to be one of her most important tasks.

Seven months after her nomination, Reisch gave a lecture entitled 'Frankfurt's Position in the New Germany – Cultural Political Considerations.'<sup>378</sup> In this lecture she said that, in future, Frankfurt would not as a matter of course be a cultural metropolis. Unified Germany created not only Berlin as a formidable competitor, but also cities such as Leipzig, Dresden and Weimar. Frankfurt would need to measure itself against cities like Prague, Budapest and Leningrad. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* complimented Reisch on her lecture, as well as on her control of facts and



issues, and suggested that the mistrust which part of the public had towards Reisch might turn into goodwill.

As the lecture took place only five days after Bertini's surprise resignation as Intendant of the opera, it was no surprise that questions about the plans for his replacement and the future of the Frankfurt opera and generally about Reisch's opera policy were asked. Reisch made the following points:

- She preferred the successor to Bertini to be a young, ambitious Intendant, who had not yet made his name all over the world and who would ripen artistically in Frankfurt, rather than an established 'star', and
- She preferred the opera to have a nucleus of good soloists which, when necessary, would be complemented with external singers, instead of the present system, where singers would fly in for a few performances and then fly out again.

This lecture seems to suggest that, after the Hoffmann years, sights were now being set lower. Whereas Hoffmann, especially in the Wallmann years, was able to spend money in an ambitious plan to place Frankfurt as an important artistic centre, especially in the visual arts, Reisch signals clearly that Frankfurt is not a first league player. This realism, was to a large extent due to the now limited resources available.

In March 1993, Reisch produced a paper titled 'Restructuring : Cultural Political Requirements of the '90s. Example Frankfurt am Main', describing the situation in Frankfurt and the possibilities as she saw them.<sup>379</sup> Although, the 75 page document, is also partly prescriptive, a substantial part of it is just descriptive. The fact that, three years into her job, in a city in deep financial difficulties as Culture Councillor of the city Reisch produced a paper with almost academic aspirations, analysing general problems with Frankfurt as a case-study, is an indication of her ineptitude. The document which has been long-awaited, and for the delays of which Reisch was constantly being criticised, had three important weaknesses:

- The report should have already covered the organisational aspects, relevant to the suggested solutions in detail. It did not. It is those very organisational aspects which eight years later have still not been agreed.
- The document comes over as Reisch's personal dissertation about the cultural needs of the '90s. It would have been more important to get the blessing and the

political support of the Mayor for her suggestions for Frankfurt than for her to grandstand.

- The report had no implementational plan. With so many different stakeholders involved, a practical process should have been outlined.

Following in the footsteps of Hoffmann would never have been easy. Not only did he have the experience and the political acumen, but he was also fortunate to have been in office during a period when there was abundant funding available. Reisch was aware of the fact that it was useless to set expensive objectives. Not only was there less money available, but the maintenance of the many museums added by Hoffmann and the overspending on the rebuilding of the opera\* made it even harder to juggle the funds.

The main objective Reisch undertook with regard to the opera was in the context of her hoped for organisational restructuring of the theatres.

The only opera Intendant Reisch contracted was Sylvain Cambreling. She made several other significant decisions, especially with regard to the contracts of theatre and opera Intendants, however, other decisions made during her formal tenure, were in fact taken by Mayors von Schoeler and Roth, whilst Reisch was dis-empowered. The main subject which the different concerned parties (political parties, Mayors, Culture Councillor and various Intendants) discussed year after year was the organisational and legal structure of the opera and the theatres. Should the theatres be integrated, or should they be separated? Should the (technical and other support) Central Services be centralised or separate to each of the theatres, ballet and opera? Should the theatres be converted to a limited company? Nothing was ever decided but whenever an Intendant managed to convince those in power of his point-of-view, a personal contract would be signed, which would subsequently bind the hands of the city administration. In these post-Hoffmann years the Intendants would regularly call on lawyers to negotiate on their behalf with the administration. For several years, the city actually paid the fees of these lawyers. In September 1997, Reisch

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\* Three years after the fire at the opera, the rebuilding work was being completed. Daily new titbits of information about overspending, and extravagant offices for the Bertini and his co-Intendant Schwab, were exposed. All the programmes and plans go back to Hoffmann days, but it was Reisch that was forced to deal with the consequences.

confirmed that although she should not have approved payment of these legal fees, she would not resign.<sup>380</sup>

## **10 Reisch - In Practice**

The truly big issue in this period were the reduced budgets and their ramifications. The stagione versus the repertoire system was discussed in this context. The discussions about personal contracts of the Intendants and about the legal structures were to a large extent inflamed by the financial strain. This section examines the effect of these pressures on the Frankfurt Opera.

### **10.1 Contracts of Intendants**

Reisch arrived in Frankfurt and found an integrated theatre-ballet–opera company, each with its own Intendant. Gary Bertini was the opera's *Generalmusikdirektor* and Intendant with a contract which had just recently been extended (by Hoffmann) for another two years until 1996.

Soon after her arrival in Frankfurt, Reisch spoke about the need to restructure the city theatres. Within 100 days of her being in office, Reisch signed a contract with Peter Eschberg to become the Intendant of the Frankfurt *Schauspiel* (theatre) and one with Ulrich Schwab which promoted him to co-Intendant of the Opera. She told the press that was proud that the contracts with the Intendants had been agreed and were ready for signing in the first 100 days of her being in office.<sup>381</sup>

The contract with Peter Eschberg, gave him assurance that the theatre, which had until then been part of a combined theatre, ballet and opera, would be separated and that he would be able to run it independently. The immediate result of the Eschberg contract was the need to divide the combined organisation into three. At various later stages, when the city administration wanted to re-integrate the companies, Eschberg, using his contract was able to thwart it. And yet, the same contract, which limited the city's flexibility, was renewed in 1996 by Mayor Roth. Hoffmann's position on the question of independent companies with three Intendants was unclear. In an interview he gave in April 1990 to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, he considered this to be sensible, but suggested that it would cost millions which the city could not

afford.<sup>382</sup> Six months later, Hoffmann said to the same paper that he considered the structural changes to be a mistake as a situation in which there are three Intendants without one person responsible overall would result in the stronger personality of the three ruling.<sup>383</sup> Whatever the right way was, it was certainly not in the interest of the city to agree a contract which bound it to a certain structure. Had Reisch had more experience, she might have been more careful with the contracts.

The politicians' and media attacks on Bertini prompted Mayor Hauff to confirm that the Frankfurt Opera was close to his heart and that he supported the extension of Bertini's contract. He stated that he had had full confidence in Bertini and in his artistic capabilities and that he was certain that the opera would, after its reopening, reach outstanding achievements.<sup>384</sup>

In December 1990 Bertini resigned. Considering Bertini's reputation as a gifted conductor, it is notable that it was the orchestra (rather than the administration) which wanted him out. A no-confidence vote by the orchestra brought about his resignation.

To deal with the opera after Bertini's resignation, Hans-Peter Doll, who for sixteen years (1969 –1985) had been Generalintendant of the State Theatre in Stuttgart, together with Martin Steinhoff, the *Geschäftsführender Intendant* (the Managing Intendant is responsible only for non-artistic matters) of the Frankfurt Ballet, were made transitional-Intendants of the Opera and the Theatre.

Reisch now had the opportunity to choose an Intendant for the opera to suit her ideas. Without consulting the musicians, Reisch agreed to bring Jeffrey Tate as Music Director who together with Stefan Lister (from the *Chatelet* Theatre in Paris) and Martin Steinhoff, the Managing Intendant, would run the opera. The main opposition party, CDU, questioned the suitability of Steinhoff for the job of opera Intendant and demanded that Reisch meet with representatives of the orchestra, the choir and the soloists, before she made any decisions.<sup>385</sup> However, as a result of Mayor Hauff's resignation and the withdrawal of one of the candidates Reisch's plan did not materialise.

Reisch then negotiated and agreed a contract with the Opera Director of the Brussels opera, *Theatre Royal de la Monnaie*, Sylvain Cambreling, to become *Generalmusikdirektor* and *Künstlerischer Intendant* (Artistic Intendant) of the

opera. This was a departure from previous Intendants who had responsibility for both artistic and administrative aspects of the running of the opera. Cambreling was not given administrative responsibility. As Cambreling was not available before July 1993, the interim team of Doll and Steinhoff were to be in charge until his arrival.

The CDU spokesman on cultural matters, Hans-Jürgen Hellwig, conceded that in hindsight it was a mistake to employ Cambreling as this had resulted in the opera house being left without leadership for two years.<sup>386</sup>

In 1994 the financial difficulties were already manifest. The fact that Steinhoff and Cambreling were not able to work together was not a secret. Peter Eschberg (the Intendant of the theatre) would not agree to the city's request to create a limited company which would include the opera, ballet and the theatres. Eschberg was able to prevent such an amalgamation through a clause in his contract with the city. Yet the city extended Steinhoff's contract by ten years to 2004, whilst Cambreling's contract was still in force until 1999 and Eschberg's contract was extended to 2001. The Steinhoff contract made his dismissal impossible.

These contracts were signed a short while after a Parliamentary enquiry concluded that Reisch had lied and misled the *Magistrat* with regard to the contract and emoluments of Cambreling.<sup>387</sup> They were negotiated by Mayor von Schoeler, who, although legally Reisch was still in charge, took over the responsibility for Frankfurt's theatres. Reisch was a co-signatory on behalf of the city, but later maintained that she had nothing to do with the negotiations and objected to them. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* suggested that Reisch did not want to lose her job as a result of refusing to sign the contracts, adding that there were not so many jobs of that magnitude in Germany.<sup>388</sup>

The papers were full of criticism of these new contracts which were driven by von Schoeler through the *Magistrat* against the views of professional advisors in the city administration.<sup>389</sup> The contract with Steinhoff reflected the panic of the Mayor and of other politicians about the need to cut costs and their belief that only Steinhoff would be able to succeed in such cost-cutting. The SPD speaker on cultural affairs in Frankfurt, Klaus Sturmfels, rejected Cambreling's worry about Steinhoff's interference in artistic matters. The danger of these contracts was foreseen by the critic Peter Iden, who wrote:

the Frankfurt theatre-dilettante von Schoeler, who is also the Mayor, has almost certainly caused the city considerable damage, through the contracts he agreed with the leading staff of the city theatres.<sup>390</sup>

## **10.2 Other Political Players**

The post-Hoffmann period is typified by ever-changing allegiances and coalitions. Reisch's inability to work in harmony with the Mayor(s) was clearly a contributing factor to this state of affairs. These were years in which the Mayor publicly rebuked her own Culture Councillor; the Culture Councillor referred to the Mayor as incompetent and to an Intendant's behaviour as 'obscene'. Everyone was stirring. According to Reisch:

The structural crisis of the City's theatres can be succinctly explained by the fact that there was not one Culture-Councillor with the requisite authority, but several Mayors and various political parties, who all wanted to play the role of Cultural-Councillor.<sup>391</sup>

What Reisch was saying was that too many cooks spoil the broth and indeed nothing was being achieved. The terminology used by the different parties is often more that of a brawl than one of a political argument or debate.

In February 1993 the CDU produced 'Suggestions for the Future', a document setting out their views about the future of the Frankfurt opera.<sup>392</sup> The document was based on information prepared by Steinhoff. It suggested several changes which would limit Cambreling's autonomy, such as the substantial reduction of the dramaturgy team.<sup>393</sup>

The SPD and the Greens called for cuts in the city's budgets for culture and for funds to be diverted to social institutions. The Greens attacked Reisch and her 'lawnmower' policy which involved cutting everybody's budgets at the same rate. They demanded that priorities be set. The Greens maintained that with a financial situation which was unlikely to improve some of the big and expensive institutions should no longer be carried by the public purse.<sup>394</sup> The line of the Greens was, 'One does not need world-class ballet, world-class opera, world-class theatre in Frankfurt.' To save money, the Greens also called for the opera to be converted to the stagione system.<sup>395</sup>

The CDU opposition attacked the city administration in the budget discussions, held in the Frankfurt Parliament in January 1994, for its lack of objectives and priorities.

In their attack they quoted an address given in 1963 by the then Mayor of Frankfurt, Werner Bockelmann:

The current fashion, to enquire about the price first, and then about values and significance, is especially absurd in cultural, artistic and spiritual enterprises [...].<sup>396</sup>

They maintained that this was again the case in Frankfurt, which after the good years under Mayor Wallmann and Culture Councillor Hoffmann, now had a leadership which negated the value of culture. They spoke of the take-over of cultural affairs by the Finance Department:

Is it really so hard, Frau Reisch, to set priorities? Or do you consider it a compliment when the *Frankfurter Rundschau* [newspaper] refers to the cultural politics of 1993 as the “year of the lawnmower”?

The city's thinking was confused. Having waited two years for Cambreling, the ruling party's (SPD) speaker on cultural matters, Klaus Sturmfels, said that what he wished for was a small ensemble which would build a repertoire on a good level. This, of course, was the opposite of Cambreling's artistic line. The new Intendant, who was aiming for ‘world-class’, was told that this would not be necessary in every production.<sup>397</sup>

The SPD itself was torn between Reisch's views, to some extent supported by their spokesman, Sturmfels, who objected to the closure of institutions, saying ‘Frankfurt should remain a city of culture’ and of others such as the SPD local party in the Westend district of Frankfurt, who expressed the opinion that:

In this budgetary situation, there is no longer any sympathy for the expenditure of the elite-culture in the budget of Culture-Councillor Reisch.<sup>398</sup>

In two long parliamentary discussions about the culture budgets, held in January and February 1994 technicalities about budget cuts were the main issues.<sup>399</sup>

Years of scandals surrounding the opera and Reisch's capabilities as Culture Councillor resulted in a public discussion about the style and direction the subsidised opera should have taken. Towards the March 1997 municipal elections, the spokesmen of the different parties made their stand. Reisch, still Culture Councillor, now without responsibility for the theatres, was of the view that it was the new, the

young and the experimental which should be promoted. Ignatz Bubis of the FDP, thought that the public should also be able to see well-known plays and Hans-Jürgen Hellwig, the CDU spokesman, said that Cambreling did not produce the operas the public expected. The Green Party spokesman, Professor Micha Brumlik, was of the opinion that there were sufficient classics performed by the opera, adding that to serve the wide public's taste would be throwing away money. Brumlik added:

Subsidised art must promote the rare, risky, new and the unpopular. The rest can establish itself in the entertainment market.<sup>400</sup>

### **10.3 Stagione versus Repertoire**

The difficulty in running a repertoire system was already described by Gielen in 1987. The issue of repertoire, stagione or semi-stagione systems, was discussed by the politicians, most of whom initially wished to maintain the repertoire system and rebuild an ensemble.<sup>401</sup> The shift from repertoire to a semi-stagione had already started before Cambreling's arrival, but Cambreling was a great believer in the stagione system and believed that this would be the way to achieve excellence. In an interview given by Reisch in 1993, she said that running a repertoire opera is no longer financially feasible. When asked whether this was reflective of an aesthetics of new simplicity she refused to be drawn saying:

I could tell you what my opinion is, but it is not the role of Culture-politics. I do not prescribe aesthetics to the theatres. I have to see to it that a certain amount of money is made available and it is the Intendant's decision how to utilise it. It would be up to the Intendant to explain meagre productions as their sole programme. Naturally, politics cannot be completely detached from the basic question of repertoire or stagione. [...] I do believe, however, that we will reach greater leanness [...] The main criterion for artistic judgement has to continue to be quality. Time will tell, how this will be achieved, what the answer to that may be.<sup>402</sup>

It is notable that Reisch, instead of suggesting a plan of how quality may be achieved, resorted to platitudes such as 'time will tell.'

In the framework of a presentation made by Steinhoff in 1993, in which he calculated that by 1997 the Opera would no longer be able to perform unless structural changes were introduced, he spoke particularly about a long list of restrictive practices which made the productions more and more expensive. Steinhoff also suggested conversion



of the Opera to stagione. Both Reisch and the CDU objected to a conversion to stagione.<sup>403</sup>

#### 10.4 Budget cuts

In June 1989 Volker Hauff (SPD) became Mayor, after a twelve-year period in which the CDU had a majority in Frankfurt. Already in the coalition negotiations with the Green Party, Hauff explained that the deficit spending of the previous administration would have to stop. According to Micha Brumlik, the Green Party's spokesman on cultural matters, Hilmar Hoffmann, who was still Culture Councillor at the time, understood that the days, in which he had an almost free hand in investing in culture, were over and promptly resigned.<sup>404</sup>

In the following years the main actions by the *Magistrat* with regard to the need to cut the budget of the theatres were:

- a consolidation programme which was agreed in 1994.
- disenfranchisement of Reisch (by von Schoeler) and additional powers given to Steinhoff in 1994 as Managing Intendant of opera, ballet and the *TAT* Theatre. (the *Schauspiel* theatre was not included, as Eschberg, the *Schauspiel's* Intendant had an independence clause in his contract)
- Withdrawal of responsibility for the theatres from Reisch (by Mayor Roth)
- the establishment of the Everding\* commission into the structure of Frankfurt theatres
- further powers given to Steinhoff as both commercial and artistic Intendant of the opera in 1998

All the actions, except those agreements which because of political necessity were part of coalition agreements between the political parties, were the results of struggles between feuding players. The main strategy of both the SPD administration of von Schoeler and the CDU administration of Mayor Roth was to trust Steinhoff to be able to juggle savings and run the opera, without having to go into painful discourse over objectives.

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\* August Everding, was Generalintendant of the Bavarian State Theatre and President of the *Deutsche Bühnenverein* (German theatre council).

In 1993, by the time Cambreling came to Frankfurt, it was apparent that the city's finances were in a crisis. The SPD and Green Party coalition agreed to reduce the annual culture budget by fifty million DM as of 1994.<sup>405</sup> The budget for the city's theatres was to be cut from DM 116 million to DM 85 million. As the fixed costs, including staff which could not be dismissed, took up the main part of the opera's budget, such cuts would have a drastic effect on the artistic flexibility of the theatres.

In a Parliamentary debate about the culture budgets in early 1994, Mayor von Schoeler stated that, from his point of view, even in the changing financial conditions, the continued existence of the city's big cultural institutions had high priority.<sup>406</sup> However, he did not set priorities nor did he define specific objectives, beyond stating that budget cuts would be necessary.

Cambreling was in an invidious situation. He was unwilling to compromise on quality and his solution was to go for a stagione-based opera and to substantially reduce the number of performances. Reisch, however, opposed the conversion of the opera to a stagione house.<sup>407</sup> After years of 200 and more performances per annum, Cambreling came down to 98, at its lowest point in 1996. Steinhoff attacked Cambreling for this policy, but the subject was never discussed formally or agreed as an acceptable policy with the city administration or Parliament.

In February 1994 von Schoeler, against Reisch's wishes, cancelled the separation of the opera, ballet and theatre.<sup>408</sup>

In the 1995 elections, the CDU regained a majority in the city's Parliament and in July 1995 Petra Roth (CDU) was elected Mayor of Frankfurt. Two years into the consolidation programme, the funding of the opera was fast reducing, (from DM 66.6 million in 1994 to DM 61.2 million in 1996, and to DM 56.8 million in 1997). In a press-release, Hellwig, the CDU Spokesman for Cultural Affairs in Frankfurt, accused the city's Finance Councillor of subjecting the theatres to financial liabilities to an extent far beyond the agreed consolidation programme.<sup>409</sup> Reisch confirmed that the city did not keep its part in the consolidation programme. Reisch also accused Thomas Königs (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*) the city's Finance Councillor, of misleading the public with the information he issued regarding the funding of the theatres.<sup>410</sup> A further complication was that according to Steinhoff, Reisch and von Schoeler had agreed with him in 1994, (contrary to consolidation programme which

had only just been approved) to allow the orchestra and choir of the opera to avoid reducing numbers.<sup>411</sup>

Cambreling used the opportunity of the premiere of *The Marriage of Figaro* in June 1996, to call for more support for the opera and to demand that the *Kulturdezernat* represent the opera's case in the city administration. Unless these and more funds were forthcoming it would be impossible to run the opera. Ann Anders, the spokesperson for the Frankfurt / *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* (who, as partners in the coalition, had two out of eight *Dezernents*, including the all-powerful *Finanzdezernent*) said, in reaction to the tumultuous events, that her party considered opera, ballet and the *TAT* theatre important and deserving priority and demanded that Roth should make a decision.<sup>412</sup> Soon thereafter Petra Roth suggested that she might relieve Reisch of her responsibility for the theatres. A week later Roth gave her own Culture Councillor an ultimatum. Reisch was told to come up with a concept which would ensure the financial health of the 1996/97 season of the city's theatres.

In September 1996, a day after Hellwig, referred to Culture Councillor Reisch as a safety-risk for culture in Frankfurt,<sup>413</sup> branding her a liar and as totally incompetent, Mayor Roth issued a press-release attacking Reisch and referring to her plans as utopian.<sup>414</sup> Hellwig produced an alternative restructuring plan for the city's theatres, which was presented by Roth. The plan was to turn the theatres into limited companies. The hope was that such companies would not be subject to the agreement with the unions not to fire employees. The unions, not surprisingly, opposed the plan. Steinhoff, on the other hand supported the Hellwig plan and made public the rift between him and Cambreling.

In October 1996, Mayor Roth withdrew *Kulturdezernent* in Reisch's responsibility for the city's theatres.

## **10.5 Everding Commission**

At the suggestion of Gerard Mortier, Director of the Salzburg Festival (and former boss of Cambreling in Brussels) a working-group was established in October 1996 to make recommendations to dealing with the controversy surrounding Frankfurt's theatres. The group was headed by August Everding, the Generalintendant of the Bavarian State Theatre and included Mortier, Rolf Bolwin, the Director of the

*Deutscher Bühnenverein* and Stefan Mumme a Frankfurt lawyer. The group's recommendations were to:<sup>415</sup>

- Increase the budgets for the theatres;
- Enlarge the recently reduced opera orchestra; and
- Install a Generalintendant, for the theatres, ballet and opera, who would take over the business management responsibilities of Steinhoff.

The report criticised the consolidation programme which was agreed in 1994. Everding also spoke about the surprising aversion to culture:

In Frankfurt, of all places, I have come across a distaste for culture, which really frightens me. Frankfurt, this great city-of-culture as it has always been, has now practically an aversion against culture. This is true of both citizens and politicians. Something is wrong there.<sup>416</sup>

Although the consolidation programme was a creation of the previous city administration, Roth could not afford to open the purse-strings again and was not receptive to the recommendations of the committee which she herself appointed. The politicians did not want to hear that the opera needed more money, that the orchestra had to be enlarged and that Steinhoff, their man delivering the savings, should be relieved of his duties.

Mayor Roth said that the working-group's recommendation to make more money available was impractical and unlikely to be realised. Steinhoff joined in the attack on the committee's report. He considered the demand for more funding, without taking into account the city's financial situation, an unhelpful contribution to those who were trying to find a realistic solution for the theatres.<sup>417</sup> Steinhoff was, of course, eager to discredit the report, which suggested that he should be demoted to Administrative Director.

When it became clear that the Everding committee's recommendations would not be followed, Cambreling announced that he would be leaving Frankfurt at the end of the 1996/97 season (July 1997). In his statement announcing his decision to leave, Cambreling attacked various politicians as well as Steinhoff. Steinhoff responded by saying that Cambreling's departure would enable the Opera to continue playing. Roth complained about Cambreling's unwillingness to compromise over artistic matters and added that Frankfurt, because of its financial situation, would have been unable

to afford Cambreling's aesthetic concepts in the long run.<sup>418</sup> Bernhard Mihm, the chairman of the CDU faction, demanded that the successor should be aware of Frankfurt's limited resources.<sup>419</sup>

This was the first time that the issue of what the city could afford, and was willing to pay for, was mentioned. Reisch, still Culture Councillor but already a lame duck, referred to the issue and said:

It is the political will that remains the driving force in a city like Frankfurt, in its decision whether to develop the contemporary and the modern at the opera and the theatre. Alternatively, it can reduce theatre to a level, at which it is able to exist on a lower budget, but unable to achieve such pretensions.[for the avant-garde]<sup>420</sup>

After seven years of squabbling, mainly about organisational and legal models for the city's theatres, totally weakened, Reisch, returned to discussing objectives. The only other forum in which the topic of opera surfaced was at the Frankfurt City-hall's New Year's reception in December 1996 when the theatre critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki in his address spoke deprecatingly about Cambreling and named him a 'mishap' and 'dilettante', and spoke of his productions as 'Productions full of infantile pranks, senselessness and abomination.'<sup>421</sup> It is likely that Mayor Roth knew in advance that Reich-Ranicki so virulently would attack Cambreling and his concept of opera. Reisch said that when she heard that Reich-Ranicki would be speaking at the reception, she decided not to come, as his views about Cambreling were known. Reisch attacked Mayor Roth for inviting Reich-Ranicki and for not coming to the defence of Cambreling after the vicious public attack.<sup>422</sup>

## **11 Changing Directions 1997 – 2001**

After Cambreling's resignation, Mayor Roth announced that as an interim solution until 1999 the Opera would be run by Steinhoff, with Hans-Peter Doll acting as a consultant. For that interim period they would find a Musical Director. After 1999, a limited company would be formed to include the Opera, Ballet and the various city theatres, which would be run by a Director with powers of a Generalintendant.<sup>423</sup>

Doll, who believed that the Opera should revert from the semi-stagione system operated by Cambreling to repertoire, announced the increase of the company's

soloists by four to six and the enlargement of the choir from 48 to 60.<sup>424</sup> The number of rehearsals would be reduced and cheaper conductors would be hired. A two-year contract as chief-conductor was given to Klauspeter Seibel. He was the orchestra's choice candidate, but it was clear that he was only the chief conductor, not even a *Generalmusikdirektor*, let alone Intendant. Not surprisingly, considering Doll's and Steinhoff's views, Seibel confirmed that he supported a reversion to the ensemble and repertoire system.<sup>425</sup>

The next *Generalmusikdirektor* contracted was Paolo Carignani. The committee which chose Carignani as Musical Director of the Opera consisted of: the Intendant Steinhoff, Hans-Peter Doll, Karl Rarichs, the composer Wolfgang Rihm and a representative from the orchestra.<sup>426</sup> Carignani believes that the concept and criteria for the selection of a *Generalmusikdirektor* were developed by Doll and Roth.<sup>427</sup> Carignani was told that Frankfurt was looking for a conductor who had a big repertoire, covering both Italian and German opera. After the Cambreling years which had much modern opera and a stagione system, Frankfurt wanted a wider repertory and a repertoire system. Although he could not imagine repertoire opera in his native Italy, Carignani was pleased to acquiesce.

The questions which were discussed in the media at that time, such as the discussion on *Hessische Fernsehen* Television, in which Gerard Mortier spoke about opera as a necessity and not a luxury and Reich-Ranicki countered that art was a luxury which should constantly keep its public in mind and added, 'I expect only entertainment from the opera, they should not seek my redemption',<sup>428</sup> were not addressed by Roth. Although in the choice of Carignani a clear direction had been defined, Roth did not publicly address the issue of what kind of an Opera Frankfurt wanted. Was it an innovative Opera or a traditional one? Should a new young team (a-la-Gielen) be brought to Frankfurt, (as suggested by Mölich-Zebhauer, the Manager of Frankfurt's Ensemble-Modern)<sup>429</sup> or should top names and stars as in a traditional house like Milan, New York and Vienna be the approach?

## **12 The Resistible Rise of Dr. Steinhoff**

After twenty years, in which Frankfurt cultural politics were in the strong hands of the city's Culture Councillor, Hilmar Hoffmann, Frankfurt deteriorated in its cultural

politics into a long period of direction-less shifts resulting in its opera house being relegated to provincial status.<sup>430</sup> A main actor in this period was Dr. Martin Steinhoff.

Steinhoff, who started his career at the Frankfurt theatres in 1984 as the *Betriebsdirektor* (Director of operations) of the Frankfurt Ballet worked his way up to a post in which, in addition to being the Intendant of the Central Services of the Frankfurt Theatres he was also the Managing and Artistic Intendant of the Opera.

The main contributing factors, as described above, leading to Steinhoff's omnipotence in the Frankfurt Opera were:

1. The inexperience of Reisch;
2. The lack of support Reisch had from both Mayors von Schoeler and Roth;
3. The financial constraints necessitating budget cuts; and
4. The two-year gap in artistic management between Bertini's departure and Cambreling's arrival.

Steinhoff's ascendance began after Bertini's resignation. At the time, Steinhoff was *Geschäftsführender Intendant* of the Ballet. Reisch, who needed to fill the gap left by Bertini, added the Opera to his responsibilities. As Steinhoff originated from the commercial and support side of arts-management, it was only natural that this was also the area in which he was most active. However, whereas in the past there had been an artistic Intendant in charge, with Bertini gone, there was a vacuum in which he had the opportunity to develop his power-base. It did not take long for friction to arise. The orchestra and chorus complained, to no avail, about Steinhoff, who was highly paid but not a professional and yet made decisions about cuts in the artistic domain.<sup>431</sup>

For two years after Bertini's departure, Steinhoff (together with Doll) ran the Opera. In 1993 Cambreling was due to arrive as *Generalmusikdirektor* and as artistic Intendant. As a welcome to Cambreling, Steinhoff explained in an interview that the role of the Intendant needed to be redefined and specifically that it has to be clear who the Managing Director was:

The term Intendant needs urgent reforming [...] Most importantly, it is necessary to establish who is the overall person in charge.<sup>432</sup>

Steinhoff fired the opening shot in his struggle with Cambreling over the control of the Opera. In the same interview he clarified his disparaging views about the vanity of Intendants and about the abundance of available conductors:

the vanity of Intendants, who in the name of “artistic freedom” and in order to reach so-called sensations, be they singers or directors, commit financial insanity. Directors are treated like sacred cows, set-designers, who are constantly re-setting, are put on a pedestal.

[...]

And yet, conductors are two to a penny, in Europe alone, there are 4000 active conductors.

He also sent a message to the more populist politicians, attacking the elitism of opera in Germany, which he suggested would eventually have to close down, not for lack of funds but because it had lost its way.

Opera in Germany – contemporary opera in particular – has come to resemble the [ivory tower] pleasures of a university professor. Opera increasingly distances itself from art and from the audience. It is turning into an esoteric, questionable event. It is therefore in a severe crisis. If this will continue, the Opera will one day be shut down, not for lack of finances, but because of a lack of direction. Some may still be going to the Opera but that which is offered to them has long ago become meaningless.

At a time when politicians were discussing cuts and budgets without ever discussing objectives, lectures about the essence of opera were given in Frankfurt, instead of by artists and philosophers, by a manager. (The *Geschäftsführender Intendant*).<sup>433</sup>

According to Hellwig, Steinhoff was constantly plotting behind the backs of Linda Reisch, the Culture Councillor and Peter Eschberg, the Intendant of the theatre.<sup>434</sup>

Steinhoff, it was later revealed, in his concerted action against Cambreling would not even allow the printing of publicity posters for opera productions, (which Cambreling then paid for out of his own pocket). He also prevented Cambreling from getting basic performance and financial data of the Opera.<sup>435</sup> Steinhoff has continued to use control of information as a power tool till the end of his tenure. Statistical information of the Opera, which normally should be regularly made available to the *Kulturdezernat*, the City’s Culture Department, was held back and only delivered piecemeal.



Steinhoff was a cunning political operator, who systematically played the local political machinery to build his power-base. One day he would advocate stagione as the solution to the financial problems of the Opera,<sup>436</sup> then, after politicians from both the ruling SPD as well as the CDU opposition objected to this suggestion, Steinhoff began to talk about the old repertoire system as the right solution.<sup>437</sup>

The need to cut the city's spending and the inability of Reisch to bring about the necessary savings at the city's theatres, enabled Steinhoff to organise a coup. The relationship between Reisch and von Schoeler was breaking down. Unknown to Eschberg (the Intendant of the theatre, which was run separately), with whom Steinhoff had prepared a restructuring and savings plan, Steinhoff prepared another plan with Mayor von Schoeler, which would bring Opera, Ballet and the theatres under Steinhoff's control. In February 1994, von Schoeler relieved Reisch of her responsibility vis-à-vis the theatres. Von Schoeler introduced Steinhoff as the person responsible for the structural-changes concept he was promoting, thereby making him de-facto the city's *Bühnendezernent* (Theatre Councillor). The role which normally would have been that of the city's Councillor in charge of the Culture Department was given by the Mayor to Steinhoff, who would now be reporting to the Mayor instead of to Reisch. Reisch's reaction in a press-conference was:

What the Mayor has done, is not honest, what Herr Steinhoff has done, is obscene.<sup>438</sup>

Steinhoff managed to convince the city administration that he was the only man who could save Frankfurt Opera. In 1994, Micha Brumlik, the speaker of the Greens on cultural matters, voiced the opinion that Steinhoff was the only person capable of reigning in the Opera and yet he was already worried about Steinhoff's becoming too powerful.<sup>439</sup>

In 1994 von Schoeler made Steinhoff into the Managing Intendant of the Central Services of the Theatres (in addition to his other responsibilities). This gave Steinhoff full control over all the central technical and support services of the Frankfurt theatres (except for the *Schauspiel*, where Eschberg was independent). He was granted a ten-year contract with extremely generous financial remuneration. In September 2000 the city finally settled his departure date for October 2002, the contractual exit payments to him were said by the press to amount to DM 2.6 million.<sup>440</sup>

In the power struggle between Steinhoff and Cambreling, Cambreling was unwilling to compromise on quality. If there was not enough money, there would have to be fewer performances, but quality would not suffer. Steinhoff, on the other hand, thought one should increase the number of opera nights from 110 to 140 and criticised the luxury of too much rehearsal time. Steinhoff considered it unacceptable that the Opera would stop playing because of two opposing dogmas: politicians who would not increase the funding and the Artistic Director's refusal to lower quality. Steinhoff insisted, 'We have to make compromises, both in terms of quality and quantity.'<sup>441</sup>

Steinhoff's position was further strengthened after Cambreling's resignation in 1996 and when Mayor Roth announced that the Opera would be run by Steinhoff with the help of 71 year-old Hans-Peter Doll as consultant. Brumlik opposed Roth's decision and said very clearly, 'We are against an Opera, which under the benevolent advice of Doll, is managed by Steinhoff.'<sup>442</sup> Steinhoff, probably did not forget this and a year later, Brumlik was reprimanded by him, for heckling at the premiere of *Freischütz*.<sup>443</sup>

In December 1996, Steinhoff vehemently denied that he had any ambition to become artistic Intendant of the Opera.<sup>444</sup> A year later, in early 1998, the non-artistic Intendant gave a lecture about philosophical and sociological aspects and roles of the opera. He quoted Adorno and Heidegger and concluded that in future opera's role would be to offer art to please the masses.<sup>445</sup> Mayor Roth sat in the audience and, clearly convinced by the 'power of his argument' (or his rhetoric), several months later promoted Steinhoff, making him Artistic Intendant as well as Managing Intendant of the Opera.

The next peak Steinhoff was aiming for was to become Frankfurt's Generalintendant of the city's theatres (encompassing theatres, Ballet and Opera). By that time the city had a new Culture Councillor, and he would not have that.<sup>446</sup> It was Hans-Bernhard Nordhoff who also managed to negotiate Steinhoff's earlier than contractual departure. *Die Welt* reporting Steinhoff's agreed departure wrote:

The path is clear for a reform of Frankfurt's Theatre scene: Opera director Martin Steinhoff is being paid to go.[...] The news sounds like a small miracle [...] His DM 30 million consolidation programme convinced the Mayor years ago. It has been recognised too late that the theatre without a meaningful message was managed by him to death. [...] It has been a long time since there has been so much of a beginning, as now with the end of Steinhoff. <sup>447</sup>

### 13 A New *Kulturdezernent* : Hans-Bernhard Nordhoff

In 1998, in a rather unusual move, the CDU and the SPD agreed to dismiss the SPD Culture Councillor Reisch (who was still Culture Councillor although without any responsibility for the theatres). It was shocking as Reisch had only been re-elected in 1996 for a further six year period and it was unusual for a party to collude with the opposition in the removal of its own representative from her job. It seems that this extraordinary step was possible, because the SPD was embarrassed to have an SPD *Dezernent*, who for a second time, had been dis-empowered by the Mayor. This was damaging to the image of their party.

Hans-Bernhard Nordhoff was elected Culture Councillor in September 1998. Compared to Hoffmann's fifty-minute programmatic speech in Parliament, Nordhoff gave a short ten-minute speech in which he defined six main areas in which he would be active in the near future:<sup>448</sup>

- Further profiling of the Museumsufer, the river Main Museum Quay ;
- Developing the role of the *Schirn* Gallery;
- Improving the working conditions of artists;
- Developing joint projects with the *Land* (Hessen);
- Cultural Co-operation with other European cities of Frankfurt's level; and
- Preparing the festivities for Goethe's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday.

These objectives are very practical and down to earth. Two of the six concern trying to get external funding for city activities. In contrast to Hoffmann, who defined an educational agenda, which was meant to change Frankfurt, Nordhoff did not set out a vision. The objectives are more maintenance than new beginning. As such, Nordhoff, who represents the SPD, in a city with a CDU Mayor, is being realistic. It is also notable that he did not mention the theatre-restructuring issue, which has been haunting Frankfurt for at least eight years.

Nordhoff has not changed his low-key approach. In an interview he gave a year after his appointment, he would not say what his vision was, commenting that his visions could be found in his poetry.<sup>449</sup> He defined his role as an enabler whose role it was to develop understanding for culture and investments in culture in those who are not close to it. After Hoffmann and Reisch, Frankfurt now had a Culture Councillor who

was aware of the importance of selling culture to the politicians by proving its contribution to the general development of the city. Nordhoff added:

Whoever believes they can have a majority in a City Council, on the basis of the 'art for art's sake' argument, is mistaken.

The need to be more populist is also apparent from a lecture he gave in February 1999, in which he defined theatre as both museum and creative laboratory.<sup>450</sup> He cited opinion polls showing that 80% of the attending public did not want experimental theatre and preferred relaxing and already proven theatre and only 20% were interested in the new and the avant-garde. Nordhoff said both groups should be satisfied.

Comments such as the one above, which showed concern for the majority uninterested in experimental theatre, signalled to conservative Mayor Roth, that he had no plans to re-educate Frankfurt's population. After the Reisch emphasis on quality, Nordhoff endorsed access. In a rare utterance about objectives he referred to the importance of 'depth of effectiveness' to describe the numbers of museum visitors, who had not been to museums before.<sup>451</sup>

Nordhoff, who was elected with the support of both his own party (SPD) and the CDU, continued to enjoy the support of his own party. However, although Nordhoff, in contrast to his predecessor Linda Reisch, has never tried to prove his independence of the Mayor, he was unable to count on her loyalty to him. In trying to sign-on a new Intendant for the *Schauspiel*, Roth flew to New-York to negotiate directly with Dieter Dorn. Roth failed in her endeavours. However, Roth should have left the selection of and negotiation with a theatre Intendant, which is the domain of the Culture Councillor, to Nordhoff. This is the old Roth syndrome which is apparent again. Just as Roth tried to catch the limelight in the early Reisch days, she saw a possibility of a success in bringing a great name as *Schauspiel* Intendant and went on her own to New-York to try and clinch a deal.

Much to the chagrin of Nordhoff, Felix Semmelroth, the director of Roth's office, also regularly made public statements about the theatre situation. In Frankfurt's town-hall Semmelroth has often been referred to as the 'secret Culture Councillor'.<sup>452</sup> When Paolo Carignani, Frankfurt Opera's *Generalmusikdirektor*, complained to Roth about Nordhoff, she told him that she was unable to interfere before the coming

election. Carignani admitted that not only did he appreciate he was a pawn in the political game but that he did what he could to take advantage of it.<sup>453</sup>

The new Opera programme plans introduced to the cultural committee of the Parliament and to the general public for the years 1999/2000 to 2004, have less contemporary opera than the Gielen and Cambreling eras, which may be a response to Reich-Ranicki's criticism. The plans increased the number of performances from 140 to 180 per annum with the aim of raising the number of subscriptions from 8000 to 10,000.

With the choice of a new Intendant for the Opera to replace Steinhoff whose departure Nordhoff had negotiated, Nordhoff played his cards very close to his chest. After the news of Steinhoff's departure was made public, Nordhoff would not be drawn into the details of the decision-making process. All Nordhoff was willing to say was:<sup>454</sup>

- there would not be a search committee;
- it would be his responsibility to find a suitable candidate and negotiate with him;
- the candidate's name would then be brought for approval to the *Magistrat* and finally to the *Stadtverordnetenversammlung* (City Parliament). As neither the SPD nor the CDU had a majority in Frankfurt, the parties would have to agree. In practice, this meant that Nordhoff (SPD) had to agree the candidate with Roth (CDU);
- the candidate should come from the 'arts' and not from management; and
- the candidate should be 'at home' with music-theatre, a musician or with musical background and have experience at the level of opera director at least.

Nordhoff's choice of Intendant was Bernd Loebe, artistic director at the *Theatre Royal de la Monnaie* in Brussels, who fits Nordhoff's own definitions of the qualities he was looking for. Loebe, has for two years been artistic consultant to Carignani, and therefore was well acquainted with the Frankfurt Opera. It is too early to assess the choice of Bernd Loebe as the new Intendant.

In conclusion, Nordhoff came to Frankfurt to a difficult, perhaps even sick portfolio. After years of abuse of the Culture Councillor by two Mayors and an ever stronger Intendant at the Opera and at the Central Services of the Theatres, Nordhoff chose to come in very low key. His only stated objective relevant to the Opera was to be more

open to popular music. In this context one can understand the four-year plan, which because of the changing personalities at the Opera, is more of a framework than anything else.

## **14 Conclusion**

### **14.1 Decision Analysis**

The following decisions were made during the period analysed with regard to or with impact on Opera:

- Choice of Intendants
- Educational and artistic concept
- Contract stipulations
- Legal structures
- Organisational structures
- Budget cuts
- Budget increases

#### **14.1.1 Choice of Intendants**

This is the main instrument by which the politicians can have their say with regard to the direction the opera company will take. Whereas the decisions are formally made by the City *Magistrat* and confirmed by the *Stadtverordnetenversammlung* (city Parliament), there has been no indication that in the choice of Intendants over this thirty year period, the Culture Councillor was ever overruled, or even had difficulties in getting his candidate confirmed. In none of the cases was a formal process or search committee established, nor were criteria set down by the *Magistrat* or by the city Parliament for the choice of the Opera Intendant.

Hoffmann wanted innovation and he advocated the concept of opera where the lyrics had the same importance as the music. Hoffmann made the following decisions with regard to three Opera Intendants: He first promoted Dohnanyi, who was *Generalmusikdirektor* under the Generalintendant of the combined theatre-ballet-opera, to Opera Intendant and then extended his contract by five years. He hired

Gielen and extended his contract and subsequently he hired Bertini. All three were conductors, but they all agreed with Hoffmann's concepts. Gielen turned out to be a great success and Bertini a failure. The system Hoffmann used in canvassing views of music critics to reach a decision about the candidates for the job, had as its main advantage the resultant support of the media. Hoffmann overlooked Bertini's lack of experience in management and his weakness in human relations, both of which together with a lack of a true vision of what he wanted to achieve, were the reasons for his failure.

Reisch contracted Cambreling as Intendant to find out that he would be changing the Opera planning to stagione, which was unacceptable to her or to almost any other politician in Frankfurt. By the time Cambreling resigned, Reisch was still formally Culture Councillor, but the theatres were not any more her domain, but the responsibility of Mayor Roth.

Roth made Steinhoff Artistic Intendant of the Opera. Her decision reflected the arid thinking of Roth with regard to the Opera, where she was only interested in having an Intendant, who she thought would save money. Steinhoff persuaded Roth that he was the right man for the job, just as he persuaded her predecessor von Schoeler. Considering Roth's objectives, her choice would, on the face of it, seem right. The fact is that Steinhoff did manage to reduce costs, but at a very high price in the erosion of the high standards of the Opera.

Nordhoff's choice, Bernd Loebe, has not yet started as Intendant.

#### 14.1.2 Educational and Artistic Concept

Hoffmann was the only Culture Councillor to define clear educational objectives. He was successful in realising this objective through the Gielen nomination. In the post-Hoffmann years no artistic or educational objectives were defined, but Roth has acted to move to a more culinary and popularly pleasing concept of the opera.

#### 14.1.3 Contract Stipulations

During Hoffmann's time, the contracts were fairly simple. They did include reference to the number of opera performances the Intendant had to undertake. Both Gielen

and Bertini agreed to do 240 performances per year. The contracts made by Reisch, von Schoeler and Roth, all had stipulations ensuring fiefdoms of the Intendants. These clauses would turn out seriously to restrict the freedom of the city in its restructuring plans.

#### 14.1.4 Legal and Organisational Structures

Hoffmann wanted to break the mould of the old-fashioned dictatorial Generalintendant and he therefore separated the Opera from the theatre and promoted Dohnanyi from *Generalmusikdirektor* to Intendant. Co-determination (*Mitbestimmung*) on the other hand was not implemented. During the whole of the 1990s and into the new Millennium, a discussion has been raging about the ideal structure for the Frankfurt theatres. Some aspects of these questions were also investigated by the Everding Commission in 1996. With the stipulations in the contracts of Steinhoff and Eschberg, the city had no freedom to act. With both men leaving, Frankfurt is likely to make the first step and turn the theatres into limited companies.

#### 14.1.5 Budget

The true subsidy to opera, or rather the city's expenditure on opera, in Frankfurt, is far from transparent. Not only are the theatres a department of the city, but part of the budget allocated in the city's budget for the theatres, is immediately clawed back (never actually paid out) in lieu of central city overheads. Moreover, there is an arbitrary apportionment between the Opera, ballet and theatre, which does not necessarily reflect reality.

In Hoffmann's time, there were two occasions where substantial increases were approved as part of the agreements with the Intendants to enlarge the orchestra, the choir or to increase budget for guest artists. Even when funds were scarce, Hoffmann managed to avoid cutting the Opera budget.

The Reisch, von Schoeler and Roth period saw substantial cuts in the budget. A political decision by the coalition partners decided the amount which the theatres would lose and it was up to the Culture Councillor to manage that. Reisch's inability to manage this cut led to her removal. Steinhoff built his power by offering both Mayors von Schoeler and Roth to manage the cuts for them.



## 14.2 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the development of cultural politics in Frankfurt in the years 1970 to 2000 and their impact on the situation of the Frankfurt Opera.

The case study juxtaposes two periods in Frankfurt. These were years with an effective Culture Councillor and a highly regarded Opera that were followed by a period of failure and a provincialisation of the Frankfurt Opera. Whereas the decisions in the first period were made to advance the ideological concepts of the Culture Councillor, in the second period, most of the city's energy in connection to the Opera was devoted to reforming organisational structures. More than ten years later, these have still not been concluded.

The period's most obvious division is between the years 1970-1989 and the years 1990-2000. Hoffmann, a man with a clear vision and obvious SPD political views, was brought to Frankfurt by an SPD Mayor and managed to successfully work under five Mayors, of both opposing SPD and CDU parties. Although nine of the twenty years were in the Wallmann high-spending administration, he also worked during periods when funding had to be cut. The post-Hoffmann era is typified by internal quarrelling and no significant achievements. Admittedly, these were objectively difficult years in which budgets had to be cut. None of the active players in this period managed to deal with the problems successfully and Frankfurt Opera's reputation as one of the most interesting and exciting opera houses in Europe deteriorated to that of an insignificant company.

The good years were good not only because of the successful Culture Councillor, but also because most of the time they coincided with years of economic prosperity. In contrast, an ineffective Councillor came to Frankfurt just as the city was entering an economic downturn, which had an immediate effect on the funds available for cultural activities.

At the very time when the city required a skilled operator to handle reduced budgets, it had a Culture Councillor who failed to establish team-work with the two Mayors with whom she worked. Similarly, there was a Mayor who failed to co-operate with and give support to two different Culture Councillors. It was this communications failure and the resulting power vacuum seized by the Intendant of the Frankfurt

Opera, which reduced the Opera, according to the critics, from its heights as a renowned company all over Europe to a merely adequate local company.

A new Culture Councillor has been in office since 1998. He is trying to make changes in some of the structures and in some of the main appointments. The political culture of Frankfurt, however, has not changed and the new Culture Councillor also suffers from an un-supportive Mayor, who for a long time has wanted to move the Culture Department to someone else. This does not bode well.

## X Bavaria

Bavaria has funded opera companies (two of which are fully funded by the state), including the well-known and highly-regarded Bavarian State Opera, for many years without any problems apparent in the public domain. The purpose of this case study is to investigate Bavaria's decision-making vis-à-vis opera and especially to understand how it manages to run its activities in such a smooth manner.

Documentary sources for this case study include minutes of discussions in the Bavarian Parliament (*Landtag*) and reports of the Bavarian State Audit. Interviews were held with the Intendants of the Bavarian State Opera and the *Theater am Gärtnerplatz*, the Head of the Theatre Section at the Bavarian State Ministry for Science, Research and Art, the Chairman of the Bavarian Parliament's Select Committee for Universities, Research and Culture and with two Members of Parliament of the SPD opposition.

### 1 Background

Bavaria was a Kingdom until the end of the First World War. After the War, a Republic was established and King Ludwig III fled Bavaria. In the Bavarian Constitution of 1919, the State was styled as *Freistaat Bayern*, i.e. Free-State Bavaria. This was also referred to in the post-Second World War Constitution of 1946. This terminology is meant to accentuate the independence from, initially, the pre Second World War Republic and from the post-War Federal State. None of the other pre-unification *Länder* chose to use this term. After unification, two of the five new states (Sachsen and Thüringen) also styled themselves as free-states. This choice of name has only symbolic significance and does not bestow on Bavaria more freedom than the other *Länder* enjoy.

Sir Peter Jonas, Staatsintendant of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, maintains that culture 'is very much at the centre of the Government's agenda.'<sup>455</sup> The legal basis for cultural spending by the Bavarian State can be found in its Constitution. The third clause of the Constitution defines Bavaria as a cultural state:

Bavaria is a State of law, a cultural State and a social State. It serves in the public interest and safeguards the fundamentals of life and cultural heritage.<sup>456</sup>

The Constitution also stipulates that both state and local communities are obliged to support art, science, cultural life and sport.

The State and local authorities are to support art and science. In particular, they should make available resources to support creative artists, scholars and writers, who prove themselves through serious artistic or cultural activities. Sport and cultural life should be supported by the State and local authorities.<sup>457</sup>

## 2 Subsidised Theatres

The State of Bavaria runs three theatres (one theatre and two opera houses), all of which are in Munich. In addition, the State subsidises seven municipal *Dreispartenhäuser* (combining opera, theatre and ballet). These are managed by local authorities and get State subsidy of normally about a third of the total public funding they receive.

In 1999 the Bavarian State funded opera houses' activity as follows:

### **Bavarian State Subsidy to Opera in 1999\***

	State Subsidy		Number of Opera Performances
Bayerische Staatsoper	DM 90 m.	§a	197
Theater am Gärtnerplatz	DM 46 m.	§a	144
Bayreuth	DM 3.2 m.	§b	30
Augsburg	DM 10.8 m.	§c	69
Coburg	DM 9.9 m.	§c	49
Hof	DM 6.7 m.	§c	45
Landshut/Passau	DM 4.2 m.	§c	50
Nürnberg	DM 14.3 m.	§c	100
Regensburg	DM 7.0 m.	§c	77
Würzburg	DM 7.0 m.	§c	61

\* Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst, 19.7.2001.

§:

- a. The *Bayerische Staatsoper* and *Gärtnerplatz* are State theatres and as such fully funded by the State.
- b. Bayreuth is an opera festival, with a limited opera season, funded by the Federal Government, the State of Bavaria and City of Bayreuth.
- c. Combined opera-theatre-ballet houses. One third of their subsidy is funded by the State. The subsidy covers all three artistic areas and not only opera.

The *Wagnerfestspiele* at Bayreuth, are an annual festival of Wagner operas. The Bayreuth *Festspiele* were founded by Richard Wagner, in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, to perform his operas. The Festival always has been and still is run by the Wagner family. The annual budget of Bayreuth is (2000) twenty five million Deutschmarks (approximately £8 million), of which half comes from ticket sales, sponsorship and donations and the other half is funded in equal parts by the *Bund*, the State of Bavaria and the City of Bayreuth. The present director is Wolfgang Wagner (grandson of Richard Wagner), who has an unlimited contract and the Wagner family has full control of the foundation running the festival. It has been agreed that in future the *Bund*, the *Land*, the City and the Friends of the *Wagnerfestspiele* will run the foundation in equal parts.

Bayreuth enjoys a cult status in Germany and for the world-wide Wagner “fan-club”. As such Bayreuth is a special and unique case and it would be wrong to deduce policy vis-à-vis opera from the attitude of Government towards it.

The main State Opera of Bavaria, the *Bayerische Staatsoper*, was established in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

*Theater am Gärtnerplatz*, which was established in 1865, has historically staged lighter operas especially Singspiel;\* it has a history as a Volksooper,<sup>†</sup> with particular emphasis on operetta. The operetta audience is dying out, however, and *Gärtnerplatz* has had to broaden its repertory. Klaus Schultz, the Staatsintendant running the *Gärtnerplatz* estimated that 60% of the evenings are regular opera, 20% ballet and 20% musicals.<sup>458</sup> He also added that whereas *Gärtnerplatz* still has the reputation of the opera house for the lighter fare, objectively things have changed and it is more of

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\* A play with musical numbers, the German equivalent of opera comique.

<sup>†</sup> A company that performs popular opera and operetta.

a second opera house in Munich. The repertory is, however, also defined by the physical restrictions of the *Theater am Gärtnerplatz*. Operas which need an orchestra of more than 50 players cannot be performed. (Mozart is played in both houses but Wagner is not played at the *Gärtnerplatz*). *Gärtnerplatz* has a small company with a staff of some 500, compared to 1300 at the *Bayerische Staatsoper*. It can only accommodate a substantially smaller audience: 800 seats compared to 2300 seats at the *Bayerische Staatsoper*.

### **3 Bavarian State Ministry for Science, Research and Art**

The responsibility for the State budgets for opera lies with the *Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst*. (Bavarian State Ministry for Science, Research and Art). The department dealing with theatre and opera consists of one person.

Budgets are approved for two years, but it is possible to request additional budgets for the second year of each cycle. When the papers from the opera house arrive, the officer in charge discusses the request with the Budget Department of the Ministry. They are subsequently combined into the Ministry's total budget, which then gets transferred to the Ministry of Finance. Discussions are subsequently held at various levels: first the officer in charge discusses the requests with his counterpart in the Ministry of Finance; whatever cannot be agreed at this level, goes one level up to the Departmental Heads and if no agreement is reached ultimately to the Ministers themselves. According to the officer-in-charge of theatre and opera in the Ministry, in the latest budget, matters regarding opera and theatre budgets and funding were agreed between civil servants, without having to go before the Ministers.<sup>459</sup> The budgets then are agreed by the Cabinet and passed to the Parliament for approval. This approval becomes the Budget Bill.

The other areas which are dealt with by the Ministry are: contracts with the General Manager (*Staatsintendant*) and with the Musical Director (*Generalmusikdirektor*) and Director of the Ballet; approval of contracts with department heads at the opera companies; negotiation of and approval of building and development plans; ticket sales policy, pricing and organisation; responses to letters from the public; and approval and funding of guest performances by the State companies.

According to the Head of the Theatre Section in the Ministry, the State does not interfere in programming, contents or choice of artists. There is no forum in which these are discussed between the opera companies and the Ministry.<sup>460</sup> Some of the politicians, however, think otherwise. Parliament member Dr. Manfred Schuhmann (SPD) believes that 'Zehetmair (Bavarian Minister of Science, Research and Art) will make his views very clear to Peter Jonas'.<sup>461</sup> The Chairman of the Parliament's Select Committee, Dr. Wilhelm, confessed to not quite keeping to the rules about artistic freedom:

we do, of course, have the principle of artistic freedom [...] I far from like every production of the *Bayerische Staatsoper*, but do not consider it my role to ask a question in Parliament about it. I can, of course, informally, make my views known [...] Yes, I have often had one-to-one meetings with Peter Jonas [...] also in order to influence the artistic policy. For instance, we discussed the choice of productions, or certain staging in a friendly manner [...] but this is not the province of the Select Committee [...].<sup>462</sup>

Similar to the norm in other German *Länder*, there is no monitoring of quality or any artistic assessment of the opera companies by the State.

#### **4 The Role of Parliament**

The amounts spent by the State on culture are approved by the Bavarian Parliament (*Landtag*), when it annually passes the Budget Bill. Although amounts spent on culture are quite substantial, Parliament's main interest comes when representatives try to raise issues of importance to their own constituencies. They rarely discuss subsidies to culture as a whole or the substantial amounts spent on the State opera companies. Parliament will however discuss the theatres whenever capital investments and building work are to be funded, as these issues require its formal approval. According to the Head of the Theatre Section at the Bavarian Ministry of Science, Research and Art:

Parliament shows precious little interest in Arts-Policy and least of all in the area of theatre. The areas of the arts, in which Parliament has some interest, are: museums, media, film, even libraries, foundations and copyright law. Therefore, my area here is most definitely out of interest. Neither cabinet, nor Parliament, *Bundesrat* (Upper House of the Federal Parliament) or the Culture-Ministers' Conference has any interest in me. In fact, none at all.<sup>463</sup>

This is also confirmed by Dr. Paul Wilhelm, the Chairman of the Bavarian Parliament's Select Committee for Universities, Research and Culture:

in connection with the Opera, Parliament does not initiate much. There is little latitude with opera. We have theatre debates but these are about the financial needs of the non-state theatres.<sup>464</sup>

Notwithstanding that, Sir Peter Jonas considered it expedient to lobby the relevant members of the *Landtag*. Klaus Schultz (the Staatsintendant managing *Gärtnerplatz*) maintained that it is not necessary to lobby Parliament. It may be that the majority which the CSU party has held in Bavaria for so many years has resulted in a smoother running of matters through Parliament. There is greater haggling between parties in states which have coalition governments.

The CSU majority is considerable and the party does not appear to take Parliamentary questions too seriously. For example, the Ministry's response to a question about the ownership of opera houses, to which the Bavarian State Opera was being compared (*La Scala* in Milan, *Metropolitan Opera* in New York and *Covent Garden* in London), was that it had no information.<sup>465</sup> Surely it would not have been difficult for the Bavarian Ministry of Culture if it took seriously its opposition to get such information.

In 1997, the main opposition party in Bavaria (SPD) asked the Government an all-encompassing set of questions about funding of culture. The response given was fairly general. Parliament was told by the Ministry that it would be too time-consuming to prepare the statistics requested and therefore only figures which were available were included.<sup>466</sup>

## 5 Objectives

The Bavarian Minister for Science, Research and Art has issued 'Principal Regulations for the Bavarian State-Theatres' (*Grundordnung für die Bayerischen Staatstheater*), for the management of the two opera companies and one theatre in Munich which are State institutions.<sup>467</sup> The current regulations were issued in December 1997 and are an update of a previous set of rules, which had been in force since 1982.



The following objectives can be derived from these rules:

- There should be wide access to the performances of the State theatres; and
- Repertory should cover works from the various periods and contemporary works should be taken into account.

To achieve the above, the following have also been specified in the rules:

- provided it is financially and organisationally possible, the State theatres should also perform elsewhere in Bavaria;
- Organisations endeavouring to reach visitors from lower socio-economic groups are to receive cheaper tickets;
- The number of evenings on which the houses are closed is limited and this cannot be changed without approval from the Ministry;
- The programme is to be presented to the general public only after the Ministry has been informed of it; and
- Whenever possible programming should be co-ordinated between the theatres.

It is notable that whereas general wishes are defined in these rules, the language used is vague enough to enable substantial latitude both in matters of programming and of access. The State rules determine that:

State-Theatres' performances should be accessible to the greatest number of people possible. Guest performances should also be performed in other Bavarian locations, subject to budget restrictions and without causing unreasonable disruption to normal theatre operations.<sup>468</sup>

This means that there is little ground for complaint against the companies if they do not tour. And, indeed, the big State theatres have not toured for many years. Similarly:

The Performance-plan should include compositions from a span of different periods, taking into consideration contemporary works, as appropriate. The State Ministry of Education, Science, Art and Religious Affairs must be shown the programme before it is made public.

The State has clearly defined that programming is the total responsibility of the theatres themselves. Theoretically, however, the above could be the basis of a discussion or dispute between the Ministry and the theatres to the extent to which the programme does or does not cover contemporary work, or whether in fact all periods are covered by the programme. According to the Head of the Theatre Section at the

Ministry, there has never been a discussion about the structure of the programme, either internally in the Ministry or between the Ministry and the opera companies.<sup>469</sup> Sir Peter Jonas confirms that repertory has never been discussed with him.<sup>470</sup>

Peter Jonas was made Staatsintendant of the *Bayerische Staatsoper* in 1992. Upon assuming his new position, he defined the new objectives of the company:<sup>471</sup>

1. To create a climate in which opera is considered a fundamental component of life;
2. To stimulate surprise, adventure and challenge in and out of the theatre;
3. To bring back live composers as creative members of the ensemble in order to facilitate the regular generation of new works;
4. To achieve a wide repertory;
5. To develop new talents; and
6. To broaden access.

The objectives of the Opera when Jonas arrived were about quality of productions and the level of ticket sales. The image of the Opera was defined by the keywords "traditional", "culinary", "elitist" and "conservative". To achieve the change to his new objectives, the Opera felt it needed a new, open, curious and lively audience with the necessary aesthetic sensitivity.

Eight years later, Sir Peter considered the following to be the objectives of the State Opera:<sup>472</sup>

1. A repertory that is as broad as possible;
2. As many performances as possible;
3. Accessibility to a broad majority of the population;
4. Opera performances at the highest possible standard, as judged by the international community; and
5. Financial viability, i.e. never to make a deficit and always to break-even.

It seems that when Sir Peter first came to Munich, he saw his role in a more avant-garde mode than after eight years in the job. The first three objectives, he defined in 1992, in which Jonas spoke of changing the climate vis-à-vis opera, stimulation and contemporary work, are not mentioned eight years later. It is likely that Jonas has been affected by the Conservative administration of Bavaria, but it also is only natural to suffer a decline in revolutionary zeal, after eight years in the job.

## 5.1 Access

The state controls access through ticket pricing. The two State opera companies are not allowed to change ticket prices without the express approval of the Ministry. Such approval is not simply a matter of rubber-stamping. The *Gärtnerplatz* Opera wanted to increase prices in 1998 and was persuaded that it was not the right timing (the house was about to be closed for a year for refurbishment). The *Staatsoper* has recently been given permission to increase prices of subscriptions by 25%, after an eleven-year period in which the subscription prices were kept the same.

## 5.2 Representation and Pride

Bavarian politicians take great pride in the *Bayerische Staatsoper*. When the question is asked about the justification of the huge investment, or about the ratio between the State's investment in State-Theatres and in non-state theatres, the response invariably is about the world stage on which Bavaria wishes to compete. The Chairman of the Parliament's Select Committee explained why so much money was spent on the *Bayerische Staatsoper*:

the *Staatsoper* is our flagship, our cultural flagship, standard-bearer, great house, competing with the best operas of the world. Here we want to be good. That is why they get a lot of money [...] the political will is to succeed in the competition [...].<sup>473</sup>

In response to a Parliamentary question about the funding of State theatres, the Ministry, as its sole explanation for the funding of State theatres, replied:

the State [...] manages three State theatres in Munich, the Bavarian State Opera, the Bavarian State Theatre and the State *Theater am Gärtnerplatz*. All three institutions enjoy an outstanding reputation beyond the borders of Bavaria, across Germany. In particular, the Bavarian State Opera is one of the leading international music-theatres.<sup>474</sup>

The explanation given in response to a more general question about the objectives of Bavaria's State Government's cultural policy, was that Bavaria invests in culture as it wishes to continue to be a source of cultural trends for both German and European culture.

Even the opposition (SPD) party agreed with the concept of the ruling (CSU) party that the State-Theatres are the show-case of Bavaria.<sup>475</sup>

## 6 Analysis of Objectives

When one compares the objectives which are included in the *Grundordnung für die Bayerischen Staatstheater* (Principal Regulations for the Bavarian State-Theatres), with the statements the Bavarian politicians have been making with regard to the *Bayerische Staatsoper*, its importance and the justification for the expenditure on the State-Theatres, one finds that the politicians do not speak about access, nor about the importance of musical variety, nor the inclusion of contemporary works. The only issue the politicians are concerned about is the pride in having an internationally renowned Opera and conductors in Munich and the pride in “playing in the Champions League”. The choice of Intendants and conductors proves the same point and the removal of ‘surprise, adventure and challenge’ and ‘bringing back live composers as creative members of the ensemble’ from the list of objectives of the *Staatsoper* all suggests that the main objective of the Bavarian Government in funding its opera companies is representation and local (Bavarian) pride.

## 7 Nomination of Intendants

The Bavarian State contracted [now, Sir] Peter Jonas to become Staatsintendant of the Bavarian State Opera, when he was already well-known, having been General Director of the English National Opera in London. They later appointed Zubin Mehta as Music Director for the Opera. The city of Munich made James Levine, of the *Metropolitan Opera*, Music Director of the *Münchener Philharmoniker* and the Bavarian Radio appointed Lorin Maazel as Chief Conductor of their Symphony Orchestra.

Although the nominations were made by different organisations, the total picture which can be drawn from these nominations, although it has never been officially declares as a policy, is of an administration which hires very well-known names, and is willing to pay very high salaries to attract artists who will ensure high quality, but with only limited artistic risk.

The point at which the State has impact over the development of an opera house is when it chooses an Intendant and agrees a contract with him. Sir Peter Jonas talked about the contractual basis of the relationship with the State:

The definition of what these theatres do, I think, is in the Bavarian system very clear. We don't assume our roles, we are given them. [...] when you become Intendant, you sign a contract part of which is that you are obligated to uphold the principles of the theatre which you will run.<sup>476</sup>

According to Klaus Schultz, in offering him his contract the Ministry asked him how he saw the *Theater am Gärtnerplatz* and what profile and programming he would want to develop.<sup>477</sup> The discussions were with the *Theaterreferent* (the Officer in charge at the Ministry) and with the Minister. During negotiations about contract renewal, the State will bring up matters where it wants to see change. Schultz is however, of the opinion that the Ministry would normally prefer to renew an existing contract than to lay itself open to accusations that it took the wrong decision when making the original appointment.

## 8 Artistic Intervention by the State Comptroller

The Bavarian State Comptroller\* seems to enjoy the freedom to interfere in areas which would be considered as the artistic domain and not necessarily the province of the State Comptroller. In certain cases, it appeared to reflect political views. An example was its 1977 report of the Nürnberg theatre. At the time, Nürnberg had an SPD majority and the CSU (which had the majority in the State) was locally in the opposition.

The report stated:

The theatre and concert programmes of the City Theatre have for several years included a bigger proportion of modern works. As a result, the substantial subsidies are passed-by the general public [...] We consider an audience-oriented change of future theatre and concert programmes as essential.<sup>478</sup>

In 1995, a Report criticising the expenditure on the *Bayerische Staatsoper's* experimental stage suggested that money would be better spent in playing popular works:

In employing public funds for experimental theatre, one cannot disregard the fact that non-state theatres in Bavaria stage plays which fill the halls and

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\* The *Bayerischer Oberster Rechnungshof* is Bavaria's state audit office.

which remain part of the repertoire for years and are seen by many for less money.<sup>479</sup>

The State Comptroller's Report for the year 2000 dealt extensively with the fact that the Staatsoper's Music Director's emoluments in 1999 were six times as high as those of his predecessor in 1992. It criticised the *Bayerische Staatsoper* for hiring Zubin Mehta as *Generalmusikdirektor*, who not only earns so much more money, but conducts fewer nights and does not have the responsibilities of an Intendant, as his predecessor. The report calculates that on a fully sold out night, Mehta's pay is equivalent to 25% of the box-office takings for the night. The State Comptroller would not accept the response of the Ministry that as long as the opera company does not exceed its budget, it is up to the company to decide whether there is artistic justification in contracting a *Generalmusikdirektor* of this calibre and expense. The Comptroller demanded a cheaper solution for the musical management of the Opera, once the present contract expires.<sup>480</sup>

## 9 The Bavarian Way

Historically, budgets for the opera companies in Bavaria have always gone up. There was one occasion (in 1994) when the budget for the *Bayerische Staatsoper* was reduced by some DM 2 million. The company overspent its budget by that amount and nothing more was said. For the first time, it is now planned that the budgets of the opera companies will not be increased to cover the pay round for public employees (Budget 2001 and 2002).

The extent to which funding of opera is an underplayed issue in Bavaria can be seen from the very limited press coverage devoted to a special report on cost-cutting at the Bavarian State Opera which was prepared as a result of the Comptroller's report. All the newspapers filed only small items relating to the fact that the Bavarian Prime Minister had said that the Opera would, in future, have to be careful in its spending.

Sir Peter Jonas was asked by an interviewer, why one never heard anything negative in the press about Munich:

Things function smoothly here because of the consensus and of plenty of communication that exists between us and the legally responsible entity (Government). [...] for instance we strive for the Freestate to continue to

cover salary increases, which are the result of indexation. In contrast to Berlin, we only have difficulties, but not chaos.<sup>481</sup>

The editor of Germany's *Opernwelt* magazine, Bernd Feuchtner, when asked whether he had published anything about Bavarian arts-policy and the *Staatstheater* in Munich, responded:<sup>482</sup>

Sorry, we have nothing about Munich. They are simply too rich for such problems.

## 10 Conclusion

Bavaria finances two fully-owned state operas in Munich, and co-finances seven municipal opera houses. The main political reasoning for Bavaria's funding of the state opera houses is national pride. There is bipartisan agreement on this issue which is never contested.

To some extent, Bavaria funds culture with an attitude not dissimilar to that of a benevolent prince. Substantial amounts are spent to fund representational institutions which are predominantly in the Bavarian capital, Munich. When there are funding needs, these are dealt with quietly and no public controversy is created.

The politicians of Bavaria believe that Munich is a world-quality opera centre and they are proud of that. Their wish to continue as one of the leading opera centres of the world is an important factor in Bavaria's funding of its State Opera. The conservative *Weltanschauung*, which can even be found in the State Comptroller's reports, corresponds with this policy.

Although there is no formal artistic interference by Government, it has been established in this case study that the Minister, influential Members of Parliament and even the State Audit seek to influence the artistic management of the opera companies.

Two significant factors have played a major part in bringing about a friction-less relationship between the State and the opera companies: the healthy financial situation of Bavaria and the political reality of a Government with a stable majority. Bavaria has enjoyed political stability where the same party has maintained an

overall majority for many years. On the Parliamentary level this means that, somewhat as in Britain, Parliament does not play a significant role in any possible conflict surrounding the funding of the arts. The political stability has resulted in good communication and co-operation between the stakeholders, who know that nothing is to be gained by trying to play one party against the other. As a result problems are not turned into political conflicts.

In such conditions and with an economy which for many years has been untroubled and where when money is not scarce, politics are stable and opera is considered an object of national pride, there has been no need for any difficult decision-making.



## XI Berlin

Mr. Wowereit, when will one of the Berlin opera houses be closed?

Klaus Wowereit (Mayor of Berlin): Never! \*

Berlin was chosen as a case study because of its unique situation in Germany. Since 1990, it unites the former East Berlin, capital of the German Democratic Republic and the former West Berlin, a show-case of democratic, capitalist Federal Republic of Germany. The united city found itself with the cultural institutions of both East and West Berlin, yet with smaller budgets for their maintenance. Another unique aspect, which makes Berlin particularly interesting as a case study for this thesis, are its systematic endeavours to sort out its predicament with its three opera houses. Throughout the 11 year period analysed, the maxim laid down by politicians of all parties was that none of the city's opera houses is to be allowed to close.

This case study investigates and analyses the attempts made by the Berlin administration to 'square the circle' and examines the failures of each of these attempts.

The case study also looks at the main decisions taken in Berlin, during the same period, regarding the appointments to the pivotal Intendant positions at the city's two main opera companies.

Before scrutinising policy implementation, the case study covers the historical background and the organisational structures of the Berlin administration. It also analyses the administration's objectives vis-à-vis opera.

Documentary sources for the Berlin case study include, in addition to minutes of parliamentary debates concerning opera, three reports: the 1990 *Nagel Report* written for the administration and the 1996 *Kreisepapier* and 2000 *Stölzl Plan*

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\* Quote from an Internet chat, Klaus Wowereit, Berlin's Mayor held on 24.7.2001.

written by the administration itself. Extensive interviews were held with representatives of the administration and the opera companies. These include two former Ministers (*Kultursenator*) and two former Junior Ministers (*Staatssekretär*), the present and the former Head of the Music Theatre Section in the Department of Science, Research and Culture and two Members of Berlin's Parliament. Representatives of all three opera houses were interviewed, including two Intendants, a Music Director and a Managing Director, as well as two candidates, considered by the administration for the position of Intendant of *Deutsche Oper*.

## **1 Background**

In order to understand how the Berlin problem and its solutions have developed it is vital to consider its recent history. The situation that now confronts the politicians of Berlin is the direct result of that history. This section gives a description of this background.

The richness of Berlin's cultural institutions can be traced back to the days in which it was the capital of Prussia (until 1871) and later in the period prior to the Second World War, when it was a thriving and one of, if not, the most cosmopolitan cities in the world.

In the years 1945 to 1989, Berlin was divided. The Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) were established in 1949 with Bonn as the capital in the West and East-Berlin as the capital in the East.

The partition of Germany stipulated that those parts of Berlin under Western control would be included in the West Germany and those under Soviet rule would become part of the East Germany. West Berlin effectively became an island in East Germany. West Germany never accepted partition as lasting and its Constitution reflected this:

The entire German nation remains challenged to complete – in self-determination - the unification and freedom of Germany.<sup>483</sup>

The German Constitution was redrafted in 1994 to reflect unification and assert that Germany's Unity and Freedom were complete.

In the Cold-War years, both the West and the East German Governments funded Berlin as a propaganda outpost. This point is made succinctly in a German Government publication, produced in 1996:

From the beginning of the 1980s, Berlin received a substantial part of the Federal Ministry of the Interior's budget for cultural matters. This reflected the special nature of the challenge in establishing visible symbols of unification and freedom in Germany's capital and extending these into the areas of art and culture. At the same time, East Berlin was the focus of the subsidies for culture of the GDR Government.<sup>484</sup>

West Germany spent substantial amounts of money to keep West-Berlin vibrant and attractive to its population. There were large subsidies for a very wide range of services in Berlin including culture and young people who chose Berlin as their home were exempt from military service. Georg Quander, Intendant of the Berlin *Staatsoper Unter den Linden*, described West-Berlin in those years:

The situation in West-Berlin was, that it was supported around the world as a symbol of freedom. There was support particularly for culture, as it was believed that with culture one could prove that we were the more democratic, interested and better people compared to those opposite in a totalitarian regime. Consequently, West-Berlin had a role as a show-case for the whole of Germany, and beyond for the whole of the free Western world.[...] It was a clearly defined political objective. With unification, the need for such a show-case no longer exists and this political objective is redundant.

[...]

West-Berlin was different to other German *Länder*; it was relaxed about money. Whenever money was needed, Berlin would stretch out her hand and the Federal Government came running, glad to be allowed to transfer some more funds. [...] In Berlin, more thought was given to how to spend money than how to save it.<sup>485</sup>

State support for the arts in Berlin benefited from both the wish to prove Western supremacy and from the necessity to offer an attractive and cultured life to those West-Germans who chose to live in Berlin. Both sides of Berlin benefited from the apparently cross-border belief in culture as a means of propaganda.

## 1.1 Development of Government Subsidies to Berlin

The following table shows the significance of Federal subsidies to Berlin:\*

Year	Total Berlin Outgoings	Total Federal Aid	%
1980	16,565	9,180	55.4
1981	17,332	9,717	56.2
1985	20,296	11,294	55.6
1986	20,718	11,584	55.9
1989	23,774	12,528	52.7
1990	24,828	13,110	52.8
1991	35,643	17,112	48.0
1992	38,388	15,820	41.2
1993	41,109	13,073	31.8
1994	41,409	8,419	20.3
1995	43,193	7,392	17.1
1999	41,231	9,589	23.3

1. The amounts are in millions of Deutsche Mark.
2. Until (incl.) 1990 the figures refer to West Berlin only.
3. Special Berlin funding by the *Bund* was phased out between 1991 and 1994.
4. Since 1995, Berlin has no longer been subsidised by the Federal Government. The support it receives is paid through a complicated system by which the richer *Länder* in Germany fund the poorer *Länder*. (*Länderfinanzausgleich*).

It is understandable how hard it was and still is for the current Berlin administration to cope with the new situation. The subsidy Berlin receives has been drastically cut in both absolute terms and as a percentage of its expenditure. The former West Berlin politicians, who were used to having more than half their expenditure covered by the Bonn Government, found it hard to get accustomed to this fiscal reality. Moreover, there was always a belief that this situation would reverse as soon as the institutions of the Federal Government moved from Bonn to Berlin. One example was the

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\* *Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen*, Berlin, 31.7.2001.

successive failure of the politicians to resolve the financial and structural crisis of the Berlin opera companies.

The West Berlin opera house was the *Deutsche Oper*. It was initially established as the Charlottenburg Oper in 1910 as a burghers opera house which would be a counterweight to the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden*, the representational State Opera house. However, when the city was divided, as the only opera house in West-Berlin, it assumed a different role. The German magazine *Der Spiegel* described the role *Deutsche Oper* played in pre-unification days. It is understandable how difficult it is for *Deutsche Oper* to accept that post-unification it is one of three opera companies and that it has to fight for its subsidy:

The plain, box-like structure in the district of Charlottenburg, was not just a playground for *Aidas* and *Elektras*, but more importantly functioned as an intellectual bastion of a border-city. On this stage, each *Lohengrin* and every *Rosenkavalier* was also a demonstration of prosperous capitalism. Every night the Song of Songs of the delight of Western existence was being trumpeted. Having spent the day condemning the regime beyond the wall, political leaders would relax with Friedrich,\* *Figaro* and *Freischütz*. [...] Until the fall of the wall, the *Deutsche Oper* Berlin performed state theatre and they wanted for nothing, certainly not money.<sup>486</sup>

The fact that, to a large extent, unified Berlin is now run by the politicians of pre-unification West-Berlin, ensures that some of the old loyalties remain in place. It might be suggested that the feelings of gratitude on the part of the politicians to the *Deutsche Oper* and to Götz Friedrich, its Intendant for twenty years until his death in 2001, for their efforts in the pre-unification years, has resulted in their turning a blind-eye to the big deficits the company has accumulated.

## 2 The Companies

The present *Staatsoper Unter den Linden* was established in 1742 as the *Königliche Hofoper* and was part of the Prussian State. In the post-War years, it was the state opera of East Germany and now is one of the three opera companies of the Land Berlin.

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\* Götz Friedrich was Generalintendant of *Deutsche Oper* Berlin in the years 1981 to 2001.

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the *Krolloper*, a private company, was established in Berlin. In 1924, it became a second stage of the Staatsoper. In 1927, still as part of the *Staatsoper*, but now run as an independent entity, the conductor Otto Klemperer made it the avant-garde opera stage, with innovative and exciting productions. This opera house was bombed in the war and not rebuilt.

In 1910, the burghers of the town of Charlottenburg (subsumed in the Berlin metropolis in 1920) established the *Deutsches Opernhaus in Charlottenburg*. This company went into bankruptcy in 1924 and was reopened by the *Magistrat* of Gross-Berlin (Greater Berlin city council) in 1925 as the *Städtische Oper*. The first Music Director of the *Städtische Oper* was Bruno Walter. This Opera then became *Deutsche Oper*, which was later the opera house of West Berlin.

*Komische Oper* was created in 1948, on the initiative of the director Walter Felsenstein who convinced the Soviet Occupation Force to establish this house, in order to provide a venue for realistic music-theatre (*Musiktheater*). Felsenstein's pupils-followers include the stage and opera directors Harry Kupfer and Götz Friedrich. *Komische Oper*'s ensemble has always been mainly young. The company continues to produce stage-driven performances, all sung in German.

### 3 Local Government

The city of Berlin is a city state (*Land*). The State Government is the *Senat*. Unlike the non-city *Länder*, where the Head of State's title is *Ministerpräsident*, the Head of the state of Berlin is styled *Regierender Bürgermeister* (Governing Mayor). Eight *Senators* (ministers), elected separately by Parliament and reporting to Parliament, headed by the Governing Mayor, run the city. The Mayor has no intervention authority (*Richtlinienkompetenz*) in the spheres of competence of the different *Senators*. The legislature is the Berlin *Abgeordnetenhaus*. When no party has an overall majority, the *Senat* is formed by a coalition. The CDU and SPD coalition, in power since 1991 was overthrown in June 2001. Eberhard Diepgen of the CDU, who was Mayor since 1984 (except for a two year period 1989-1991), lost his office to Klaus Wowereit of the SPD, who has been elected Mayor, pending new elections scheduled for October 2001.

The political power structure in Berlin, particularly that no party has a majority, has resulted in a Parliament much more involved in details normally considered to be the distinct domain of the executive branch. In many respects, Berlin remains a divided city and the former West Berlin boroughs have a CDU majority while the former East Berlin boroughs hold a PDS\* majority.

Speaking of the power of the Berlin Parliament, Dr. Elmar Weingarten, the former Intendant of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra said:

They really do have power. In fact, they have the decisive power [...] They can really say that they take [allocations] from here and give them there. At the end of the day, that is the power of the legislature [...]

Some theatres are treated by Parliament more generously than others. They are better at lobbying.

[...]

[ Mr Wowereit] (at the time the speaker of the SPD party in Parliament), is not only an extremely important person but also very tough. [...] For instance, if Frau Thoben† wants to give a particular theatre a bigger allocation, he will say no [...] and there is nothing she can do about it [...] last weekend he said either Barenboim‡ would work according to our conditions, or else he should go.<sup>487</sup>

Parliament deals with cultural matters in two committees. The Committee for Cultural Affairs (*Kulturausschuss*) and the Theatre Sub-Committee (*Unterausschuss Theater*), a sub-committee of the Finance Committee. This sub-committee is invested with a significant amount of power, such that the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* referred to it as the political *TUV* [MOT car test] for *Kultursenators*.<sup>488</sup>

### 3.1 Department for Science, Research and Culture

The Government department in charge of opera is *Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur* (Senat Department for Science, Research and Culture). Within this department, there is a section dealing with music-theatre. The section has a staff of six:

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\* Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus is the socialist party established after the collapse of East Germany.

† *Kultursenator* in Berlin in the first months of 2000.

‡ Daniel Barenboim had been Generalmusikdirektor of the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden* since 1991, and was negotiating an extension of his contract with the city of Berlin.

- Head of Section
- Assistant responsible for: *Deutsche Oper* + the proposed *Berlin Ballet*
- Assistant responsible for: *Staatsoper* + *Komische Oper*
- Assistant responsible for: Musicals, Operetta
- Assistant responsible for: *Friedrichstadtpalast*, revue and small projects
- Assistant responsible for: organisational questions, statistics and responses to Parliamentary questions.

*Land* Berlin funds the three opera companies, which themselves are not independent legal entities. They do have separate annual budgets and profit and loss accounts which are audited by an external auditor.

Responsibility for the programming and for staying within the budget are those of the opera companies' management (the Intendant and the Managing Director). The *Senatsverwaltung* (Government Department) acts as a staff function of a holding company. It receives quarterly financial reports and has regular meetings to discuss them with the companies. The department discusses the budgets with the companies and prepares them for the *Abgeordnetenhaus*' (Berlin Parliament) approval. Planning is informally done for three years, but budgets are approved each year.

The artistic quality of the opera companies is not assessed by the department. Since there are no assessment procedures, it was unusual and caused an uproar when the Mayor, in a speech he gave in Parliament in March 2001, said:

It must be clear that a theatre, which no longer has adequate artistic quality,[...] or generally artists, who – as one says in artistic circles - strut and fret their hours upon the stage and then are heard no more, cannot continue to be artificially supported through public subsidies.<sup>489</sup>

The background to this speech was the continuing need to cut budgets and the growing financial troubles Berlin was facing. Mayor Diepgen, who by reputation has no interest in the arts, caused public waves with his speech, which suggested that in future the administration would be an assessing authority which would evaluate the quality of the state theatres and the justification of their continued state-funding.



## 4 Objectives

Although there have been some attempts by the Berlin administration to differentiate between the three opera companies, the question of whether the administration should set objectives for the companies is not yet resolved. This section discusses the general question of objectives. The following sections describe various attempts at creating distinctive profiles for the opera companies.

The Intendant of the *Staatsoper*, Georg Quander, considers the lack of objectives a mistake:

I deplore this too. There is absolutely no discussion concerning substance. Nobody speaks about what this, or any other [opera] house should achieve, or what cultural goal or programme-profile they should be given. It is often written or spoken about, but not discussed. The [opera] houses themselves decide what their profiles should be. There is no political discussion. The only mission that we were given was to continue to develop music-theatre [...] this is what appears as the heading of the budget item, explaining what the subsidies are for.<sup>490</sup>

This chapter, in the sections dealing with the *Kreisepapier* and the *Stölzl Plan*, will demonstrate that Quander's view is not widely shared, although he is not alone in his view. Reluctance to set objectives can even be found within the administration. Guido Herrmann, the Head of the Music-Theatre section in the *Senat* was unsure whether Government should set objectives for the opera companies. However, ultimately it was his opinion that the *Senat* should have a role in defining the different profiles and direction for the opera companies. Such decisions emanating from the bureaucracy would, according to Herrmann, not be acceptable to the other stakeholders. He himself was 'distrustful of anything, concerning content, which emanates from a ministry.' He has therefore suggested the use of external experts for this purpose. The administration would of course, through its choice of the experts used, affect the outcome of this decision making process.<sup>491</sup>

### 4.1 Access

In 1918, access was already considered to be an issue for the administration. The first instruction which was given by the Prussian Ministry for Education to the *Staatsoper* was to reduce drastically the ticket prices, which had previously been exorbitant.<sup>492</sup>

More than eighty years later, access is still a main objective but, since 1995, the opera companies have been entitled to set ticket prices autonomously, as long as they maintained discounts for the socially needy, the old, students etc.<sup>493</sup>

## **4.2 Education**

Educational work is not an objective for the opera companies, although it is one of the criteria for the allocation of funds to private theatres.<sup>494</sup>

## **4.3 Promotion of the city**

In the years that Peter Radunski was *Kultursenator* the line was very much to stress the value of culture to the economic development, tourism and economic standing of Berlin (*Standortfaktor*). The companies were told to spend more on marketing and to increase ticket prices. According to the spokesman of the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden* 'All was non-ideological.'<sup>495</sup>

## **4.4 Diversity**

Very soon after unification it became clear that a policy would need to be defined to manage and support the abundance of cultural institutions, which for years were generously fed by the two countries. Should the institutions be unified, or should some of them be closed? Would it be possible to have more co-ordination between the institutions or perhaps even define distinctive profiles for them? The writer Heinz-Joseph Herbort suggested<sup>496</sup> that this would be a significant challenge, for which Berlin would need a Superman with vision, creativity and ideas.

## **4.5 Constraints**

There are two important political constraints which have been respected across-the-board by both parties:

The first constraint is that companies are not allowed to dismiss staff for economic reasons: The speaker of the SPD in Berlin, Klaus Wowereit candidly said:

Nobody dares, everybody looks at the others: who will lose his nerve and will say those words "economically induced dismissals" – I won't say it either.<sup>497</sup>

Moreover, as the staff of the opera companies are all employees of the city, closing an opera company does not make economic sense. In a televised discussion, which took place in November 2000, after the first part of the *Stölzl Plan* was publicised, *Senator Stölzl* made the point that:

If I close an Opera today, I will have to continue paying the salaries in ten years time, because of the social legislation.<sup>498</sup>

Salary increases are agreed between the unions and the Berlin State Government and are binding on the opera companies. Therefore, with reducing subsidies, the only alternative open to the companies has been to save on the productions themselves.

The second constraint is that theatres must not be closed: Ever since the traumatic closure, by *Senator Roloff-Momin* of the *Schiller Theater* (see below), ‘no closure of theatres’ has become a sacred mantra for politicians.<sup>499</sup>

As a result of these constraints, the principle referred to in Germany as the *Rasenmäherprinzip* (lawnmower principle), by which cuts are made equally across the board, is a critical term for politicians who may not have the courage to prioritise. According to Georg Quander, if the Berlin cultural administration has an additional million marks to spend on opera, there will be 350 thousand for the two big houses and 300 thousand for the *Komische Oper*.<sup>500</sup> *Staatssekretär* Dr. Alard von Rohr, explained the logic of the system:

When there are cuts, all three are cut. Of course this is the case, otherwise one of them would feel unfairly treated. [...] In each of these (opera) houses there are people, there are Intendants, with whom you have to get along. And when you take such steps, the Intendants say “no, this is not as agreed in my contract, I will then not co-operate, I will go”.<sup>501</sup>

This principle, referred to by both members of the administration and representatives of funded bodies, avoids unpleasant upheavals at times of changing priorities or preferences. The price for such a policy is that it prevents the carrying out of (often necessary) changes.

## 5 Mayor Eberhard Diepgen

Throughout most of the period reviewed, Eberhard Diepgen of the CDU was Governing Mayor (the title of the Head of State of Berlin). Except for a two year period (1989 to 1991), he was Mayor since 1984 until he lost his office to Klaus Wowereit of the SPD, who has been elected Mayor in June 2001.

Neither Mayor Diepgen nor any of the four *Kultursenators*, who were in office between 1990 and 2000, wanted to be associated with the closure of one of the opera houses. As money became scarce, pressure was put on the three companies to reduce their outgoings. Over the last ten years, the three companies together shed 750 of 2800 jobs. According to former *Kultursenator* Peter Radunski, the underlying hope of the politicians had been that with the arrival of the Federal Government from Bonn more funds will become available.<sup>502</sup> With the arrival of the Government, it has turned out that though some more money was transferred from central government, far from enough to solve all of Berlin's culture funding problems.

Perhaps because the general view (as demonstrated hereunder) is that Mayor Diepgen is ineffective, and has no interest whatever in culture, he felt it necessary, in a speech in the Berlin Parliament in March 2001, to say:

In connection with the budget for the arts, I would like to counter the impression, one could get in Germany and especially abroad, that it is not worthwhile to come to Berlin anymore because the cultural scene has been economised to its ruin.<sup>503</sup>

In analysing the grave situation of Berlin's opera funding crisis, the newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* wrote:

Berlin lacks the political heads with adequate cultural horizons for the magnitude of a metropolis. Eberhard Diepgen would be just fine for Vaduz. [the capital of Liechtenstein].<sup>504</sup>

*Der Tagesspiegel* wrote about Diepgen:

In all that time, he has never shown any recognition of culture, which was always alien to him. In any dealings Diepgen ever had with arts-policy issues he always showed a light aversion in the shade of his voice.<sup>505</sup>

Roloff-Momin\* described Diepgen, who is known to have said 'when it comes to culture I am overcome with deep suspicion', as 'narrow-minded and of shop-keeper's mentality', adding 'it was clear to me that I would not be able to rely on Diepgen to defend Berlin's culture.'<sup>506</sup>

It is impossible to know, to what extent Berlin would have handled its opera dilemma more successfully, if it had a mayor with interest and appreciation of the arts. It is likely, though, that a mayor with vision as regards the importance of culture, would, through personal involvement and political support, have produced success at the very points where there was failure. The coming sections will investigate these failures.

## 6 Ulrich Roloff-Momin and Attempts at Profiling

Ulrich Roloff-Momin was *Kultursenator* in the years 1990 to 1996. He was elected soon after re-unification and thereby immediately confronted with the abundance of cultural institutions under his responsibility. In 1991, Roloff-Momin commissioned Friedrich Dieckman, Michael Merschmeier, Ivan Nagel and Henning Rischbieter, all of the Berlin *Akademie der Künste*, to write a report (the *Nagel Report*) about the situation of the theatres in Berlin. This section examines the *Nagel Report's* main recommendation, to create distinctive profiles for the theatres, and the subsequent failures of more than one administration to implement such profiling for the opera companies.

The report, which also covered the three opera companies, explained the need for individual profiles against the background of their history as representational theatres:

On both sides of the wall, the politicisation of the arts in the years 1949-1989 attempted to force the same representational mission on theatres of differing traditions and orientation. Arts-policy today should inspire them to develop their individuality [...] There should be one aim: to define the profile of each and every institution, [this is ] the variety of a metropolis.<sup>507</sup>

To ensure diversity, the report suggested that Government should set clear and different objectives for each of the three opera houses. To suit these objectives, the

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\* See section 6.

administration should develop, together with the managements of the opera companies, models for their programmes, structures of their repertoire, staff levels, ticket prices and subsidy. The report made its own detailed suggestions as to the different profiles the three companies should be given.

This issue of profiling came up regularly whenever structures for the Berlin opera houses were discussed. This has proven to be a thorny issue which, up to now, has not been solved.

The *Nagel Report* was very clear as to the need of substantial Federal moneys to maintain the Berlin theatres. Unless such moneys would be made available, irreplaceable institutions would have to be closed. By juxtaposing profiling against the previous roles of the theatres, the authors of the report may have attempted to assign profiling a 'healing' role in the difficult process of unifying Germany. They thereby may have hoped to attract additional funding for the theatres. As budgets were cut rather than increased, the suggestions of the *Nagel Report* and the profile-building were never realised. The Report was also met by an outcry from the cultural and political establishment of West Berlin. This establishment, referred to by Georg Quander, as the 'West-Berlin Mafia and lobby',<sup>508</sup> was a further reason for the *Nagel Report's* non-implementation. Ten years later (and ten years after unification), the problem has still not been solved. Michael Naumann, a Minister of State in the German Chancellor's office in charge of Culture, criticised the Berlin opera houses for not defining individual areas of specialisation and, as an example spoke of two productions of Wagner's *Ring* which were performed in Berlin simultaneously.<sup>509</sup>

Baroque opera is the only area of specialisation which the *Staatsoper* has developed over the last ten years. This designation had been defined in various *Senat* documents and was heralded by both the Opera and the *Senat* with great pride. It is curious that, even-though this was an initiative of the *Staatsoper*, its musicians do not play and have not learned to play Baroque instruments. This may be due to the fact that Berlin maintains over ten subsidised orchestras. However, for these Baroque productions other musicians have to be hired. At the end of 1999, the *Staatsoper* stopped producing Baroque opera because of the cost. This decision, which was agreed with *Senator* Radunski, was opposed by the Head of the Music-Theatre Section in the *Senatsverwaltung* who considered it a mistake to cut the very area in which the *Staatsoper* specialises. He referred to the *Senat's* failure to implement profiles:

we have realised that both, i.e. big opera, in particular to perform Wagner and this Baroque, both are not compatible [...] but Barenboim wants to do Wagner, full stop.<sup>510</sup>

There is no doubt that the opera companies were not interested in receiving dictates from the *Senat* as to what they should or should not play, or even what their profiles should be. The *Nagel Report* was quite categorical about the unacceptability of leading Intendants, directors and conductors of one opera house also producing, directing or conducting in one of the other Berlin opera houses, on the basis that the *raison d'être* of three houses is different.<sup>511</sup> On that basis, Harry Kupfer, who was the director and central figure at the *Komische Oper* for many years, ought not to produce opera at the *Staatsoper*. But Daniel Barenboim, the *Generalmusikdirektor* of the *Staatsoper*, wanted to perform Wagner opera together with Kupfer (with whom he had already worked in Bayreuth), disregarded this concept and hired Kupfer. Similarly, when the administration indicated that it expected the *Staatsoper* to do the more representational classics and *Deutsche Oper* to produce modern opera, Barenboim commissioned Elliott Carter's 'What Next'. In like manner, *Komische Oper*, which is known for its ensemble-work, has over the last few years started dismantling its ensemble to work with more guest singers.

Guido Herrmann of the *Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur* accepted that not insisting on profiling was a mistake:

I do believe that, in addition to other factors, it is true to say that the existing people have, or did have, contracts and that a discussion with them is not, and was not, wanted. The background sentiment was: let us not cut the arts when we are already cutting the finances. The fact that both are connected was realised possibly too late. [...] Now in discussions with Barenboim it has become an issue [...] naturally in the direction the *Staatsoper* should develop. In our opinion, and that is unequivocal, this should include the pre-classical. There is no discussion about that.<sup>512</sup>

The issue of profiling came up again in the discussion of Senator Radunski's *Kreisepapier* in 1996 and then flared up as a result of the 2000 *Stölzl Plan*, as will be described further in this chapter. The issue is as yet unresolved.

In a midnight session in June 1993, the Berlin *Senat* decided to close one of its classical theatres, the Schiller Theater. Roloff-Momin was taken by surprise when the subject was raised by the *Finanzsenator* (Senator for Finance).<sup>513</sup> The closure of the *Schiller Theater* was a traumatic experience for the Berlin cultural scene, who did not

expect that an important state-owned cultural institution would ever be closed. Roloff-Momin was hence known as the '*Schiller-Killer*'. Later it turned out, that the closure of the theatre hardly made any economic sense, as the city was unable to fire the employees, many of whom are still on the city's payroll.

Roloff-Momin, who began his period as *Kultursenator* with a wish to plan the multitude of cultural institutions of post-unification Berlin by commissioning the *Nagel Report*, was unable to implement the Report's recommendations and instead was party to a decision taken haphazardly to close the *Schiller Theater*. Even Roman Herzog, the President of Germany, referred to this issue and criticised what he considered to be a spontaneous decision, rather than the result of rational and strategic thinking.<sup>514</sup>

## 7 Peter Radunski and his Failed *Kreisepapier* Process

The next *Senator* who tried to put his house in order, at a time of ever greater financial pressures, was Peter Radunski. Unlike Roloff-Momin, who was not a party man (occasionally the parties nominate people who are not politicians as *Senators*), Radunski was a seasoned CDU politician, (who, or many years, had run the CDU election campaigns at Federal level). This section analyses the failure of the decision-making mechanism introduced by Radunski.

Peter Radunski was *Kultursenator* in the years 1996 to 1999. He came to power after several years of financial hardship for the city. A theatre had already been closed with great resultant trauma and many of the institutions had had their funding reduced and become leaner. Like his predecessor Roloff-Momin, Radunski wanted to have a policy document prepared to enable him to prioritise funding. Whereas Roloff-Momin commissioned a report from a group of culture experts and intellectuals, to map a strategy for the unified city with its rich palette of cultural institutions, Radunski had a document prepared by his own administration.

In September 1996, the *Senator* made public a discussion paper about the publicly subsidised arts in Berlin.<sup>515</sup> This document was geared to find further additional savings than those which were made since the early nineties. The document declared that its purpose was to bring about a public discussion, which would lead to a conscious, pertinent decision as to the necessary tasks and their financing. The



document dealt mainly with finance and organisational structures. Almost all the objectives listed in the document were connected to cutting costs. To achieve this goal, decisions about quantity and quality were outlined to result in increased efficiency. It then suggested that future budget allocations should be made on the basis of an analysis of needs and capabilities in the following way:

- identifying the institutions and projects which should be given priority because of cultural policy requirements, i.e. objectives; and
- identifying the institutions and projects which should be given priority because of their special achievements.

The paper set a timetable, according to which, within a six month period, the concept was to be discussed, agreed and put into action. The planning of the 1999 budget, which would start in the second quarter of 1997 was already to be based on the new cultural structure concept and management model.

The paper divided the Berlin cultural scene into sixteen 'circles', one of which was opera and ballet. The discussion document made the following points with regard to opera provision in Berlin:

The three internationally respected opera houses of Berlin give it the unique opportunity to profile itself world-wide as an opera-metropolis. To that end, the three opera houses have to measure up to the qualitative demands of international artistic competition, to bring about the cultivation and development of music-theatre beyond the borders of Berlin and to lend music-theatre significant stimuli.

[...]

*Deutsche Oper's* mission is to "cultivate and develop music-theatre". This puts it in direct competition with the *Staatsoper*. [...] It should continue to offer a wide opera repertoire, on a high international standard, accentuated with special weighting in the contemporary range. This goal, however, confronts *Deutsche Oper* with the problem of having a too big opera house for contemporary music-theatre. [...] commissioned work, which enriches the repertoire in the context of the further development of music-theatre, is of great importance, but it is coupled with economic risks. [...] One should consider whether this cannot be solved by granting *Deutsche Oper* a higher subsidy in comparison with the *Staatsoper*, whose work is economically of less risk.

[...]

On the basis of its historical significance, its physical location in the city, its undisputed cultural-political achievements in over 250 years of existence (the *Staatskapelle* [orchestra] 300 years) in addition to the future representational functions of Berlin as the seat of Government and of Parliament, the *Staatsoper* is predestined for a programmatic concentration in the repertoire of classical opera. [...] Special mention should be given to the recent direction

of the pre-classical repertoire. This differentiation from *Deutsche Oper* should continue. The partially-completed change from repertoire to stagione, should continue, especially in tourist-friendly periods (weekends, summer). A shorter season should also not be ruled out.

[...]

The main artistic profile of the *Komische Oper* should continue to be its concentration on director's theatre (*regietheater*), forged by a young ensemble and productions of young directors. [...] The consistent performance of all operas in the German language adds another distinction vis-à-vis the other opera companies.<sup>516</sup>

It is significant that the paper took great care to define each of the opera companies and their profiles, on the basis of their existing profile and the administration's views. This was a courageous step for the administration to take, as it thereby marked the definition of profiles as *Senat* territory. Nevertheless, the core objectives the *Kreisepapier* discussed were organisational.

Immediately after its publication, the *Kreisepapier* was strongly criticised by the cultural lobby *Rat für die Künste*, Council for the Arts. They attacked the document as a business management model which pushed aside the basics of artistic freedom or the endeavour for cultural advancement.<sup>517</sup>

The *Rat für die Künste* and the *Akademie der Künste* organised a series of podium-discussions, based on each of the document's circles. In the podium discussion on opera, the Intendants of the three Berlin opera houses were flanked by the Intendants of three other important companies: Gerard Mortier, Intendant of the *Salzburg Festival*, Peter Jonas, Intendant of the Bavarian State Opera and Albin Hänseroth, incoming Intendant of the Hamburg State Opera. The three methodically demolished the *Kreisepapier's* opera chapter.

The main points made by the three guests were: Strictly defining the parameters of each of the opera houses will prevent their creative development. It is especially dangerous to define the *Staatsoper* as a representational house. Classical-representational repertoire is considered an insult in an opera house. There is no logic in assigning contemporary opera, which attracts fewer people, to *Deutsche Oper*, the biggest of all three opera houses, which therefore would need more subsidy.<sup>518</sup>

The *Kreisepapier* set an objective of reducing subsidy by DM 27 million within three years. The paper defined this as medium-term planning. The speakers explained that,

in the opera business, contracts were agreed more than three years in advance and that such a timetable was unrealistic.

And yet, it was said, politicians should define what kind of Opera they want to have. The artists will then tell them how much this would cost. Starting with the money is wrong. The speakers contended that for what politicians want, they will find the funds. The view that politicians have no role in defining objectives is not shared by all those who criticised the *Kreisepapier*. Mortier said that before money could be discussed fundamentals had to be agreed:

One only sees the profitability of the arts and no longer their role in a democracy. As a result, arts organisations have turned to mass-consumption. [...] Our task as culture-creators and the task of the politicians is to deliver arts-policy, not by viewing figures, but according to our arts-policy mission.<sup>519</sup>

The *Kreisepapier* was supposed to be a basis for a public discussion leading to Parliamentary decisions. However, the process never went beyond the discussions at the *Akademie der Künste*. By the time the various podium- discussions had taken place, public criticism of the document ensured that the Parliamentary politicians would tear it to pieces. Radunski's administration was unable to proceed with the plans laid out in their *Kreisepapier*.

Radunski's successor was *Senator* Christa Thoben. According to Thoben's deputy, *Staatssekretär* Dr. Alard von Rohr, her plan for the four-year legislature period was to create models of more efficient management, marketing, and workshops, including perhaps the creation of holding companies.<sup>520</sup> The Berlin Parliament instructed *Senator* Thoben to draw up a restructuring plan for the Berlin theatres by the end of June 2000.

Ms. Thoben resigned within four months of her appointment. She maintained that she was not given the means to carry out her job. Although Thoben was an experienced political operator (before Berlin, she was a Junior Minister in the Federal Government) and was a member of the Governing-Mayor's party, she, according to the press, was neither given the full information about the state of affairs, nor received the full backing of the Mayor.<sup>521</sup>

## 8 Christoph Stölzl and the *Stölzl Plan*

Thoben's resignation was an embarrassment for Mayor Diepgen, who needed to fill the post quickly and prove to his detractors that it was possible to solve the problems confronting Berlin in the theatre realm. Diepgen's choice was Christoph Stölzl, whose background was the museum world. He gained prominence for having built and managed the German Historical Museum in Berlin. His first task in the arts and culture domain was to prepare the restructuring plan for the Berlin theatres which the Berlin Parliament had originally demanded from Ms. Thoben.

Stölzl defined two objectives for his structural reform of the Operas:<sup>522</sup>

1. To enable long-term financability of the opera companies in the framework of the present subsidies, whilst optimising expenditure and results.
2. Widening the opera repertoire on offer in Berlin by giving each house a more precise definition of its profile.

The salient points in Stölzl's plan were:

1. A joint company to be set up to run both *Deutsche Oper* and *Staatsoper*. *Komische Oper* would be run separately. Both these companies would be converted from city run departments to publicly owned organisations (*Anstalt öffentlichen Rechts*). The agreements with the unions were to be renegotiated to enable players in one orchestra to perform in the other.
- The orchestras of *Deutsche Oper* and *Staatsoper* to be reduced from 133 to 95 players each.
- The choruses of *Deutsche Oper* and *Staatsoper* to be reduced by 40 from 184 to 144.
- Technical and management staff to be reduced by 55.
- The staff reduction at *Staatsoper* and *Deutsche Oper* would save DM20 million.
- The budget for guest singers to be increased by approximately DM10 million.
- Various steps at *Deutsche Oper* would increase the takings by approximately DM6 million: increase average ticket price from DM40 to DM55; increase number of performances from 196 to 211 per season; increase attendance rate by 10%. No such steps were considered viable at *Staatsoper*.

*Komische Oper* to also reduce its orchestra of 115 to 95.

2. The total foreseen savings were calculated by the *Senator* to be approximately DM16 million, out of a subsidy budget (2001) for all three companies of DM216 million.
3. Stölzl's plan was to delineate the differences between the three opera houses as follows: the big operas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and especially Wagner, would only be performed at the *Deutsche Oper*. The *Staatsoper* would concentrate on *Baroque* and *Belcanto*,\* whereas the *Komische Oper* should cease its recent forays into the "monumental" works and take the "intimacy of the venue" as policy guiding line for the choice of the repertoire. Special emphasis should be given to 'young singer-performers' and 'provided that they are successful, new ground-breaking dramatic concepts'. Separate artistic profiles are defined for each of the three houses. The document clarified that it was not the wish of its authors to limit the houses to specific works, but rather to demand a clear profile.
4. The plan did not examine the question of whether the opera houses should be run on a stagione, repertoire or semi-stagione system, nor the number of performances each house will be expected to deliver. A body comprising of representatives of the companies and an external opera intendant will look into these questions.
5. Decisions on appointments for the leading positions in the new companies will be made after the new structures have been agreed.

Stölzl made it clear that Parliament would have to decide with regard to the implementation of the plan.

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\* Defined by Collins Encyclopaedia of Music, London, 1976, as: literally, beautiful song, beautiful singing. The term is usually applied to singing finely sustained in the Italian manner, with emphasis on beauty of tone and phrasing, on agility and the ability to take high notes without strain. Composers whose works depended on such singing included Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini.

## 8.1 Reactions to the *Stölzl Plan*

The initial reaction of the coalition (CDU and SPD) politicians to the *Stölzl Plan* was favourable, whereas PDS and the Greens were critical.<sup>523</sup>

Daniel Barenboim made clear his objection to the reduced orchestra structure planned by Stölzl. A concerted propaganda machine was activated by the *Staatsoper* to fight-off the *Stölzl Plan*. The Opera's mailing list was sent cards in an effort to collect signatures from the public and Barenboim gave interviews to the media attacking Berlin's politicians and the proposed Plan which he considered would destroy a unique orchestra. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, a former German Minister for foreign affairs, the Chairman of the Friends Organisation of the *Staatskapelle* strongly attacked Stölzl's plan. Richard von Weizsäcker, a former President of Germany, wrote an article in one of Berlin's papers, calling for the independence of the *Staatsoper* to be retained.<sup>524</sup>

The peak of the opposition to the *Stölzl Plan* was the conference of the Intendants of the opera houses in German speaking theatres (*Opernkonferenz der deutschsprachigen Bühnen*). This is a body which normally meets twice a year to co-ordinate joint areas of interest. The outgoing chairman of this body was *Deutsche Oper*'s Götz Friedrich and the incoming chairman Munich's *Staatsoper*'s Sir Peter Jonas.

Alexander Pereira, the Intendant of the *Zurich Opera*, suggested that the solution to the problems of the opera companies could be found in higher levels of sponsorship, rather than in the far-reaching proposals of the *Stölzl Plan*. It was, he said, the job of the intendant to find money, adding:

I spend half of my sixteen-hour work-day begging for DM 13 million in sponsorship moneys for my (opera) house.<sup>525</sup>

According to Sir Peter Jonas, adding performances and increasing ticket prices is the solution. He defined the *Stölzl Plan* as a 'document of mistrust against the three operas' capacity to stay alive' but, above all, Sir Peter compared the present idea that the state would prescribe the profiles of the opera companies to Nazi behaviour in controlling music:

For the first time since the Reichsmusikkammer,\* the state is trying to lead the arts by the hand, by prescribing to the [opera] houses who should play which piece.<sup>526</sup>

Stölzl's only support came from the incoming Intendant of *Deutsche Oper*, Udo Zimmermann, who hoped to become the senior Opera manager in Berlin whose contract stipulates that he needs to co-operate in any restructuring plans. To the attacks over the state-defined profiles for the opera houses, Zimmermann responded that there was no doubt that the companies' profiles had to be better defined, adding:

After the fall of the wall and with growing competition, populist pieces – in the best sense of the word – were sought to generate income. Hence three *Magic Flutes*, two *Don Giovannis*. The paper is a constructive basis for discussion. Herr Pereira, Herr Jonas, they reside in God's chosen land. From their politicians I hear: Opera is a gift from God. I would like to hear that just once here in Berlin [...].<sup>527</sup>

Zimmerman objected to Pereiras' flying in from 'the Gold Coast of Zürich' and Jonas from the 'riches of Munich' to preach to hard-pressed Berliners.<sup>528</sup>

Following the conference, at which these opinions were raised in front of an audience of 800, Stölzl asked the visiting Intendants whether they could join him for a brainstorming weekend to re-assess the report's proposals. The result of the concentrated attack on Stölzl and his plan was that, as agreed with Stölzl, the German Opera Council (*Deutsche Opernkonzferenz*) prepared a counter-plan. This counter-plan, 'Analyses and Recommendations of the German Opera Council for the Solution to the Financial Crisis of the Berlin Music-Theatres', was submitted to Stölzl in early December 2000.<sup>529</sup>

The objective of the German Opera Council was to prevent the amalgamation of two of the Berlin opera houses with continued independent management and independent orchestras. The report duly demonstrated how this could be achieved. On the opera-planning side, the report pointed out, that a move away from the repertoire system, based on a house-ensemble, had resulted in structural problems for both the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden* and the *Komische Oper* and that the same would happen to *Deutsche Oper*. To ensure co-ordination of repertoire-programme, the German Opera Council suggested that each of the opera companies should have a 'mission statement'. Such mission statements were to be developed by the Intendant

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\* The Reichsmusikkammer was the music-commissariat in Nazi Germany.

of the Opera together with the *Senat*. That was the maximum they were willing to concede in response to the *Stölzl Plan*'s delineation of the opera companies' profiles.

A month after Stölzl published his plan and before any changes were agreed, Barenboim's lobbying seemed to have succeeded. First he met with Minister Michael Naumann, the Federal Commissioner for Cultural and Media Affairs, the Federal Government. Then, after having for a long time refused to undertake funding of the *Staatsoper*, the Federal Government decided to step in, in the middle of a complicated process and made a direct grant of DM 3.5 million for the *Staatskapelle*, the orchestra of the *Staatsoper*. The grant was initially agreed for one year. This intervention strengthened Barenboim in his opposition to the *Stölzl Plan*. Naumann, (who several days later resigned his position), explained the grant as follows:

There is just one reason behind the Government's recent decision to help [...] We do not want to be counter-productive to Berlin's *Kultursenator* Christoph Stölzl's opera-reform plans. [...].<sup>530</sup>

According to Naumann, he and Chancellor Schröder wanted to enable Stölzl to develop his Plan without having to subject the *Staatskapelle* members to too much pressure. This explanation would have been more convincing if Stölzl had asked the *Bund* for such interim support, or had the *Bund* made the funds available to Berlin to be used for its opera crisis without ring-fencing the funds for Barenboim's orchestra. It does seem more reasonable to assume that the *Bund* intervened to influence the direction and the result of the opera reform plans in Berlin. This intervention immediately created a problem as the orchestra members of the two other opera companies objected to such special treatment by the *Bund* for but one orchestra. The *Bund*'s decision was publicly attacked by the Managing Director of the *Deutsche Oper*, André Schmitz, who claimed that it left the underlying problems unsolved and was divisive in its treatment of Berlin opera companies.<sup>531</sup> Naumann, who was worried about political criticism of this grant decision, hastened to add that Angela Merkel, the National Chairperson of the CDU opposition, had called him a few days earlier, after attending a *Tristan and Isolde* performance at the *Staatsoper*, to ask him to ensure that Berlin did not lose Barenboim.<sup>532</sup>

The concerted action was successful. Stölzl, without formally saying so, dropped his plan. The *Stölzl Plan* which had been made public after months of preparation, was shot down within weeks. The report of the German Opera Council was signed by



Peter Jonas, Klaus Zehelein, the Intendant of the *Stuttgart Opera* and Alexander Pereira, in their capacity as Chairman-elect and deputy-chairmen elect of the German Opera Council. All three opera companies are very successful and the business plan and recommendations of their heads would be difficult to ignore for the Berlin Parliament or its administration. It was highly unlikely that the drastic steps as suggested by Stölzl, would be taken after a report of such august 'parentage'.

Without formally conceding defeat, the administration no longer was pursuing the *Stölzl Plan*. Several months later the CDU-SPD coalition was overthrown and the whole issue will now not be dealt with before the next administration is established after the elections in October 2001.

## 9 Appointments

An important instrument with which German politics influences the direction of culture is the appointment of Intendants and, in the case of opera companies also the *Generalmusikdirektor*. This section investigates how the Berlin administration has handled such appointments and demonstrates its failure to make use of appointments to demarcate the opera companies.

If the *Senat* had accepted the reasoning of the *Nagel Report*, the administration would have defined the profiles of the companies and appointed Intendants and Music Directors accordingly. One such opportunity was in 1991 with the nomination of Daniel Barenboim as Artistic Director and Music Director of the *Staatsoper*. Neither his contract, however, nor the discussions with him dealt with issues beyond the city's wish to ensure that the *Staatsoper* was a top international opera house.<sup>533</sup>

This question can also be asked in relation to the choice of Christian Thielemann as Music Director of the *Deutsche Oper* from 1997. Thielemann's repertoire is rather similar to that of Barenboim at the *Staatsoper*. Had there been a genuine commitment to diversity, perhaps the *Senat's* choice might have been different for the *Deutsche Oper*. Gerard Mortier, the Artistic Director of the *Salzburg Festival* spoke about the problems caused by unsuited appointments:

One has to essentially differentiate between the companies. The *Staatsoper* is the classical house for early-romantic repertoire and that of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

It is really not a Wagner house. [...] the fact that Barenboim conducts Wagner well is known. But, Barenboim should have become Music Director of the *Deutsche Oper*, to conduct the repertoire, which is so near to his heart, at that opera house. Another problem is that by employing Barenboim and Thielemann, one has employed two conductors who conduct exactly the same repertoire.<sup>534</sup>

Ulrich Roloff-Momin was the *Kultursenator* who originally engaged Barenboim for the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden*. It was Roloff-Momin's wish to bring a musician of Barenboim's standing to the unified Berlin and for Barenboim to bring the *Staatsoper* to the highest international standard. For this purpose Diepgen had promised funding would be available.<sup>535</sup> This undertaking was, of course, made before the deterioration of Berlin's finances was known, even to its Mayor.

Roloff-Momin described his thinking vis-à-vis the hiring of conductors for Berlin in his book '*Zuletzt: Kultur*' in which he outlines how:

After Barenboim had taken up his job at the *Staatsoper*, I played with the idea of bringing a second big, world-renowned conductor to Berlin for the *Deutsche Oper*. A field of creative tension should develop between the *Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra* with Claudio Abbado, the *Staatsoper* with Daniel Barenboim and the [...] (*Deutsche Oper*). I conducted talks with and about Zubin Mehta. He was my preferred candidate. It was my dream to have these three conductors, who belong to the world's top eight, in Berlin. But Mehta declined.<sup>536</sup>

Roloff-Momin also discussed the choice of Thielemann for the job of Music Director at the *Deutsche Oper* and said:

From the aspect of musical ability, I considered Thielemann – having also taken the advice of excellent experts – a suitable candidate.

Roloff-Momin, failed to deal with the similarity, if not duplication, in style between the Music Directors in the two opera houses. The objectives Roloff-Momin defined have more to do with the standing of the city, than with the need to define profiles for the different opera houses.

## 9.1 Old Berlin networks

In 1998 there was a big turmoil when it turned out that the *Deutsche Oper* had run up a deficit of DM19 million. Until then, *Deutsche Oper* was managed single-handedly by its Intendant of eighteen years, Götz Friedrich. The city's inability to fire Friedrich,

when the deficit of DM 19 million at the *Deutsche Oper* became known, is explained as old West-Berlin loyalty networks. Radunski, according to the newspaper *Der Tagespiegel* could not afford to have an open debate about who was to blame for the situation, the merits of the Intendant and the years of generous support the Opera enjoyed.<sup>537</sup>

The old-guard of CDU politicians tried to support Friedrich. Klaus Landowsky, the CDU speaker in Berlin, referred to the calls for Friedrich's resignation and said:

The Intendant has and still does accomplish a lot. It is unacceptable, that bookkeepers should overthrow art and culture.<sup>538</sup>

According to *Die Welt* the crisis at the *Deutsche Oper* became a party-political issue:

It is reported from CDU circles, that one of the reasons for holding onto the damaged Generalintendant Götz Friedrich, is that the SPD is by now aiming at *Kultursenator* Radunski and they have no wish to give the comrades even an inch.<sup>539</sup>

But the problem needed solving. The press reported that, although Friedrich was to remain as Intendant, his powers would be substantially reduced.<sup>540</sup> It was agreed that all decisions which had financial significance would need to be authorised by a Managing Director (*Geschäftsführender Direktor*). Moreover, Friedrich was given two months within which he had to submit a consolidation programme for the clearing of the deficit and the *Deutsche Oper's* programme was to be made more appealing to audiences to increase the ticket sales.

The former *Kultursenator* Roloff-Momin described the old-boy-network as the way things were done in Berlin:

This way a kind of 'elbow-syndrome', going back to West-Berlin days, has stayed-on, whereby preferably members of the same party, elbow each other in a pally manner to say "let's get this done now". Instead of relevant criteria and considerations, the actions are driven by personal obligations and inclination. I was unable to change that style. [...] and then there are always those strings, which those who belong to that inner circle of local playmates, can pull whenever they so wish. Wisely, I think, I extended the contract of Götz Friedrich only to 1999, so that there should be an opportunity for new directions and new artistic creativity. As soon as I was out of office, his contract was extended to 2001, as a starter. The strings are even in the office of the Intendant, all one has to do is pull.<sup>541</sup>

The decision-making with regard to senior appointments has, as described here, suffered from this old-boy-network and from the fact that, according to Daniel Barenboim:

The whole Berlin *Senat* is the former West Berlin *Senat*. The same people who were there in 1989 taking decisions for former West Berlin are now taking decisions for the whole of Berlin – and they cannot stomach what is happening in the East. <sup>542</sup>

The next time a big shift might have been expected was 2000 to 2001. In this period the contracts of Harry Kupfer of the *Komische Oper*, Barenboim at the *Staatsoper* and Friedrich at the *Deutsche Oper* were all ending. This could have been a historic opportunity to act with vision. The following sections will look at the process which took place with regard to the two main decisions: Intendant of the *Deutsche Oper* and Artistic and Music Director at the *Staatsoper*.

## **9.2 Nomination of a New Generalintendant for *Deutsche Oper***

A critical opportunity to have a major impact over the direction of one of the opera houses was the appointment of a new Generalintendant for *Deutsche Oper*. Professor Götz Friedrich had filled this post since 1981 and his contract was to come to an end in the year 2001.

An internal paper, *Deutsche Oper Berlin: Eckpunkte/Auswahlkriterien für künftige Intendanten*, prepared by the Music-Theatre Section of the Berlin *Senat*'s Science, Research and Culture Department, set out the criteria for choosing the new Intendant of *Deutsche Oper*. The paper made the following points:<sup>543</sup>

- A true development of Music-Theatre in Berlin has to emanate from *Deutsche Oper* (rather than the two other houses). Such development needs to envelop not only new works and new forms of production but also the question of the organisation of an opera house and the development and presentation of opera in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- The tendency in the international opera scene at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is towards the development of new modes of interpretation, i.e. primacy of staging over music.

- The *Staatsoper* is musically led (Barenboim is the artistic director) and both *Deutsche Oper* and *Komische Oper* have for many years been dominated by two strong individuals (Friedrich and Kupfer). The result is that Berlin has not participated in this international trend of developing new modes of interpretation.

The paper concluded that the following points were therefore crucial:

- The new Intendant must 'be courageous and self-confident in developing a profile which goes in the aforementioned direction, or alternatively, say which profile he would envisage.'
- The new Intendant should be able to be a true leader who will be able to give direction and bring back attention to the *Deutsche Oper*. International experience is considered vital for the fulfilment of the job.
- The new Intendant should have management qualities and have a vision of the organisation of the opera house.
- The new Intendant should have marketing concepts.

In the period February to April 1999 interviews were held with five candidates for the job. *Deutsche Oper Berlin – Nachfolgeentscheidung Generalintendant - Auswahlentscheidung*, a paper prepared by the *Senat's* Science, Research and Culture Department for Berlin's Parliament in July 1999, described the process. This paper has omitted two points which were part of the internal paper prepared in February: international experience and the capability to develop in the direction of production-led opera.<sup>544</sup>

Pamela Rosenberg, Acting Intendant of the *Stuttgart Opera*, who was asked by the *Senat* to be a candidate for the position of Intendant of *Deutsche Oper* and turned the offer down,\* spoke of the process. She said:

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\* Rosenberg's refusal to become Intendant of *Deutsche Oper* is confirmed in the *Senat's* paper presented to Parliament.

the problem with this system is that you can't have incompetent *Kulturpolitiker*. I think they have totally bungled their chances for the golden opportunity to rethink the whole Berlin opera scene.<sup>545</sup>

Another of the candidates for the job was Klaus Schultz, the Staatsintendant at the *Theater am Gärtnerplatz* in Munich. He was asked to be a candidate by *Staatssekretär* Lutz von Pufendorf (second in command to the *Senator*), and met with Radunski several times. According to Schultz, Radunski gave him the impression that he was his preferred candidate. Schultz also maintains that a paper he prepared for von Pufendorf and Radunski made its way to Zimmermann.

I can only say that all important points came up in Zimmermann's press-conference, including the names. The administration there is very porous.<sup>546</sup>

Udo Zimmermann a composer, who had since 1990 been Intendant of the Leipzig Opera, was chosen. Zimmermann has no international experience and is a musician who naturally will be music rather than theatre driven and contrary to the original plan is unlikely to add weight to the staging of opera. The decision was made by the *Kultursenator*, Peter Radunski, against the advice of his staff. Lutz von Pufendorf spoke scathingly of the process, suggesting that political interference brought about the nomination of Mr. Zimmermann.<sup>547</sup> This was also suggested by the Intendant of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>548</sup> These insinuations that Chancellor Kohl or anyone else had interfered were, however, denied by Radunski.<sup>549</sup>

### 9.3 *Staatsoper Unter den Linden*

Daniel Barenboim, came to Berlin in 1992 on a ten-year contract as the Artistic Director and the *Generalmusikdirektor* of the *Staatsoper*. Barenboim has said privately and publicly that he will not stay in Berlin unless such funds as he demands will be added to the *Staatsoper's* subsidy.<sup>550</sup> The businessman Peter Dussmann, *Staatsoper's* largest private financial supporter, said that he considered Barenboim as important for Berlin as the *Brandenburg Gate*.<sup>551</sup> Not everybody in Berlin will agree with that statement. However, though they do not have additional funds, the politicians in Berlin also do not want to lose such a well-known name as Barenboim. Barenboim's protracted demands and the statements of Mayor Diepgen who has made it clear that he wants to retain Barenboim, caused the SPD politician Wowereit, to demand that the situation with Barenboim should be concluded once and for all.<sup>552</sup>

In interviews given to the press, Barenboim specified that he wanted an additional DM 3.5 million per annum for in order to upgrade his orchestra, the *Staatskapelle*, to the salary-level that the *Leipzig Gewandhausorchester* and the *Dresdner Staatskapelle* enjoy. He also wanted to have an additional DM6.5 Million for guest-singers and guest-conductors. Barenboim maintained that Mayor Diepgen had already promised him the necessary funds for the upgrade of the orchestra in 1991.<sup>553</sup>

Some of the rivalry between the *Deutsche Oper* and the *Staatsoper* is also routed through East-West rivalries and even anti-Semitism has entered the fray. The Music Director of the *Deutsche Oper*, Christian Thielemann, who resigned once Zimmermann was appointed Intendant, has made it clear that he would be interested to head a merged Berlin Opera. Thielemann denied the stories that he had made anti-Semitic remarks with regard to Barenboim. Barenboim's reaction to this denial was:

Mr. Thielemann is a very good conductor and I have a high regard for his musicianship.. but it seems that the Berlin air is so good, it even affects peoples memories.<sup>554</sup>

The depth of the rift was described by Klaus Landowsky, the leader of the CDU faction in the Berlin Parliament, who summed up the situation between the opera houses:

On the one hand, you have the young von Karajan in Thielemann, on the other you have the Jew Barenboim.<sup>555</sup>

Landowsky soon apologised saying that all he had wanted was to contrast

Mr Thielemann, on the one side, with the important Jewish cultural element represented by Mr. Barenboim on the other side.

Barenboim did not pull any punches himself. He made certain that the importance of his role was known. He even took credit for the day to day administration, an area in which as Artistic Director he should not necessarily have been involved. He attacked the Berlin political scene and played on the sensitivity of the still open East-West division, where he maintains:

In Berlin, it is not reunification: it's a take-over. It is the Western economy that is rebuilding the *Potsdamer Platz*. It is Western money that has built the centre of Berlin [...] there is no reunification in Berlin.<sup>556</sup>

## 9.4 Appointments – Failure

With the choice of Intendants and Music Directors, the administration, although it had defined profiles for the opera houses, made decisions which at best overlooked its own profile definition. Barenboim was chosen for his international standing, whilst the profile of the *Staatsoper* as a representational house was not discussed with him. Thielemann was chosen as Music Director for *Deutsche Oper*, although his musical repertoire is very similar to that of Barenboim at the *Staatsoper*. Having agreed that they were looking for a theatre-driven (rather than music-driven) Intendant with international experience to replace Friedrich at the *Deutsche Oper*, the administration then chose Zimmermann, who is a composer without any international experience. When it came to the end of Barenboim's ten year term at the *Staatsoper*, the decision-making regarding the extension of his contract turned into a political issue, with the involvement of the German Chancellor. Berlin did not want to make additional financial concessions, as demanded by Barenboim and yet, neither Mayor Diepgen, nor the Chancellor wanted a situation where Barenboim would leave Berlin. Concepts for the *Staatsoper* and the suitability and willingness of Barenboim to adhere to such concepts were not discussed.

It appears that the wish to attract and hold on to well-known names was more important to the Berlin politicians than any of the profile definitions.

## 10 Conclusion

In the period of twelve years that have passed since the former West Berlin and East Berlin were re-united, the Berlin administration's main activity vis-à-vis the city's three opera houses was through two means: investigations into and reporting on the structure and possible restructuring of the theatres; and by making several important nominations for the central jobs at the city's opera houses. The administration has failed in both.

The city's pre and post-War history has left Berlin with a richness of cultural institutions and insufficient means to maintain them. Since unification in 1990, the Berlin administration has been struggling with the possible closure of one of its three state opera companies. This has become a red flag for politicians of both main parties who regularly pronounce their adamant opposition to any closure.



Berlin's worsening financial situation has forced the three opera houses into substantial cost-cutting over the last ten years. Additionally, serious attempts have been made by the Berlin administration to rationalise its theatre and opera provision. Three different *Senators* had reports written to rationalise the theatre landscape of Berlin. None of the reports was implemented. Two reports were prepared suggesting how theatre and opera should be maintained and a third report covered opera only. Whereas the first report (1991) assumed that a solution would be forthcoming through Federal funding, the other two (1996 and 2000) investigated organisational and structural options.

The 1991 *Nagel Report* called for Federal resources for the funding of the theatres and for profiling of the companies as the only way for the continued existence of the companies. Yet, the *Bund* was drastically reducing the moneys it made available to Berlin. The 1996 and 2000 reports were written after substantial reductions had already been applied at the opera houses, but more were needed. The 1996 *Kreisepapier* dealt mainly with cost cutting and organisational issues. With political astuteness, Radunski published his paper, which had an exactly defined and fairly tight timetable for execution as a discussion document. In the discussions which took place after publication of the *Kreisepapier*, the concept died. Radunski understood that it was important not to dictate a solution from above, but to have a document which would be discussed by all concerned parties. However, Radunski, by leaving the discussion stage open and unstructured, enabled the lobbying framework *Rat für die Künste* (The Council for the Arts) to take over. As a result the process failed in its implementation.

The third report was prepared in 2000, by *Senator Stölzl* and his administration. The *Stölzl Plan* was prepared by order of the Berlin Parliament and was presented to it. The report was meant to cut expenses through restructuring of the theatres. Its recommendations included: reduced orchestras and choirs, a certain level of amalgamation between two of the three companies and a well defined differentiation between the three companies. The report left for a separate body from the opera companies to tackle various questions such as repertoire or stagione and programming. However, the report contained enough recommendations considered dangerous by the German Opera Conference, a fraternity of Intendants of opera companies in German speaking countries, to be attacked and broken to pieces. Again, the administration failed in devising a decision-making system which would

take into account the powerful stakeholders and which would ensure the co-operation of all involved parties. For the first time since re-unification, the politicians set out to find a solution specifically for the opera structure in Berlin. The plan immediately came under very strong attack and, for all intents and purposes, has been abandoned.

In total contrast to the calm and controlled political scene of Bavaria, Berlin's Government is based on a coalition, which has recently collapsed. Because of the political structure of Berlin, the decision-making process failed as the administration tried to promote its agenda without the co-operation of all relevant parties.

## XII Discussion and Conclusion

### 1 Discussion

#### 1.1 History

The underlying difference between England and Germany with regard to the provision of opera lies in its history and tradition. In Germany, opera has been part of the publicly-funded system for hundreds of years, since the days of court-operas maintained by the different princes and dukes. Consequently, there are approximately eighty opera houses in Germany, now funded by state or local authorities. In England, there has been comparatively little opera and the little there was was due to private entrepreneurship. Only after the Second World War, did the British State begin to fund the performing arts. More than fifty years later, there are still only five large-scale opera companies in the United Kingdom and several smaller touring companies. There are four times as many opera performances per capita in Germany as there are in the United Kingdom.\*

As a result of the lack of operatic tradition, the smaller number of opera houses and the higher ticket prices, the accusation that opera is an elitist art-form is more prevalent in Britain than in Germany. However, the German culture-politician, Hilmar Hoffmann, also considered it necessary to reject the notion that opera is elitist.† Nevertheless, the German concept of their country as *Kulturstaat*, which must preserve its heritage and promote and protect the development of art and culture,‡ has made it less necessary to defend expenditure on opera in Germany than in Britain.

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\* Based on statistics provided by the Arts Council of England and the *Deutscher Bühnenverein*.

† 'Opera is subsidised for only 8 per cent of the population, thus for an exclusive set', is one of the prejudices Hoffmann rebuts. See chapter II, section 1.1.

‡ See chapter VIII, section 2.

## **1.2 Political Play**

The British Parliamentary system usually gives the Government of the day almost a free hand between elections. Not having regularly to contemplate coalitions and changing coalition-partners enables the Government to proceed with its programme, without the need to compromise with other political players. The British Parliament rarely gets involved in the Arts Council's activities. Notable exceptions include the public anger surrounding the Lottery funding and subsequent closure of the Royal Opera House (ROH).

The German political system bestows more power on the parliamentarians, be it at Federal level, or at state or even city level. In Germany, State and City Parliaments play a role in questions of arts funding. This is more intense in cities or states in which the Government does not have a stable majority.

In Frankfurt, for example, in the debates about the future of the Opera, in 1993, the Frankfurt Opera Intendant's artistic line was criticised by Klaus Sturmfels, the ruling party's (SPD) own speaker on cultural matters.\* Bavaria's Parliament, in which the ruling party has a stable majority, does not initiate much with regard to the state opera companies.† In contrast, in Berlin, where no party has a majority, Parliament has much more power. It regularly discusses detailed operational matters normally considered to be the distinct domain of the executive branch. Opera Intendants are often called to appear before Parliamentary Committees for such discussions.‡

## **1.3 Ownership**

None of the opera companies in the United Kingdom are owned by the Arts Council or by any other Government agency. They are all independent trusts or limited companies whose shares are held by trustees. The subsidised opera companies in Germany are either units of a city or a state, and if they are structured as a company, the shares of the opera company are held by the city or the state.

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\* Sturmfels said that he would like the opera to have a small ensemble which would build a repertoire on a good level. This was the opposite of Sylvain Cambreling's (the newly appointed Intendant) artistic programme. See chapter IX, section 10.2.

† See chapter X, section 4.

‡ See chapter XI, section 3.

## 1.4 Objectives

Neither in Germany nor in England have the funding bodies defined specific objectives for the funding of opera. As regards more general, non opera-specific objectives, the German funding system has no formally defined objectives for its activities, whereas the British system has specified access and excellence as its objectives in the Royal Charters granted to the Arts Council. Some additional objectives have been set over the years which essentially expand the access objective. Excellence has never been a real issue for the British funding system with regard to opera. The small number of funded companies were normally considered to produce high quality opera. The demands made on the medium and small-scale touring companies with regard to artistic standards are naturally not as high.

### 1.4.1 Access

Although the German funding bodies have not defined their objectives in a policy statement, access is clearly a dominant aim. To this end, the three administrations examined in the German case studies intervene in varying degrees in the level of ticket prices. In Frankfurt, any change requires the approval of the city's Parliament. In Bavaria, changes to ticket prices have to be approved by the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts. In Berlin, the opera companies are free to change ticket prices, provided they adhere to the *Senat* (Berlin Government) guidelines with regard to concessions. The main British solution for access to opera is the touring companies. To some extent, the Arts Council's activities in the touring areas resemble those of an impresario. It co-ordinates touring, on the basis of its Spheres of Influence policy, which define the areas in which the different touring companies are allowed predominance. The Arts Council has occasionally suggested that the ROH should offer cheaper tickets but, in the past, there were periods when the Arts Council actually strongly advised the companies to increase ticket prices.

### 1.4.2 Education

Although education can be considered a means to achieve the important objective of access, it was defined as a separate clause in the first Charter of Incorporation of the Arts Council of Great Britain (1946). The Arts Council continues to demand that subsidised opera companies provide an educational programme.

Most culture administrators in the German case studies had no educational programme. Hilmar Hoffmann, as Frankfurt's Culture Councillor (1970 to 1990), was unusual in his educational concepts for the Frankfurt Opera. Hoffmann, whose educational ideas were more ideological, wanted to use culture to change society.\*

## 1.5 Assessment

A notable difference between the British and the German systems is in the concept of the funding body as assessor of the funded bodies. The British system has a full and structured monitoring procedure which covers both the financial and the artistic aspects of the funded bodies. At the Annual Review meetings between the Arts Council and the opera companies, the standards of the work produced and the artistic direction of the company and its plans for the future are discussed. In Germany, there is no artistic evaluation of the opera companies. The companies, which are either integrated departments of the state/city or fully owned by it, are controlled by the relevant departments, acting in a similar manner as a holding company would, i.e. through financial reporting.

The big four national companies in Britain<sup>†</sup> were adamant opponents of assessments and doubted the Arts Council's professional ability to carry them out.<sup>‡</sup> Whether there is value in such intricate assessment procedures may be a valid question. In its relationship with the Royal Opera House, Arts Council assessments sometimes failed to forewarn of impending deficits and at other times did not lead to any action by the Arts Council.<sup>§</sup> In its 1989 decision to withdraw funding from Kent Opera, the Arts Council did not utilise the already established appraisal system.\*\*

There is general objection in Germany to the introduction of assessments by the funding bodies. The *Deutscher Bühnenverein*, representing theatres and cities as

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\* See chapter IX, section 2.2.

† This term normally refers to the Royal Opera House, the English National Opera, The Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre.

‡ See chapter III, section 4.2 and chapter V, section 5.1.

§ See chapter V, section 5.1.

\*\* See chapter VII, sections 2 and 6.

theatre-owners, and the funding bodies themselves, do not consider the funding bodies to be suited to make such assessments and have voiced their objection to them.\*

## **1.6 Appointments**

The German opera companies are part of the state (or city) and the appointments of the leading personnel are made by the relevant department in the Ministry or the City administration. As the German funding bodies do not conduct artistic appraisals of the opera companies they fund, the power to appoint key artistic personnel is crucial. The nomination of an Intendant or *Generalmusikdirektor* provides the main opportunity for the German administration to have influence on the direction of the opera company. In Britain, appointments of General Managers have always been cleared with the Arts Council, although it did not have a formal standing in such appointments. With the introduction of Funding Agreements between the Arts Council and its clients, the Arts Council has formalised its involvement in the procedure of making senior appointments. However, the opera companies are independent legal entities and it is emphasised that the sole responsibility for selection is that of the company. Board members of the Royal Opera House are appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Neither the Government nor the Arts Council appoints Board members in the other opera companies.

## **1.7 Artistic Freedom**

An important tenet of the funding systems in both England and Germany is the preservation of artistic freedom. In Germany, this is anchored in the Constitution of the Federal Republic and in the constitutions of many of the 16 German states. In Britain, Government funding of the arts is channelled through the Arts Councils. Even though the Government appoints the members of the Arts Council, an 'arm's length principle' has been the norm ever since the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1945.

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\* See chapter VIII, section 7.

In Berlin, the principle of artistic freedom was recently (2000) powerfully put to use by the German opera lobby.\* It was instrumental in the successful prevention of the Berlin administration's opera restructuring plan.

It is notable that even at the height of objection by the Royal Opera House to assessments and evaluation by the Arts Council, when it doubted the Arts Council's competence to carry out such reviews and questioned the validity of the assessment procedures, it did not, however, suggest that the principle of artistic freedom was at stake.†

Notwithstanding the rhetoric about the principles of arm's-length and artistic freedom, administrators and politicians do, as the case studies have demonstrated, interfere or at least informally interfere in artistic matters. One example is the acknowledgement of a senior Bavarian Member of Parliament that he occasionally meets the Opera Intendant to influence artistic policy.‡ Another example is the involvement of the Berlin *Kultursenator* Peter Radunski in the decision taken in 1999, by the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden*, to discontinue the productions of Baroque operas.§

The power to nominate or to be part of the selection process of Intendants, General Managers and Music Directors of opera companies could encroach on the principle of artistic freedom. The British case studies have not found any indication of such interference. In both Bavaria and Berlin, the evidence points to a wish to attract well-known top international names as conductors and Intendants, rather than people with a specific artistic direction. This is especially evident in Berlin's failure to create separate profiles for *Deutsche Oper* and *Staatsoper Unter den Linden*.\*\* On the other

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\* The prescriptions contained in the *Stölzl Plan*, were likened by Sir Peter Jonas, President-elect of the conference of the Intendants of the opera houses in German speaking theatres, to those of the music-commissariat of Nazi Germany. See chapter XI, section 8.1.

† See chapter V, section 5.1.

‡ The Chairman of the Bavarian Parliament's Select Committee for Universities, Research and Culture, Dr. Paul Wilhelm, said: 'Yes, I have often had one-to-one meetings with Peter Jonas ... also in order to influence the artistic policy.' See chapter X section 3.

§ See chapter XI, section 6.

\*\* See chapter X, section 7 and chapter XI, section 8.



hand, Frankfurt's Culture Councillor, Hilmar Hoffmann, confirms that before engaging Michael Gielen as Intendant, he assured himself that Gielen shared his own views.\*

Notwithstanding the examples of formal and informal interference in artistic matters, and although the funding bodies discuss artistic projects, whilst negotiating funding requirements, with the opera companies, the strength of the belief in the importance of artistic freedom is unlikely to wane. The setting of objectives can be considered a step towards artistic interference and nominations of key personnel has a bearing on the artistic results. Moreover, politicians will probably wish to continue to have an impact also on artistic matters but in both Britain and Germany the indications are that the structures ensuring artistic freedom will prevail.

## **1.8 Complexity of the System**

Opera companies are complex organisations, labour intensive, run by experienced specialists, with a long (four to five year) production cycle. Due to this, not only is there little flexibility, but the professionalism and expertise needed to understand opera companies, make it very difficult for outsiders to bring about any effective changes.

Attempts by external bodies to gain insight into the workings of opera companies have not proven to be successful. This has been amply demonstrated in the case studies. In 1984, the Arts Council's *The Glory of the Garden* suggested a merger between Scottish Opera and Opera North.<sup>†</sup> In 1985, the Henson Report recommended a merger between Kent Opera and Opera 80.<sup>‡</sup> Both suggestions were turned down as inadequate by the companies. Similarly, the structural changes proposed in the *Stölzl Plan* for Berlin were also criticised for their impracticality. The ascendance of Dr. Martin Steinhoff as Intendant in Frankfurt was very much based on the politicians' feeling of impotence (and ignorance) with regard to the operational complexity of the Frankfurt Opera.<sup>§</sup> The problem "outsiders" have in penetrating the complexity of opera companies was described by one observer, commenting on the relationship between the opera establishment and the technocrats, "They managed to

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\* Specifically that in opera music should not be more important than lyrics. See chapter IX, section 5.

<sup>†</sup> See chapter IV, section 5.

<sup>‡</sup> See chapter VII, section 4.

<sup>§</sup> See chapter IX, section 12.

pull the wool over Clive. The problem with a man like poor old Clive is that he doesn't speak the language."

## 1.9 Conflicts and Power

Opera companies typically involve powerful stakeholders and strongly affect public opinion. Typically, a funding body will be dealing with only a few (sometimes only one) substantial opera companies. These companies, have been shown to be powerful and sometimes at least as or even more powerful (such as the ROH or the Berlin opera fraternity) than their funding bodies. In the case of most opera companies, one cannot talk of powerful funders and weak 'cap-in-hand' recipients.

The case studies have demonstrated the risk of conflicts mutating from functional to dysfunctional. In such cases, a conflict, which is focused on judgmental differences about how best to achieve common objectives, becomes emotional and focuses on personal incompatibilities or disputes.<sup>557</sup> That has been the case in Frankfurt during the tenure of Linda Reisch as Culture Councillor. Occasionally, that was also the case in the relationship of the Arts Council with the Royal Opera House.

Throughout its relationship with the Royal Opera House, the Arts Council was conscious of the power of the ROH and was worried 'that Covent Garden was going to snap and say to Government we are fed up, we don't need the Arts Council.'<sup>558†</sup>

Almost all the case studies have shown the prevalence of the use of power by the participants and the importance of mobilisation of power. They have also shown how often this power play has led to a stalemate. The failures in Berlin of the *Stölzl Plan* and the *Kreisepapier* have shown that even an administration which enjoys the advantages of formal power, is often unable to mobilise sufficient power to achieve its aims.

A vital instrument of power is control of information, which can enable 'lower participants [to] make higher ranking participants dependent upon them. Thus dependence together with the manipulation of the dependency relationship is the key to the power of lower participants.'<sup>559</sup> Central to the power-building of

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\* This referred to Clive Priestley and the 1983 *Priestley Report*.

† See chapter V, section 2.

Dr. Steinhoff in Frankfurt was his control of information, which by right should have been available to the Culture Councillor and to his co-Intendant.\* In Britain, the manner in which information was made available to the Arts Council Music Panel in connection with the decision to withdraw funding from Kent Opera is another example of the way information is controlled to secure a decision.†

This research has demonstrated the importance attached to the principle of artistic freedom in both Germany and Britain. In discussing the difficulties of, 'the development of performance indicators linking government investment to measurable output', Professor Nicholas Garnham calls 'not to retreat into a mystical defence of the unmeasurable and unassessable nature of art.'<sup>560</sup>

Garnham does not seem to give enough weighting to the 'reluctance on the part of arts councils and the artistic community to define objectives in rational and unambiguous terms.'<sup>561</sup> How strong these feelings are was made very clear by the German Opera Conference, when the Berlin administration tried to introduce changes in its 2000 *Stölzl Plan*.‡

The risk is that once measuring takes place, artistic freedom is likely to be eroded. The directors of opera companies may then find themselves confronted by administrators and politicians quoting 'objective' measurement of their companies' quality, or the extent to which their work serves other governmental goals, whilst negotiating their grants. There is no sign that they will be willing to allow this to happen and thereby substantially lose power in favour of the funding bodies, giving up their position as sole arbiters (excluding the media) of their own work.

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\* See chapter IX, section 12.

† The topic of Kent Opera was not on the agenda of the Music Panel which recommended the withdrawal of funding from Kent Opera and its members were not given any documents to enable them to reach a considered opinion. See chapter VII, section 5.

‡ See chapter XI, section 8.

## 2 Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that the British funding system has not formulated objectives or policy targets with regard to opera. Although many studies have been undertaken, work-groups set up and reports written, they were never expected to, nor did they, come up with a list of goals to be achieved in the funding of opera.

The German and British arts-funding systems are very different in their attitude to the definition of goals and in their concept of assessment and evaluation. The British system, in theory at least, believes in the setting of objectives for expenditure. Its failure to do so, has not resulted in the scrapping of that belief. In Germany, objectives have almost as a rule never been defined. Elaborate assessment procedures have been developed by the Arts Council of England to assess its clients. In Germany, there is no assessment of subsidised companies by their funding authority. As a result, performance indicators, a topic which has been discussed and defined in Britain since at least the early 1990s, has not been an issue in Germany. However, the discussions about performance indicators in Britain have still not resulted in any clearly defined and operable measurement systems for the performing arts.

Would the situations outlined in the case studies have been different had the funding bodies operated with well-defined and measurable objectives and applicable performance indicators?

The problematic relationship with the Royal Opera House was the result of the real power of the ROH and to a large extent of the Arts Council's perception of its weakness vis-à-vis the ROH. This, consequently, distorted dealings between the two organisations. Even after the Arts Council introduced its assessment criteria and evaluation mechanisms, it was incapable of persuading the ROH to accept its status as assessor. The case study has shown that the Arts Council stood in awe of the Royal Opera. The solution to the problems the Arts Council has with the ROH lies in the anomalous power dynamics of their relationship.

The Arts Council's 1978 decision to establish Opera North in Leeds is a success story. The case study reveals, however, that there was no serious comparative analysis of alternatives. Such analysis should have compared Leeds with other locations. As a result, the Arts Council's decision may not necessarily have been the optimal one. An analysis of all the options would not have encumbered the rest of the funded

companies with any additional reporting requirements, as it would have been a one-off study.

In the withdrawal of funding from Kent Opera, the Arts Council disregarded its existing objectives and did not make use of its already existing appraisal system. The Arts Council failed to implement alternatives, such as reducing the funding of the ROH and ENO. This was not only the key recommendation of one of the Arts Council's own committees, it would also have been in keeping with Arts Council policy to redress the existing imbalance in the provision of opera in and outside of London. The company with the weakest power-base but not the artistically weakest was cut. Moreover, very little money was saved at the cost of a company, considered by all its peers to be an outstanding opera company.

The failure of the Frankfurt administration was the result of the power-vacuum created by the inability of the politicians to communicate and work jointly to deal with Frankfurt's financial constraints and its need to reduce the funding for the Frankfurt Opera. Objectives such as number of performances per year and stagione versus repertoire, were discussed in the media by politicians and opera administrators. They were never discussed in a 'civilised' policy forming or policy implementing forum. The outcome was an Opera reduced, according to the critics, from its heights as a renowned company all over Europe to a merely adequate local company.

The Bavarian case study has established that political stability has created a system which delivers smooth handling of any problems. Good communication and co-operation between the stakeholders, who know that nothing is to be gained by trying to play one party against the other prevent problems from being turned into political conflicts.

The Berlin administration has failed in its attempts to implement its proposed plans for the restructuring of the city's opera houses. The administration failed in devising a decision-making system which would take into account the powerful stakeholders and which would ensure the co-operation of all involved parties. Even when the politicians set out to find a solution specifically for the opera structure in Berlin, they underestimated the power of the German opera lobby in Germany. The plan immediately came under very strong attack and has been abandoned. Because of the

political structure of Berlin, which has a coalition-based Government, ensuring the co-operation of all relevant parties is crucial.

Professor Jan-Erik Lane makes the point that setting goals and objectives in the public sector is difficult and has made the observation that 'public decision-making often appears characterised by ambiguity, uncertainty and political symbolism.'<sup>562</sup> He also maintains that 'leadership in public management is difficult, not because there are many goals but because they are highly qualitative.'<sup>563</sup>

Indeed, this thesis has established that the lack of performance indicators is not the issue and that problems described would not have been solved by clearer objectives. Problems between opera companies and their public funding bodies are, in the main, the result of the mishandling of power conflicts. In such situations stalemates are reached (such as in Frankfurt or Berlin) or bad decisions are made (such as Kent Opera). Additional objectives or more precise measurements, whether they are possible or not, would, in the context of this thesis, not have made a difference. The case studies have demonstrated the importance of power and its use in the solution of problems confronting allocation decisions. They have also shown that the complexity of opera companies makes unilateral or imposed decisions prone to failure.

### **3 Proposed Model**

Based on the findings of the case studies a decision making model is proposed for public funding bodies for the management of their relationships with opera companies. The model, which is developed in chapter XIV, is preceded by chapter XIII which reviews theories pertaining to decision making in the public sector.

## **XIII Decision Making In the Public Sector**

The preceding chapters have explored the British and German systems for the public funding of opera and have demonstrated that:

- a. few objectives are explicitly defined;
- b. problems described would not have been solved by clearer objectives or performance indicators; and
- c. funding bodies have failed in handling their relationships with opera companies, especially in budget cutting situations.

Chapter XIV will propose a decision making model aimed at improving the decision-making of the funding bodies. As a 'tool box' for the next chapter, this chapter will review the main theories pertaining to decision making in the public sector and the existing decision-making and budget allocation techniques.

### **1 Decision Making Theories**

There are three main models of decision making: rational-comprehensive, incremental and mixed scanning.

#### **1.1 Rational-Comprehensive Decision Making**

The rational-comprehensive model and the traditional system of incrementalism are the two main competing budgetary processes.

Rational-comprehensive decision making is defined by *The Public Administration Dictionary* as,

a system analysis approach based on principles of scientific investigation and scientific problem solving. Rational-comprehensive analysis defines the problem, develops alternative solutions, places values on the consequences of various alternatives, assesses the probability that they will occur, and makes a

decision based on logical rules. It seeks to sort out and achieve the goals decision makers believe are most valued [...] This approach emphasises economic rationality.<sup>564</sup>

Critics of this decision making model suggest that many areas of public policy are not truly quantifiable and that 'high-level decision making is far more a matter of political insight and wisdom than it is an act of comprehensive rationality.'<sup>565</sup>

The two main forms of comprehensive budgeting are Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS) and Zero-Base-Budgeting (ZBB).

#### 1.1.1 Planning, Programming and Budgeting System(PPBS)

PPBS is an elaborate system which assumes that the search for and selection of goals, programs, and projects can be quantified. It is primarily concerned with efficiency and economy in government, not with whether government effectively responds to public needs.

PPBS tried to revolutionise the whole budget-allocation system by moving from a repetitive process to an analytical process. It was introduced into the US Federal Government and, according to Professor Allen Schick, failed because:

It ran roughshod over some important American political values, [...] [such as giving] expression and representation to diverse political interests which might be neglected if budget choice were centralised in the hands of analysts.<sup>566</sup>

#### 1.1.2 Zero-Base Budgeting (ZBB)

ZBB is a system that treats each activity as if it is being performed for the first time. It requires managers to justify their budget request in detail and compares different funding levels for the same program by looking at the expenditures from base zero. Zero-base budgeting provides a means for eliminating or reducing low-priority programs.

The system is considered by its detractors to be time consuming and it generates a great amount of paperwork.<sup>567</sup> Another critique of ZBB attacks the fallacy in its 'a-historical concept.'<sup>568</sup> If everything has to be scrutinised at every period, the system will be inundated with unmanageable calculations. This method has never truly



established itself. An added weakness of ZBB is that the required analysis is in most cases not feasible because of inter-connections between activities and between purposes.

Similar to PPBS, ZBB was also not supported by the politicians, who according to Dr. James Douglas,

Usually preferred the traditional form of budgeting data to the information produced by the reforms. Important budgeting actors often did not support previous reforms because those reforms did not serve their political interests [...] Performance budgeting also overlooked many of the important political realities that exist in government budgeting. It assumed that it is politically easy to come to agreement on program goals and that all budget actors seek to find the most efficient method of achieving those goals. [...] This, however, is not how public budgeting generally works. Legislators, for example, may be more interested in ensuring that money for a specific project be spent in their district than they are about how efficiently the money is spent.<sup>569</sup>

### 1.1.3 Critique

Charles Lindblom, the 'creator' of the incremental school, and David Braybrooke gave the following explanation of what the 'rational-deductive ideal' is:

Many people, social scientists among them, are inclined to think that the most rational and satisfactory procedure for evaluating policies would be something like that described in the following instructions, assuming that they could be carried out: Let ultimate values be expressed in general principles satisfactory to everybody who is willing to attend to the arguments identifying them – or, if there is no hope of that, satisfactory at least to those who are now undertaking a specific job of evaluation. Let these principles, which may embody notions of happiness, welfare, justice, or intuitive notions of goodness, be stated so exactly that they may be arranged intelligibly in an order of priority that indicates precisely which principles govern the application of others and when. Then derive within the limits of such a system intermediate principles that are suitable for application in particular cases, and that – allowing for rare cases of equality in net benefits – will indicate unambiguously which of alternative policies is to be chosen, according to the values they would promote. The intermediate principles of such a system would specify the sort of information that would be decisive for rating any policy above or below its alternatives.<sup>570</sup>

Despite the attractions of the rational system in its various forms, reality has proven it unfeasible. This point is made by Professor Amitai Etzioni:

Social decision-making centres, it is often pointed out, frequently do not have a specific, agreed upon set of values that could provide the criteria for

evaluating alternatives. Values, rather, are fluid and are affected by, as well as affect, the decisions made. Moreover, in actual practice, the rationalistic assumption that values and facts, means and ends, can be clearly distinguished seems inapplicable.<sup>571</sup>

According to Professor Jan-Erik Lane, the rational decision model is:

Unrealistic when it demands that the organisations be able to specify a connected and transitive value function for all conceivable means and ends, let alone assign these values on a ratio or interval scale. [...] Although governments may have clear intentions, knowing what they wish to accomplish with recognised means, it is often the case that the relationship between programme and outcome is problematic. [...] The problem in public policy-making is that it may be very difficult to handle uncertainty, whatever its source, by means of a uniform assignment of probabilities. Often technologies fail to recognise all the interdependencies between ends and means, or the beliefs in causal relationships between the means and the ends may be unrealistic.<sup>572</sup>

## 1.2 Incrementalism

In incremental decision making decisions are a function of previous decisions made. Incremental budgeting focuses examination on the margin of change from year to year. Incremental decision-making is described by *The Public Administration Dictionary* as:

a major approach to problem solving that suggests a conservative and practical view to administrators in order for them to meet new challenges slowly and progressively. Incrementalism recognises that in their decision making administrators typically start with an existing body of policies, the most recent funding levels of programs, the store of knowledge each participant has of other participants' views, and the resources they can mobilise to influence the outcome of the process.[...] Incrementalist policies are almost always more politically expedient than alternative approaches. [...] Since the values affecting incrementalist decisions are not distinct, the means of attaining such values, or ends, are also indistinct.<sup>573</sup>

The incremental model was developed by Professor Charles Lindblom, in reaction to what he considered as unqualified acceptance of the rational model by the public administration scholars. Lindblom's view was that the more an alternative diverges from past policy, the more difficult it will be to forecast its outcome and the harder it will be to marshal political support for it. Policy, therefore, has to be conservative with changes limited to the margins.<sup>574</sup>

Professor Amitai Etzioni explains the inevitability of incremental decision making in democracies:

Democracies must accept a relatively high degree of incrementalism [...] because of their greater need to gain support for new decisions from many and conflicting sub-societies, a need which reduces their capacity to follow a long-run plan. It is easier to reach consensus under non-crisis situations, on increments similar to existing policies, than to gain support for a new policy.<sup>575</sup>

So why not adopt incrementalism? Professor Yehezkel Dror, who describes incrementalism as 'an ideological reinforcement of the pro-inertia and anti-innovation forces', maintains that incremental policy making is only adequate when the following three interrelated conditions are concurrently met:

1. The results of the present policy must be in the main satisfactory (to the policy makers and the social strata upon which they depend), so that marginal changes are sufficient for achieving an acceptable rate of improvements in policy results;
2. there must be a high degree of continuity in the nature of the problems; and
3. there must be a high degree of continuity in the available means for dealing with problems.<sup>576</sup>

The reasons which brought about the development of the various rational-comprehensive methods (lack of objectives, lack of viable alternatives, expenditure without analysis, ever-increasing creeping budgets) have not disappeared. An important weakness of incrementalism is that it by definition focuses on the short-term and that by seeking only limited variations from past policies it acts against innovation in society.

### **1.3 Mixed Scanning Approach to Decision Making**

Professor Amitai Etzioni considered the weaknesses of the two main approaches to decision-making: the rationalistic approach and the incremental strategy, concluding that neither sufficed. According to Etzioni, developing a capacity to build consensus was vital for more effective handling of society's problems. He developed a third approach, the Mixed Scanning model, which, according to *The Public Administration Dictionary*:

attempts to integrate the incremental and the rational-comprehensive models. Mixed scanning therefore recognises the limited human capacity to secure

purely rational decisions, while continuing to value the systems analysis techniques applied in the rational-comprehensive process. Since detailed comprehensive coverage may be impossible, mixed scanners intentionally truncate the scope of their review. They invest selected resources of the agency in detailed analyses of only "important decisions", defined as those with the broadest impact. They focus only on alternative solutions their scan has identified as plausible and promising. The systematic overview provides a context for application of the incremental model in reaching less important decisions. [...] [The] primary significance of mixed scanning is that it distinguishes between fundamental and non-fundamental decisions.<sup>577</sup>

## 2 Application in the Case Studies

The case studies analysed in this thesis demonstrate a predominantly incremental decision making pattern. The two partial attempts at rational-comprehensive decision making are Kent Opera and Berlin. The Kent Opera case study has shown that the decision to withdraw funding was made after various Arts Council committees\* defined the problem, developed alternative solutions and placed values on the consequences.<sup>†</sup> It did, however, also show that the decision made by the Council was not the inevitable outcome of the reports of these committees. The Berlin case study describes the attempts made by the Berlin administration, especially in the *Stölzl Plan*,<sup>‡</sup> to analyse its problem. However, the *Stölzl Plan* does not take the risk of even looking at alternative solutions, let alone placing values on their consequences.

The Arts Council, in its 1984 strategy document *The Glory of the Garden*,<sup>§</sup> made use of a somewhat watered-down version of the Zero-Base Budgeting concept.<sup>578</sup> All clients of the Arts Council were asked how they would respond, structurally and artistically, to a substantial increase in subsidy and similarly to a substantial decrease in subsidy. The Arts Council undertook a thorough review of all its clients and, based on that, decided to reduce or totally withdraw funding from certain clients. And yet, the two decisions pertaining to opera: to stop funding Opera 80 and to bring about a merger of Scottish Opera and Opera North, were never implemented.

Professor Dror's conditions for the adequacy of incremental decision making are met in only two of the six case studies. In the Royal Opera House case study, there were

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\* See Chapter VII, section 4.

† See definition of rational-comprehensive decision making in section 1.1.

‡ See Chapter XI, section 8.

§ See Chapter IV, section 5.

high degrees of continuity in both the nature of the problems and the available means for dealing with the problems. In the main, the result was considered satisfactory, or in any case, acceptable to the policy makers. In Bavaria, the adequacy is even higher, as there is less conflict and therefore a higher level of satisfaction for the policy makers. For Kent Opera, Berlin and Frankfurt, the condition of continuity of available means is not met and in the case of Opera North, the policy makers considered the present policy unsatisfactory and were looking for a solution to the unsatisfactory opera provision in the north.

### **3 Public Deliberation and Collaboration**

In the range embracing decisions laid-down by democratically elected authorities at one extreme and plebiscite decisions by the electorate at the other extreme, there are many interim stages. Public deliberation itself can be held at varying levels of participation. Some of the situations are more of an elaborate process of consultation, others full inter-organisational collaboration.<sup>579</sup>

#### **3.1 Inter-Organisational Collaboration**

Inter-organisational collaboration is defined by *The International Encyclopaedia of Public Policy and Administration*, as

A process in which organisations with a stake in a problem seek a mutually determined solution by which they seek to accomplish objectives they could not achieve working alone.<sup>580</sup>

Previously unconnected stakeholders are organised to address common problems and thus create 'collaborative advantage', which Professor Chris Huxham suggests:

will be achieved when something unusually creative is produced – perhaps an objective is met – that no organisation could have produced on its own and when each organisation, through the collaboration, is able to achieve its own objectives better than it could alone. In some cases, it should also be possible to achieve some higher level [...] objectives for society as a whole rather than just for the participating organisations.<sup>581</sup>

Arnold De Jong describes the evolution of the political concept of involving all important stakeholders in the judgement of new policies in the Netherlands from a

reactive process to an interactive process.<sup>582</sup> In the reactive process, government would develop a first design of a policy which would then be discussed by the representatives of the various stakeholders. This reactive process very often resulted in:

- a polarised atmosphere, with the government defending its policy and the other parties attacking it, which is not conducive to the generation of consensus; and
- the participants do not consider that the developed policy is 'their' policy.

Achieving consensus and establishing mental ownership of the new policy by the participants are the most important ideas behind interactive working. Crucial to the success of the process is the composition of the group. Stakeholder analysis to ensure the right choice, consists of:

- creating an 'inventory' of the stakeholders;
- analysis of the stakeholders in terms of their stake in the policy under development and their possible role in its development; and
- management of the stakeholders.

The structure of the interactive process is based upon the principles of the 'Strategic Choice' approach, the elements of which are:

- (a) Interactive working – the interactive group process is guided by a facilitator who must be seen to be disinterested in the content of the policy.
- (b) Cyclic learning – policy preparation by the group is a learning process and it is essential that all important participants are involved in the learning.
- (c) Synergy – there should be synergy between the 'hard' elements such as knowledge and certainty and the 'soft' elements such as intuition, feelings and uncertainty.
- (d) Commitment – mental ownership of the policy ensures commitment to its implementation.
- (e) Shared knowledge – an aspect of the interactive process is the sharing of knowledge between the participants in the group. The process of sharing, rather than an inventory of facts, provides understanding and thus value to the group.
- (f) Mutual understanding – is a vehicle for co-operation, leading participants from their starting positions to a consensus.

It is important to note, that the role of the facilitator is more difficult where the collaborative process is more about substance than about process (exploring the nature of the objectives) and may challenge the ability of an external consultant. In such instances an awareness and familiarity with the different parties and their stakeholders and mandates is vital. One of the stakeholders, rather than an outside consultant, might be best suited to be facilitator.<sup>583</sup>

### **3.2 Public Deliberation**

Professor Giandomenico Majone considers the liberal theory according to which democratic government is a system of government by discussion and suggests that:

The history of democratic government might well be described as the history of the various procedures devised to institutionalise and regulate public deliberation, with the goal of ensuring the hearing of every opinion without compromising the need to reach a conclusion.<sup>584</sup>

Majone distinguishes between four stages of public deliberation:

- a. Focusing – as the most basic prerequisite to public deliberation, members of the community have to agree to focus the debate on some issues of general interest.
- b. Norm Setting - suggests that more important than setting goals and finding the means to achieve the defined goals, the role of public deliberation is setting the norms that determine when certain conditions are to be regarded as policy problems.
- c. Assessing Feasibility – the purpose of this stage is to fashion mutual understandings about the boundaries of the possible in public policy. It is important, yet not easy, to distinguish between constraints that are actually binding and those that can be relaxed by changing attitudes and values.
- d. Policy Evaluation

### 3.3 Participatory Policy Analysis (PPA)

Professor Peter deLeon in examining the contemporary condition of policy sciences argues for a more democratic or participatory procedure. deLeon maintains that:

The policy sciences have been well accepted within the halls of power but their record of discernible successes has not been especially striking. The reasons for these shortfalls can be attributed to an over reliance on instrumental rationality [...], and an increasingly technocratic, undemocratic orientation.<sup>585</sup>

Towards a solution, deLeon proposes what has been labelled as “participatory policy analysis”(PPA), a more ‘egalitarian perspective and operation, involving a larger number of policy actors than is currently the case.’ The PPA model is about a very wide and genuine citizen participation,

rather than (or in addition to) the participation of only vested interest groups as interpreted by a removed, technocratic analyst corps., PPA engages citizens in significant ways during the crucial policy definition and formulation periods, those times before the policy die is cast. It encompasses citizens’ feelings, not just expert or technical testimony, for it explicitly assumes that every person’s opinion carries social weight. PPA directly involves citizens in their government, its processes, and its choices, thus reducing the alienation factor that permeates the contemporary political scene; in essence PPA “invests” the citizens in what they come to see as their polity.<sup>586</sup>

deLeon agrees that PPA should not be employed indiscriminately and talks of ‘policy issues and time frames that are not conducive to implementing participatory policy analysis.’

Professor Nancy Roberts identifies four design elements which she considered important parts of the process of deliberation:<sup>587</sup>

- Strategic Issue Identification – the deliberation process begins with the identification of what the strategic issues are. These are matters which are central to the mandates and missions of the convening organisations. It is important to understand that if the issues remain unresolved, there is a potential for deepening the discord and distrust among the various stakeholders.
- Stakeholder Collaboration – various conditions of collaboration are observed to enable addressing common concerns as well as differences. These include ‘shared goal-directed activity among participants to fashion a set of raw materials (objects, ideas, or social relations) into a developed product.’ The parties should



freely participate, establish norms and rules to determine direction and action. Work involves creative goal-directed effort; the process is to be based on interaction among the participants and all aspects are open to re-examination and re-evaluation. The voluntary collaboration is dissolved once the goal has been accomplished.

- Generative Learning – as the leadership or bureaucracy are no longer the sole holders of knowledge or expertise and with problems becoming more complicated, the challenge is to get the people with the information and the knowledge to work together towards a common goal. In the process of generative learning participants have to be willing to detach themselves from their own assumptions and have them accessible to questions and observations. The collective energies can unleash an innovative spirit beyond the issue at hand. Working together in this manner can prevent rancour and divisiveness that often typify stakeholders in adversarial relationships.
- Executive Action – executive action should follow the deliberation process.

### **3.4 Difficulties**

The process of deliberation is an expensive process which also has a potential for failure. Such failure would mean that the cost of the exercise is a loss, the participants are very likely more antagonistic to each other than they were before the deliberation (and probably not open to similar deliberation processes in the future) and of course the convenors stand to be publicly embarrassed by the failure of the process they have instigated.

The capacity to think in system terms, to appreciate different world views or to deal with ambiguity, complexity and paradox, which not all people may have, is raised by Roberts as a difficulty in the implementation of the deliberation mechanisms.<sup>588</sup> Roberts suggests that 'deliberation is a sophisticated form of social interaction. Success may depend on the developmental mix of participants in the process.'

## 4 Application in the Case Studies

The only case study in which some kind of public deliberation has been observed is Berlin. In 1996 the Berlin administration published its *Kreisepapier*,\* a discussion paper which was meant to lead to restructuring of the cultural institutions in Berlin. The public deliberations took place within the framework of the Berlin lobbying framework *Rat für die Künste* (The Council for the Arts). The administration left the discussion stage open and unstructured and thereby enabled the lobby to take over. As a result the process failed in its implementation. Four years later, the *Stölzl Plan*† left details of a proposed solution to be worked out by a forum representing the opera companies and the Berlin administration. As the whole concept of the *Stölzl Plan* was rejected by the German Opera Council (*Deutsche Opernkonferenz*), this partial attempt at inter-organisational collaboration failed.

It is important to note, that in both cases, there was no real attempt to reach a decision by means of public deliberation or inter-organisational collaboration. In both cases, plans were prepared by the administration and then made public. Although the administration consulted with some of the other stakeholders, the 'ownership' of the policy was very clearly that of the administration. De Jong, in describing the Dutch experience in the development of inter-organisational collaboration, stresses the importance of the interactive process as distinguished from reactive processes. Berlin offered only a reactive process, and even these only to a limited extent. However, the Berlin administration, unlike those of Frankfurt or the Arts Council of Great Britain in dealing with Kent Opera, who also had to deal with difficulties stemming from financial constraints, had made attempts to include additional parties in the decision-making process.

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\* See Chapter XI, section 7.

† See Chapter XI, section 8.

## **XIV    Decision-Making Model**

### **1    Background**

In suggesting a model for the decision-making needs of the funding bodies of opera companies, the following points were considered:

1. The review of decision-making mechanisms has established that:
  - a. Incrementalism is the 'safe' state of decision-making in democratic systems. However, at times of bigger changes this method is inadequate;
  - b. Rational-comprehensive strategies, which require unambiguous objectives, are normally not feasible; and
  - c. Public deliberation techniques are costly and risky if the process does not lead to a solution.
2. Analysis of the British and German arts funding systems has revealed:
  - a. that neither Germany nor Britain have well-defined objectives for the public funding of opera;
  - b. the lack of such objectives or of performance indicators is not the source of the problems which confront funding bodies in making allocations to opera companies;
  - c. the failures of the funding bodies have been most notable in situations where budgets had to be curtailed;
  - d. the complexity of opera organisations makes imposed solutions difficult to implement; and
  - e. power conflicts and the absence of productive communication between stakeholders are often at the heart of the problem.

## 2 The Model

Professor Jan-Erik Lane maintains that models of public policy making need not be mutually exclusive. According to Lane:

Some models satisfy certain types of situations whereas other models perform in other types of situations. Instead of rejecting or accepting one public policy model we may point out the type of situations where a model performs well and the situations where it is inadequate.<sup>589</sup>

Ideally one would be able to approach any problem from a clean slate (*tabula rasa*) starting point. Clean slate situations, if at all existent, are rare. The purpose of this research was not to find a recipe for “new state” situations, but to consider possible solutions for the dilemmas of the decision-makers and the gridlock in which the various stakeholders find themselves in at times of crisis.

Although the main trauma has been shown to lie in situations of Total Scarcity,\* the full range of decision-making situations have been considered in this model. These can be classified as follows:

- a. the funding body wishes to maintain the same level of opera funding (in real terms);
- b. the funding body wishes to increase funding beyond the necessary to maintain the present level of opera provision;
- c. the funding body is considering establishing a new opera company; or
- d. the funding body wishes to reduce funding (in real terms).

The case studies analysed cover all four categories: Opera North is an example of a new opera being established (category c); Frankfurt and from time to time the British funding system have had instances of increase in real-terms of funding (category b); all the companies looked at had periods where funding was maintained at the same level (category a); Kent Opera, Frankfurt and Berlin are situations of reduction in funding (category d).

It is unnecessary, if not useless, to develop solutions, which because of various constraints will not be used. The proposed model accepts the main feature of Mixed-

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\* Total scarcity is the situation in which there are not enough resources to fund the base of public programmes. See chapter II, section 2.1.

Scanning\* in that it differentiates between fundamental and non-fundamental decisions and Etzioni's requirement for more effective handling of society's problems by developing a capacity to build consensus.<sup>†</sup> It therefore suggests that the run-of-the-mill decisions with regard to allocations to opera should be made in the incremental fashion, the way they always have been. In periods of crisis a process of stakeholder collaboration should be instigated to search for a solution agreed by all parties.

## **2.1 Category a (no change) – Incrementalism**

In a state of Chronic Scarcity,<sup>‡</sup> in which the funding body wishes to maintain the same level of opera funding in real terms, it is unlikely that anything but 'muddling through'<sup>§</sup> will take place. In this situation the funding bodies start from the basis of the most recent funding decision. Normally, only minor changes to that level are considered.

Ideally, Incremental Decision-Making should be applied in a situation where the results of the present policy are in the main satisfactory, there is continuity in the nature of the problems and there is continuity in the available means for dealing with problems.\*\* However, even in non-ideal situations, the powerful political wish not to rock the boat will persevere. When there is no additional money to be spent, changing the apportionment between recipients is politically hard to achieve. This is especially true when one is dealing with opera companies, which are typically big institutions, most of whose budgets are spent on payroll. Any decision to make substantial reductions in a company's allocation will result in redundancies in that company.

Incremental policy is cheap to administer, as there is no process to speak of involved. Incremental changes are, if necessary, easily rectified, and therefore politically convenient.

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\* See chapter XIII, section 1.3.

† See chapter XIII, section 1.2.

‡ A state in which existing activities plus small incremental increases are possible. Budget controllers have to keep demand for funding down and try to make the money go further through the use of management improvements. Conflict is contained. See chapter II, section 2.1.

§ See chapter II, section 2.

\*\* According to Professor Yehezkel Dror. See chapter XIII, section 1.2.

## 2.2 Category b (increased funding available) – Bidding

Occasionally, funding bodies are able to increase funding beyond the necessary to maintain the present level of opera provision. The simple solution would be to stick to the incrementalist allocation system. This is indeed what more often than not is the case. (The Germans use the term ‘watering-can principle’ [*Giesskannenprinzip*] to describe such policy).

What such strategy misses out on is the opportunity to try something new, without risking the existing framework. It is suggested that a mechanism, not very different from that which is used by the Arts Council of England for some of the lottery funding, be developed for such occasions. Whether the funding authority has one opera company or more does not matter in this case. Even if it funds only one company, the company would have to suggest a project or use for the funds which the funding authority will be attracted by.

The New Public Management\* theory favours disciplines such as bidding in the domain of public administration. Normally a formal bidding process would entail exact definition of objectives, so that the bidders would know what they would be bidding for. The suggestion in this context is that the funding body would inform the opera company/companies that a specified one-off additional amount will be available and ask the opera companies to apply for funding for a project they are interested in. The funding body will, if convinced, make the allocation.

Opera companies are regularly in a situation where they cannot make ends meet. Undertaking new and risky projects, is therefore often replaced by doing ‘safer’ work. The programme is meant to address this problem. The concept suggested here is that the principles for this non-revenue funding programme be very much those described in the Arts Council of England’s ‘Arts Capital Programme’:

The [...] programme will encourage imaginative responses [...] and will seek out and respond to the new, the bold and the unexpected with flexibility and openness. A spirit of adventure and risk will be at the heart of the programme.<sup>590</sup>

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\* NPM is an implementation model, developed in Britain since the 1980s, which has since also found favour in various other countries. NPM’s main tenet is that contractualism is the solution to the inefficiency of the bureaucracy; the alternative to the massive public law and the conventional budgetary process.

The present model is looking at opera funding only, although the funding mechanisms are normally not art-form specific. Most local authorities have only one opera company they are funding. Berlin has three, the state of Bavaria fully funds two opera houses and partly funds seven houses, Frankfurt funds only one opera company and the Arts Council of England funds fewer than ten opera companies. It is therefore possible that the funding body may sometimes choose to group opera with ballet or with theatre for the purpose of such one-off bidding.

Assessing proposals is more difficult in a system of few, if any, pre-established objectives, if there is no set of criteria to assess them against. However, the idea is to define as few criteria as possible for the bidding. This is to avoid limiting the proposals to the present thinking of the funding body and encourage the bidders to come up with innovative projects. Whether the funding body has defined strategic objectives, or not, it is to be expected that the applicants will be aware of the areas which are of special interest to it. It would be up to the bidders to decide whether they want to adhere to these objectives or go beyond them.

### 2.2.1 The Bidding Process

The funding body would inform its opera (or other) clients that it has a one-off allocation and is considering subsidising one or more projects. The funding would not be connected to the regular revenue funding of the recipient and would not be a basis for future funding. A deadline for applications would be set and applicants would have to make their application in a pre-set format.

Some components of the Arts Council of England's National Touring Programme<sup>591</sup> and Arts Capital Programme,<sup>592</sup> could be used for this purpose:

1. Description of proposed project. This should explain what the project should achieve and include the 'who, what, why, where, when and how' of the project. This should also define how the applicant will measure their success.
2. Which geographical area is the project to serve? Are audiences to be local, or from a wider region. Are particular communities aimed at?
3. Has any work already been done and at what stage is the work?

4. What is the total estimated cost of the project and how much money is being asked for.
5. Strategy for raising the rest of the funding

Applicants would have to demonstrate their ability to handle such a project in addition to the regular work, already being funded by the funding body.

This programme is meant to be as equitable as possible, whilst also giving the funding body maximum flexibility. By announcing its intention to make project funding available all the relevant companies have the opportunity to bid. The flexibility is gained by ensuring that this mechanism does not become a proper tournament, in which the lowest bidder must be granted the money.

The applications will be assessed by a jury.

### **2.3 Category c (new opera house contemplated) – Rational- Comprehensive Approach**

This situation, in which the funding body is considering establishing a new opera company is, nowadays rare. Germany is already so well-endowed with opera houses that it is unlikely that there would be a need for additional ones to be set up. In the United Kingdom, the last time the Arts Council was involved in the setting up of a house-based opera company was in 1978. The case study on Opera North examines this decision.

Whereas the Arts Council's decision to establish Opera North was definitely compatible with its own objectives, the decision-making process, which produced a good result, may not necessarily have produced the optimal result.

The rational-comprehensive approach has a certain remoteness from the 'real world', in that it assumes well-defined problems, a full array of alternatives and complete information. When a new opera house is being contemplated, objectives would have to be defined. Such objectives would be defined for the one project and this would make it easier to create exact and measurable objectives, as they would not need the normal ambiguity of longer-term objectives. As the creation of a new opera company is a one-off event, the data collection would fall on whoever is running the project and not encumber the existing opera companies with reporting requirements. Also, as the



company does not yet exist, any comparisons would be of different venues (geographical access issues), model of opera planned and other issues such as outreach, education etc. There will be no quality of existing companies to be compared. Nor will there be any existing staff, as an issue.

## **2.4 Category d (reduction in funding) – Stakeholder Collaborative Deliberation**

Substantial reductions in subsidy to opera companies have been shown to be difficult and traumatic. Three of the case studies (Kent Opera, Frankfurt and Berlin) manifest how deficient and unsuccessful the funding bodies were in handling such a situation.

The change in the economic climate in Germany, especially as a result of the high costs of unification (with the former German Democratic Republic) has meant, amongst other things, that less money was available for the funding of the opera companies.

In Frankfurt, an accountant turned artistic Intendant was given free rein and the opera lost in both quality and quantity. The result was turmoil at the Frankfurt Opera in the early 1990s, which ten years later is not yet fully resolved. In Berlin an administration, which has for more than ten years been struggling to keep afloat the three opera companies of the city, has still not managed to find a solution. Various failed attempts have been made to come to a solution. One of the attempts included the idea of public deliberation. It did, however, not plan the process of deliberation and it failed.

In Britain, the process leading to the withdrawal of funds from Kent Opera was flawed and had no base in the objectives of the Arts Council. It resulted in the closure of one of the more innovative opera companies operating in the Britain at that time.

Professor John Forester made the observation that it is in such situations that, 'decision makers confront opposition, resistance, intransigence, and suspicion from other actors'.<sup>593</sup> It is, therefore, worthwhile investing in the stakeholder collaborative deliberation process, which is unlikely to have results that are worse than the stalemate and conflict to which such situations lead. This mechanism is neither simple nor cheap to administer and necessitates professional handling to ensure that

it has the best chance of success. It should therefore only be used when the stakes are high.

As described in the previous chapter, there are many variations on the theme of public deliberation. Different situations call for different remedies. The case studies brought by Professor Nancy Roberts are in the education area.<sup>594</sup> If as a result of budgetary constraints it would be necessary to close schools, this would have an impact on almost every household in the affected area. Conducting deliberations which are open to the entire population is cumbersome and time-consuming and necessitates many professional moderators in order to come to a successful conclusion. But there is a powerful democratic justification for such a procedure. The population affected by cuts in opera subsidies is much smaller and not so clearly definable. The ramifications of any operational and artistic changes such as orchestra sizes, amalgamation of orchestras, choirs or ballets, limitation of repertoire, running stagione, semi-stagione or repertoire companies etc., are complicated. It is therefore suggested that the suitable model for our purpose would be inter-organisational collaboration, rather than public deliberation which is open to everyone.

#### 2.4.1 Stakeholders

A crucial factor in the success of inter-organisational collaboration is stakeholder analysis. It is important that all stakeholders participate in the decision-making and that they all consider the decision to be “their” decision.

The Kent Opera study has shown how divisive the decision-making process was. The Arts Council even failed in its wish to engage the opera companies in a co-ordinated lobby against the cuts in funding. In the resultant atmosphere, other opera companies were waiting for the funds withdrawn from Kent Opera to be divided amongst them.\*

Another example of the importance of inclusion of all stakeholders is the failure of the Berlin administration to implement the *Stölzl Plan*. This plan, although prepared by the administration with considerable consultation, was quelled by the lobby of opera Intendants.

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\* See chapter VII, section 6.

Stakeholders who can affect public organisations may hold, according to Robert Smith, former Director of Studies at the Civil Service College in Britain,

- direct power over resources, usually associated with the formal power to issue directions stemming from a hierarchical relationship;
- power of political influence, basically an indirect power over resources arising from the ability to influence those who have direct power;
- power over production, people on whom the organisation depends to produce the service but whom it cannot control without ultimately an element of consent; or
- power over the environment in which the organisation operates, whether through direct regulation, general legislation or influence on the market place.<sup>595</sup>

Identification of the stakeholders and understanding how they influence the organisation and what their criteria are in evaluating the organisation are of critical importance in this process. In Germany, for example, the contractual relationship between the parties is an important aspect leading to restrictive inflexibility:

1. The opera companies are in most cases part of the city or state bureaucracy, thereby making virtually all of their staff un-dismissable civil servants.
2. Intendants are engaged on long-term contracts, often giving them veto power over possible changes in policy or in structure.

Therefore their participation in the stakeholder deliberations is important to their success.

Similarly, if a situation arose in connection to the Royal Opera House, a recipient of significant donations from private sources, it would be important for the success of stakeholder collaboration to include the donors in the process.

## 2.4.2 Implementation of Inter-Organisational Collaboration in Case Studies

### 2.4.2.1 Kent

This case study has demonstrated how flawed the decision-making with regard to the withdrawal of funds from Kent Opera had been. It has also shown that it was a protracted process, which is still remembered by people in the arts world as traumatic. Since the annual grant Kent Opera was receiving amounted to only 3% of the Art Council's spending on opera (£743K out of £25 million), a solution could

probably have been found which would not have brought about the closure of Kent Opera.

A suggested list of the stakeholders in the case of Kent Opera would be:

Arts Council of England;

All the opera clients of the Arts Council;

The local authorities, in which the different opera companies were performing;

Friends organisations; and

Sponsors of the opera companies.

The collaboration process would need a facilitator, who could either be a representative of the Arts Council or an outside consultant who has experience in facilitating collaborative processes. The advantage of the Arts Council also acting as facilitator is their intimate knowledge of the subject matter and familiarity with the different stakeholders.\*

#### 2.4.2.2 Frankfurt

The Frankfurt case study showed how manipulative power politics and lack of communication resulted in a deterioration of the Frankfurt opera.

The main subjects under discussion, in the years when funding had to be curtailed, were organisational structures (legal structure of the city's theatres), artistic concepts for the opera and mode of operation (repertoire or stagione).

Stakeholders in the Frankfurt Opera and its crisis were:

Mayor (Oberbürgermeister) of Frankfurt;

City's Councillor for Culture (*Kulturdezernent*);

Intendant and *Generalmusikdirektor* of the opera;

Intendants of the theatre and ballet;

Unions;

Representatives of political parties; and

Friends of the Frankfurt Opera.

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\* For the Arts Council to act as the facilitator, who ideally must be seen to be disinterested in the content of the policy, it will need to gain the other stakeholders' trust. See above: chapter XIII, section 2.1.

With the benefit of hindsight it seems that the situation would have needed an external professional facilitator, rather than one of the stakeholders who would also undertake that role. There was too little communication and too much back-stabbing for an insider to succeed in running a collaborative process.

#### 2.4.2.3 Berlin

The issues which came up in Berlin, as a result of the need to reduce spending, were partly organisational, partly conceptual concerning the need to create differentiated profiles for the city's three opera houses. At one point there was actually an attempt to have a public debate about a position paper (1996 *Kreisepapier*) prepared by the administration. Since the debating process was not run professionally by people who are experienced in running public deliberation, it failed. Several years later, a plan for the restructuring of the Berlin opera companies (2000 *Stölzl Plan*) came under immense attack from the opera fraternity. By the time the administration tried to include them in the planning of the project, the opera companies and their lobby knew that they had broken the administration's force.

Stakeholders in Berlin would be:

Mayor of Berlin (*Regierender Bürgermeister*);

Senator for Science, Research and Culture (*Senator für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur*);

Intendants, Music Directors and Managing Directors of the three opera companies;

Unions;

*Rat für die Künste* (lobbying organisation of all cultural establishments in Berlin);  
and

Representatives of the political parties in the *Abgeordnetenhaus* (Parliament)

Although the Mayor of Berlin in the crisis years has never shown much interest in culture, the issues are of too much importance for him not to be involved in the process. Moreover some of the political constraints (such as no closure or no dismissals) stem from the Mayor himself.

Berlin would probably have liked the Federal Commissioner for Cultural and Media Affairs to also participate and undertake certain responsibility for opera in Berlin, at some point the idea that the *Bund* would turn the *Staatsoper* into a federally funded opera was raised by representatives of Berlin and turned down by the *Bund*. On the

other hand, the issue of culture being the domain of the *Länder* is important to the *Länder*. It may be that Berlin would therefore prefer not to have a federal representative considered a stakeholder.

It is likely that the whole question of profiling, which drew so much fire from the German Opera Council (*Deutsche Opernkonferenz*) would have been 'their' policy, were it developed in the framework of inter-organisational collaboration. Similarly, many of the restrictive agreements the unions are holding on to, might have been relaxed had there been a collaborative effort in which the unions were participating.

### **3 Conclusion**

The suggested model offers techniques, the complexity of which is higher, the more complex the issue at hand. When there is no scope for change (budget unchanged and the system's reluctance to accept change), it is unnecessary to invest in analysis. When there is a possibility to spend a one-off amount, the bidding system, enables the different companies to suggest new ideas, and the assessment and decision-making is simple and straightforward. Looking at a possible new opera company is a classical opportunity to use rational-comprehensive methods, as such a project is unencumbered by real-life burdens of an existing organisation. The most complex method will be used only when the repercussions of the decision can be traumatic. The possible closure of a house, or amalgamation of companies, have such an impact on the different stakeholders, that creating a mechanism where all concerned parties participate in the development of the solution is vital. The gravity of the problem justifies the use of such a complex method.

## XV Epilogue

The background to this thesis is the difficulty public opera funding bodies have, in Britain and Germany, in making allocation decisions. The difficulty presents itself in its most revealing form where painful decisions such as the cutting of budgets are considered.

The thesis has investigated the objectives of opera funding bodies and how these objectives are implemented. It has analysed the constitutional foundations and the structures of the decision-making bodies in both Britain and Germany and then mapped, through comparative case studies, the decision-making process and the relationship between the funding bodies and the opera companies.

The mapping of the public opera funding 'landscape' in Britain and in Germany has illustrated some of the differences between the British and the German opera funding systems. These include: the ownership of the opera houses, the extent to which objectives have been defined, evaluation of the companies, the formal searches for solutions in Britain (committees and reports) and the general popularity of opera itself. Some of the features are due to a more general difference between the two countries, such as the wider role government plays in Germany, and some reflect opera-specific attitudes. However, in both countries

- closing an opera house is politically almost impossible; and
- whereas, interference in artistic matters is formally unacceptable, through nominations and by agreeing budgets, the funding bodies do have an impact on artistic matters.

Theodor Adorno describes the heteronomous nature of what the administration requires of culture,

it has to measure the cultural, whatever it may be, using abstractly introduced external measures, norms which are not inherent in it and have no affinity to the quality of the subject. It must, however, in most cases, by its regulations

and by its disposition, refuse to become involved in questions regarding the immanent quality, the truth of the matter itself, or its objective reason.<sup>596</sup>

The Arts Council's use of Advisory Panels may be an attempt to circumvent the problem that the administration has in assessing cultural organisations and their output, as described by Adorno. The case studies have highlighted the failure of the Arts Council Advisory Panels, in which members of one institution are often instrumental in decision making concerning allocations to another institution. These panels have also been criticised for being merely rubber-stamps for decisions already made by the administration. Further research and in-depth analysis of the dynamics of the panels of peers, their use by the Arts Council and their effectiveness could prove to be useful. Such research may be able to propose under what circumstances the use of panels and professional juries can be of value.

The hypothesis, which originally led to this investigation, was that the lack of clear objectives is the main reason for the difficulties funding bodies have with their opera companies and that if only such objectives would be defined, a model could be established to aid the decision-making process. This thesis has argued that this is not the case. It is not the lack of objectives, nor the absence of performance indicators to produce better monitoring which bring about the stalemates. The administration may wish to measure the cultural, however, the solution to the problems public opera funding bodies have, lies in the power structures and the management of their relationships with the opera companies.

Evaluating the implementation of policy vis-à-vis opera companies against various models of decision-making in the public sector, has demonstrated that the funding bodies behave according to the 'incremental' system, that is to say, any changes in funding are made in small steps, without change to the underlying structures, in an attempt not to 'rock the boat'.

On the basis of the findings of the case studies, a model is proposed to find solutions which will be politically acceptable and where the cost of the process is not higher than the advantages it may bring.

The advantages of this model lie in its practicality. It accepts that politicians are most comfortable with incremental decisions. It also accepts that rational-comprehensive methods are expensive to administer and often politically not viable. It offers a



graded solution to fit with the different situations the funding bodies face when determining their allocations to opera companies.

The model is constructed to accept the constraints which have been observed in the British and German opera public funding systems: a small number of big companies employing many artistic and non-artistic staff; a political reluctance to close existing opera companies; specialised knowledge needed to understand opera companies and their functioning; a declared wish to enable the opera companies to operate with full artistic freedom.

It would, therefore, be of interest to test the suggested model against the situation in an environment where a decision needs to be made, building a practical application scheme.

# Appendix A: List of Interviews

## Britain

Malcolm **Allen** – Arts Capital Programme, Arts Council of England.  
London, 3.8.2001.

Kenneth **Baird** – former Music Director of the Arts Council of Great Britain.  
London, 22.4.1999.

Graham **Devlin** – former Acting Secretary General of the Arts Council of England.  
London, 3.6.1999, 14.10.1999.

Patrick **Dickie** – Director, Almeida Opera.  
London, 13.7.2000.

Tony **Field** – former Finance Director, Arts Council of Great Britain.  
London, 31.8.1999.

Michael **Flood** – former Finance Director, Kent Opera.  
London, 20.8.1999.

**The Earl of Gowrie** – former Chairman, Arts Council of England.  
London, 8.6.1999.

**The Earl of Harewood** – Deputy Chairman, Opera North; former General Director, English National Opera.  
London, 22.9.1999.

Meli **Hatzihrysidis** – Arts Division, DCMS.  
London, 13.6.2000

Carol **Hobley** – QUEST, DCMS.  
London, 8.8.2000.

Lew **Hodges** – Finance Director, Royal National Theatre; former Finance Director, Arts Council of England.  
London, 8.9.1999.

Robin **Jessel** – former Finance Director, Kent Opera.  
London, 20.8.1999.

Michael **Kaiser** – Chief Executive, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.\*  
London, 5.4.2000.

Henry **Little** – Head of Music Theatre and Opera, Arts Council of England.  
London, 27.10.1999, 6.4.2001.

Ruth **Mackenzie** – Special Advisor, DCMS.  
London, 1.2.2000.

Lawrence **Mackintosh** – Head of Secretariat, Arts Council of England.\*  
London, 15.4.1999.

Graham **Marchant** – former Head of Arts Co-ordination, Arts Council of Great Britain.  
London, 2.11.1999.

Nicholas **Payne** – General Director, English National Opera; former General Administrator, Opera North.  
London, 2.11.1999.

Jack **Phipps** – former Head of Touring, Arts Council of Great Britain.  
Alderton, 6.9.1999.

Norman **Platt** – former Artistic Director, Kent Opera.

Egerton, 26.7.1999, 16.8.1999.

Richard **Pulford** – former Deputy Secretary General, Arts Council of Great Britain.

London, 17.8.1999.

Luke **Rittner** – former Secretary General, Arts Council of Great Britain.

London, 3.11.1999.

Toby **Scott** – Planning and Business Assessment, Arts Council of England.\*

London, 19.2.1999.

Graham **Vick** – Opera director.

London, 19.11.1999.

\* Position at the time interview was held.

## Germany

Dr. Stephan **Adam** – Executive Assistant of the Intendant, Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin.

Berlin, 13.1.2000.

Dr. Axel **Baisch** – Geschäftsführender Direktor (Managing Director), Nürnberg City Theatres.

Nürnberg, 23.1.2001.

Maestro Daniel **Barenboim** – Generalmusikdirektor and Artistic Director, Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin.

Berlin, 1.4.2000.

Dr. Dieter **Betz** – Head of the Theatre and Literature Section, Ministry of Science and Arts, Land Hessen.

Wiesbaden, 27.9.1999.

Rolf **Bolwin** – Director, German Stage Federation (Deutscher Bühnenverein).

Köln, 28.9.1999.

Ingo **Brünglinghaus** – Centre for Cultural Research, Bonn.

Bonn, 27.9.1999.

Professor Micha **Brumlik** – Spokesman for Cultural Affairs, Bündnis 90 /Die Grünen Party, Frankfurt.\*

Frankfurt, 1.11.2000.

Maestro Paolo **Carignani** – Generalmusikdirektor, Frankfurt Opera.

Frankfurt, 5.11.2000.

Bernd **Feuchtnier** – Editor, Opernwelt, Berlin.

Berlin, 14.1.2000.

Manfred **Fischer** – Head of Cultural Exchange, Department of Science, Research and Culture, Berlin.

Berlin, 13.1.2000.

Professor Monica **Grütters** – Chairperson, Culture Select Committee (Kulturausschuss), Berlin Parliament (Abgeordnetenhaus).

Berlin, 3.4.2000.

Guido **Herrmann** – Head of Music-Theatre Section, Department of Science, Research and Culture, Berlin.\*

Berlin, 9.3.2000, 27.3.2000.

Regine **Herrmann** – Rat für die Künste (Council for the Arts), Berlin.

Berlin, 25.1.2001.

Dr. Uta **Hildebrandt** – Head of Music-Theatre Section, Department of Science, Research and Culture, Berlin.

Berlin, 26.1.2001.

Professor Hilmar **Hoffmann** – President Goethe Institut; former Kulturdezernent (Culture Councillor), Frankfurt.

Frankfurt, 2.11.2000.

Sir Peter **Jonas** – Staatsintendant, Bavarian State Opera; former General Director, English National Opera.

München, 6.6.2000.

Albert **Kost** – Intendant, Komische Oper, Berlin.

Berlin, 4.3.2000.

Franz-Peter **Kothes** – Chief Dramaturg, Komische Oper, Berlin.

Berlin, 4.3.2000.

Monica **Lochner-Fischer** – Member of Bavarian Parliament (Landtag).

München, 11.7.2001.

Dr. Michael **Mihatsch** – Head of Theatre Section, Bavarian State Ministry for Science, Research and Art.

München, 23.8.2000.

Dr. Hans-Bernhard **Nordhoff** – Kulturdezernent (Culture Councillor), Frankfurt.  
Frankfurt, 30.8.1999, 20.11.2000.

Georg **Quander** – Intendant, Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin.  
Berlin, 21.3.2000.

Frank **Portz** – Staatssekretär (Minister), Land Hessen, Wiesbaden.  
Wiesbaden, 27.9.1999.

Lutz **von Pufendorf** – former Staatssekretär (Junior Minister), Department of Science, Research and Culture, Berlin.  
Berlin, 20.3.2000.

Peter **Radunski** – former Kultursenator (Minister for Culture), Berlin.  
Berlin, 25.1.2001.

Linda **Reisch** – former Kulturdezernent (Culture Councillor), Frankfurt.  
Frankfurt, 4.7.2001.

Dr. Alard **von Rohr** - Staatssekretär (Junior Minister), Department of Science, Research and Culture, Berlin; former Director, Deutsche Oper, Berlin.\*  
Berlin, 4.4.2000.

Dr. Ulrich **Roloff-Momin** - former Kultursenator (Minister for Culture), Berlin.  
Berlin, 29.3.2000.

Pamela **Rosenberg** – Acting Intendant, Stuttgart Opera.\*  
Stuttgart, 5.5.2000.

Dr. André **Schmitz** – Geschäftsführender Direktor (Managing Director), Deutsche Oper, Berlin.\*  
Berlin, 20.3.2000, 31.3.2000.

Professor Klaus **Schultz** – Staatsintendant, Theater am Gärtnerplatz, München.  
München, 5.6.2000.

Dr. Manfred **Schuhmann** - Member of Bavarian Parliament (Landtag).  
München, 10.7.2001.

Heinz-Dieter **Sense** – Operations Manager, Deutsche Oper, Berlin.  
Berlin, 14.3.2000.

Michael **Söndermann** - Arbeitskreis Kulturstatistik, Bonn.  
Bonn, 28.9.1999.

Alice **Ströber** - Spokesperson for Cultural Affairs, Bündnis 90 /Die Grünen Party, Berlin.\*  
Berlin, 3.4.2000.

Bernd **Wagner** - Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft, Bonn.  
Frankfurt, 25.9.1999, 25.9.2000.

Dr. Elmar **Weingarten** – Intendant, Berliner Philharmonisches Orchester;  
Chairman, Rat für die Künste (Council for the Arts), Berlin.\*  
Berlin, 16.3.2000, 25.1.2001.

\* Position at the time interview was held.

## **Appendix B: Original German Texts**

The following are the German original texts, the translations of which appear in the body of the thesis.

### **Chapter I**

#### **Section 1**

- Wer Kultur sagt, sagt auch Verwaltung, ob er will oder nicht.

....

Aber Kultur ist zugleich, gerade nach deutschen Begriffen, der Verwaltung entgegengesetzt. Sie möchte das Höhere und Reinere sein, das, was nicht angetastet, nicht nach irgendwelchen taktischen oder technischen Erwägungen zurechtgestutzt ward. In der Sprache der Bildung heisst das ihre Autonomie.

### **Chapter II**

#### **Section 1.1**

- \* Oper wird nur für 8 Prozent der Bevölkerung subventioniert, also für eine exklusive Schicht.
- \*Die Oper dient der städtischen oder staatlichen Repräsentation eher als den Bedürfnissen breiter Bevölkerungsschichten.
- \*Die Oper ist "Erbe" und gehört ins Museum.
- \*Die Oper ist ein Relikt bürgerlicher Kultur.
- \*Die Oper ist reaktionär.
- \*Die Oper ist konservativ.
- \*Das Einnahmesoll verhindert das Neue Musikdrama und Experimente.
- \*Die Oper ist eine einseitig kulinarische Stätte.
- \*Die Oper als irreale Kunstform ist im ausgehenden 20. Jahrhundert ein Anachronismus.
- \*Die Oper ist gesellschaftlich irrelevant.
- \*Traumgagen machen die Oper zu teuer.

### **Chapter VIII**

#### **Section 2**

- Kunst und Wissenschaft, Forschung und Lehre sind frei. Die Freiheit der Lehre entbindet nicht von der Treue zur Verfassung.
- Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland ist ein Kulturstaat. Sie hat ein grosses kulturelles Erbe zu wahren und die Entfaltung von Kunst und Kultur in Gegenwart und Zukunft zu schützen und zu fördern.

Der auf deutschem Boden mit Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts entstehende Verfassungsstaat hat sich immer als Kulturstaat verstanden.

... Aus diesem kulturstaatlichen Verfassungsverständnis, die Autonomie der Kunst und ihre freie Entfaltung zu garantieren, ergibt sich für die Kulturpolitik, dass der Mensch und der Künstler mit seiner schöpferischen Kraft im Vordergrund stehen..

...

Zur Aufgabe... gehört es auch, neue und experimentelle Formen zu ermutigen. .... Kunst und Kultur als Ausdruck menschlicher Begegnung und Austausches müssen zudem – soweit denn staatliche Kulturpolitik überhaupt darauf Einfluss haben kann – möglichst allen Bürgerinnen und Bürgern zugänglich sein....

- Rechts-, Kultur- und Sozialstaat.
- Kultur, Kunst und Wissenschaft sind durch Land und Gemeinden zu pflegen und zu fördern.
- Das Land, die Gemeinden und die Landkreise schützen und fördern Kunst und Kultur.
- Im Freistaat Sachsen ist die Kulturpflege eine Pflichtaufgabe der Gemeinden und Landkreise.

### Section 3

- Kunst und Kultur sind eine der Grundlagen für Selbstverwirklichung, Selbstentfaltung und Identität des einzelnen; Kunst und Kultur sind ausserdem Bindeglied der Bürger untereinander im Staat, der übergreifenden menschlichen, gesellschaftlichen und staatlichen Beziehungen; sie wirken auf diese Weise auch über die staatlichen Grenzen hinaus.
- Die bayerische Position ist klar: Es gibt keine Nationalkultur. Und sie findet nicht in Berlin statt... Dass Berlin kein Geld hat ist ein Faktum. Dass Bayern seine Kultur selber bezahlt, ohne am Tropf des Bundes oder anderer Länder zu hängen, ist ebenso ein Faktum. Das ist die Realität der kulturellen Vielfalt in Deutschland.

...

Bayern ist nicht Erbgutverwalter des Preussischen Kulturbesitzes.. sagen Sie das den Nordrhein-Westfalen und den anderen Ländern, die einmal preussisches Staatsgebiet waren. Die sollen das preussische Erbgut verwalten. Bayern hat mit Preussen so gut wie nichts zu tun.

### Section 4

- Die Verbesserung der Rahmenbedingungen für die Entfaltung von Kunst und Kultur; den Aufbau und die Förderung gesamtstaatlich bedeutsamer kultureller Einrichtungen; die Bewahrung und den Schutz des kulturellen Erbes.

### Section 5

- ..hoffnungslos reaktionär, als nicht entwicklungsfähigen, einfach abzuschneidenden Wurmfortsatz bourgeoisier Kultur.

### Section 6

- Wenn unsere Gesellschaft ihre Verantwortung für Kultur nicht erkennt und pflegt, nimmt sie dem Einzelnen die wichtigste Möglichkeit, Gemeinsinn zu entwickeln.

- Kultur.. ... ein ganz wichtiger Punkt für die deutsche Mentalität; Kultur hat seit Goethe und Schiller Zeiten und weiter immer diesen Auftrag, falschen villeicht ,vielleicht geben sich grade Kulturschaffende da manche Illusionen hin, das Kultur den Menschen veredelt ; dass Kultur irgendwie das ware, schöne, gute in Menschen fördert.
- Fördern was es schwer hat ... Das ist mehr als nur ein Motto.... Sensibilität für das, was es schwer hat, und mut zu dem, was nicht gefällt oder das zu lassen, was allgefällig ist.

## Section 7

- Die Legimitation des Kulturellen ist aber schliesslich doch auch deshalb farblos, tonlos, gesichtslos geworden... weil die kulturpolitischen Instanzen sich hinter den Bedarfen der Kulturträgervereine und den versorgungshechelnden Forderungen von Kunstangestellten zurückgezogen haben: in erster Linie aus Angst vor der Auseinandersetzung über Qualität.
- Heute versagt sich der Staat als Bürge der Kunstfreiheit jede Erkenntniss über das, was er schütz. Er gibt die Kunst frei, ohne ihr – von Ausnahmen abgesehen – noch Aufgaben zu stellen. Das Bundesverfassungsgericht hat diesen Erkenntnisverzicht mit mit deutschem Ernst zu der These radikalisiert, der Staat müsse die Kunst schützen – dürfe aber nicht fragen, was Kunst sei.

## Chapter IX

### Section 1

- Denn es gab eine Zeit, da zählte die Frankfurter Oper zu den profiliertesten, spannendsten, wichtigsten Musiktheatern Deutschlands, ja Europas. Jede Premiere ein Volltreffer... Bis 1987, als Michael Gielen den Platz des Operndirektors räumte. Von da an ging es bergab..

....

Inzwischen ist das Haus längst in der Bedeutungslosigkeit versunken. "Provinziell" gehört zu den regelmässig bemühten Adjektiven, wenn von der Oper Frankfurt die Rede ist.

#### Section 1.1

- Frankfurt hat mit Kultur nix am Hut, weil die Stadt kein traditionelles Bürgertum mehr hat. ... Mit der Vertreibung und Ermordung der Juden habe Frankfurt seine kulturellen Traditionen vernichtet, habe die eigene Wurzel ausgerissen.
- Unbewohnbar wie der Mond.
- Hier traf ich auf unbeackerten Boden, in den man neue Spuren ziehen konnte.

#### Section 2.1

- Die Formel "Kultur für alle" geht leicht von der Zunge, weil sie eine überzeugende demokratische Forderung darstellt.

..

..in diesem Buch wird für den unbeschränkten Zugang zu den Künsten, zur "Kultur für alle" plädiert. ... Jeder Bürger muss grundsätzlich in die Lage versetzt



werden, Angebote in allen Sparten und mit allen Spezialisierungsgraden wahrzunehmen.... Die Angebote dürfen weder bestehende Privilegien bestätigen, noch unüberwindbare neue aufrichten.

## Section 2.2

- Eine demokratische Kulturpolitik sollte nicht nur von dem formalen Angebot für alle ausgehen, sondern kulturelle Entwicklung selbst als einen demokratischen Prozess begreifen.
- Die Kunst muss raus aus den Katakomben der Eingeweihten. .... Die Kultur darf nicht ein Reservat für 'Bildungsbürger', die durch soziale Herkunft selbstverständlichen Zugang haben. Erst recht die 'Unterprivilegierten' müssen durch eine lebendige Konfrontation mit der modernen Kunst als aktive und kommunizierende Partner miteinbezogen werden.

Das Theater muss sich neue Besucherschichten erarbeiten. Dazu gehört eine neue Spielplanstruktur und neue Formen der Präsentation. Vorbedingung dazu wiederum: Mitbestimmung am Theater und das nicht deklamatorisch, sondern praktiziert.'

- Kulturarbeit ist heute praktische Bildungsarbeit.
- Darf den Abonnenten wirklich nicht mehr als eine kontroverse Kostprobe pro Spielzeit zugemutet werden? Was darüber hinaus an entweder experimentellen oder agitatorischen Zeitbezügen in Szene gesetzt wird, wiegeln Intendanten in dem entschuldigend Studio genannten exklusiven Bezirk gegen ihre restaurativen Kritiker ab, wo nach den Erfahrungen nur jene wenigen es besichtigen, die darauf aus sind und die es nicht beanstanden werden. Aber um dieses Publikum der Einverstandenen geht es genau nicht!..

...

das Theater in der Bundesrepublik wird sich, und zwar in kürzester Frist, entscheiden müssen, ob es sich in der sklavischen Befolgung des Erfolgsrezeptes, nur was gefällt bringt volle Kassen, nicht selbst um seine historische Rolle bringt, nämlich ein wichtiges weltveränderndes Forum zu sein.

- Kann die Stadt im Kapitalismus bewohnbar gemacht werden?
- Theater als Schulungsabend findet nicht unseren Beifall, Kunst wollen wir sehen.
- Der Politiker unter den Kulturarbeitern darf nicht der Parteipolitik im engeren Sinne verpflichtet sein. Er soll für alle Bevölkerungskreise tätig sein und kann daher nicht imperative Mandate einer Partei akzeptieren.

## Section 3

- Die Mitbestimmung war damals fällig. Das waren noch die Auswirkungen der achtundsechziger Jahre, das war eine Hinterlassenschaft von Claus Peymann, Peter Stein und Dieter Reible.

## Section 4

- Ich selber bin auch nicht bereit, ein musikalisches Provinztheater mit zu verantworten.

- Gerade der kulinarische Aspekt der Musik zeigt die Chancen auf, mit Hilfe der ehemaligen Wirkungsmöglichkeiten des Musiktheaters, nämlich mit der bacchantischen Sinnlichkeit, die Empfindungen des Zuhörers und Zuschauers zu mobilisieren und damit zu einer regenerierenden Sensibilisierung entscheidend beizutragen.

## Section 5

- Es kann keineswegs die Absicht von Prof. Gielen sein, den bisherigen Erfolg, der sich ja mit 95% Platzausnutzung auch als ein eminenter Publikumserfolg ausweist, durch fragwürdig modernistische Spielplankorrekturen zu gefährden. Allerdings wird es das eine oder andere Wagnis in Richtung auf eine Weiterentwicklung der zeitgenössischen Opernliteratur geben: Nono, Antonio Bibalo, Geisler (DDR) oder Kagel etwa sind einige der bisher übersehenen Möglichkeiten, das Publikum mit den neuesten Entwicklungen bekannt zu machen.

- Wenn die Stadt Frankfurt mich engagiert, um hier die Oper zu leiten, dann weiss sie, wen sie sich einkauft, dass ich nicht dem Mittelweg, dem mittlerem Geschmack, dem üblichen Kunstgenuss zu Diensten sein kann.

.. ich gönne allen Leuten die Entspannung am Abend: aber nicht unbedingt in dem Theater, das ich leite. Der grössere Spass ist, selbst mitzumachen, nachzuspüren, was für ein Rätsel von der Bühne aufgegeben wird: Ich kenne das Stück gut, und plötzlich interessiert es mich, zum ersten Mal interessiert es mich!

..die partitur nicht wichtiger ist als das libretto.

- .. es gab ja bereits diese Bedenken in Zeitungen, die habe ich natürlich zerstreuen müssen um den Gielen hier zu installieren. Es hat ja dann auch dazu geführt, dass es viele Kündigungen des Abonnements gab. Und das haben wir gemeinsam durchgestanden. ...als die Gielen Ära zu Ende war, war er ja nicht umstritten, er war ja nur zu Anfang umstritten.
- Ich gebe mein Amt als Operndirektor ab, weil ich nicht länger so leben will, wie man als Operndirektor lebt. Das System des Repertoire-Theaters ist menschenfresserisch und ohne Möglichkeit, die Resultate zu garantieren. Die feststehenden Premierentermine arbeiten gegen die Qualität, ebenso die festgelegte Anzahl von Vorstellungen pro Spielzeit (in Frankfurt 250). Der Wechsel im Orchester verursacht Frustration, die ich nicht mehr mitmachen will.

## Section 6

- Das Haus saugte Initiativen auf, vermittelte aber keine Impulse.
- Eine neue 'Frankfurter Dramaturgie', vergleichbar der radikalen Neusichtung des Repertoires, die Michael Gielen vornahm, ist nicht in Sicht. Bertini möchte es allen recht machen: einem medial verwöhnten Opernpublikum durch den Einkauf grosser Stimmen, der Kritik durch die Verpflichtung bekannter Regisseure, den Abonnenten durch bewährte Kost.

## Section 7

- Was unter Hoffmann zählte, war der Wille zur Kulturstadt. Das Zusammenspiel zwischen Kulturdezernent, Baudezernent und Stadtkämmerer klappte, weil im

CDU-geführten Magistrat die kulturelle Expansion vom Oberbürgermeister gedeckt wurde.

- Nach den Jahren der Geheimdiplomatie älterer Herren.
- ...hatte Frankfurt stets den Mut, zudem die Ressourcen, manchmal auch die Chuzpe, sich auf Wege zu begeben, die zu grossen Zielen führten.

## Section 8

- Fast schon unfair wirkt freilich das abwartende Schweigen des Oberbürgermeisters, das die Reisch-Gegner zu der Wunschvorstellung verlockt, er erhoffe insgeheim das Scheitern seiner Kulturdezernentin.

## Section 9

- Ich will eine aufklärerische Massenkultur machen.
- Frankfurts Platz im neuen Deutschland – Kulturpolitische Überlegungen.
- Umbau - Kulturpolitische Notwendigkeiten der 90er Jahre. Am Beispiel Frankfurt am Main.

## Section 10.1

- .. der Frankfurter Theaterdilettant von Schoeler, der zugleich Oberbürgermeister ist, hat der Stadt durch die Verträge, die er mit dem Leitungspersonal der Städtischen Bühnen abgeschlossen hat, sehr wahrscheinlich grossen Schaden verursacht.

## Section 10.2

- Pointiert formuliert ist die Strukturkrise der Städtischen Bühnen darin begründet, dass es nicht eine Kulturdezernentin mit der entsprechenden Verantwortlichkeit gegeben hat, sondern mehrere Oberbürgermeister, unterschiedliche Stadtverordnete und einzelne Fraktionen, die jeweils Kulturdezernent spielen wollten.
- Man braucht in Frankfurt kein Weltballett, keine Weltoper, kein Weltschauspiel.
- Die augenblickliche Mode, bei allem erst nach dem Preis zu fragen und dann erst nach Wert und Bedeutung, ist vor allem bei kulturellen, künstlerischen und geistigen Unternehmungen absurd....
- Ist es denn so schwer, Frau Reisch, Prioritäten zu setzen? Oder betrachten Sie es als Kompliment, wenn die Frankfurter Rundschau über die Kulturpolitik des Jahres 1993 als dem "Jahr des Rasenmähers" spricht?
- Frankfurt sollte Kulturstadt bleiben.
- Bei dieser Haushaltslage kein Verständnis mehr vorhanden war für die Kosten aus der Elitekultur im Etat der Dezernentin Reisch.
- Subventionierte Kunst muss das Seltene, Riskante, Neue, Minoritäre, fördern. Der Rest kann sich auch so am Unterhaltungsmarkt etablieren.

### Section 10.3

- Da könnte ich meine Meinung dazu sagen, aber das ist nicht die Aufgabe der Kulturpolitik. Ich mache den Häusern keine ästhetischen Vorschriften. Ich muss sehen, dass eine gewisse Geldmenge gewährleistet ist, und es dann der Intendanz überlassen, wie sie damit umgeht. Die pure Kargheit als Pflichtprogramm, das muss die Intendanz beantworten. Bei der Grundfrage Repertoire oder Stagione – da muss natürlich auch die Politik mitreden. ... Ich glaube aber, dass wir zu einer grösseren Kargheit kommen werden. ... Der Hauptmasstab künstlerischen Handelns muss weiterhin die Qualität sein. Wie die erreicht wird, wie darauf die Antwort ausfällt, das muss die Zeit zeigen.

### Section 10.5

- Gerade in Frankfurt spüre ich eine Säuernis gegenüber Kultur, die mich direkt erschreckt. Diese grosse Kulturstadt Frankfurt, die sie immer war, hat jetzt fast eine Aversion gegen Kultur. Sowohl bei den Bürgern als bei den Politikern. Da ist etwas falsch.
- Entscheidend bleibt letztendlich der politische Wille, in einer Stadt wie Frankfurt die zeitgenössische Moderne am Sprech- und Musiktheater zu entwickeln und zu erhalten oder aber das Theater auf ein Niveau zu reduzieren, das es zwar ermöglicht, mit weniger Geld auszukommen, aber diesem oben genannten Anspruch nicht mehr gerecht wird.
- Unglück' and 'Dilettant'... 'Inszenierungen voll infantilem Schabernack, Unsinn und Scheusslichkeiten.

### Section 11

- Ich verlange nur Unterhaltung von der Oper; die sollen mich nicht erlösen.

### Section 12

- Der Begriff des Intendanten ist sehr reformbedürftig ... Als erstes muss klar sein, wer der Hauptgeschäftsführer ist.
- ... die Eitelkeit der Intendanten, die sich unter dem Rubrum "Künstlerische Freiheit" jeden finanziellen Wahnsinn erlauben, um an angebliche Sensationen, seien es Sänger oder Regisseure, heranzukommen. Regisseure sind heilige Kühe, Bühnenbildner, die ständig wieder umändern, werden auf Händen getragen. ...  
.....  
Dabei gibt es Dirigenten wie Sand am Meer, allein in Europa 4000 aktive.
- Die Oper in Deutschland, vor allem die Zeitgenössische, ähnelt inzwischen einem Oberstudienrats-Vergnügen. Sie entfernt sich immer mehr von der Kunst und vom Publikum. Sie wird zu einer esoterischen, fragwürdigen Veranstaltung. Die Oper ist deshalb in einer starken Krise. Wenn sie so weitermacht, wird man sie eines Tages schliessen, nicht weil kein Geld mehr da ist, sondern weil man einfach nicht mehr weiter weiss. Es gehen vielleicht noch Leute rein, aber das, was sie zu sehen bekommen, ist längst sinnlos geworden.
- Das was der Oberbürgermeister gemacht hat, war nicht anständig; was Herr Steinhoff getan hat, menschlich eine Sauerei.

- Wir müssen Kompromisse bei der Quantität und bei der Qualität machen.
- Wir sind gegen eine Oper, die unter der wohlwollenden Beratung Dolls von Steinhoff geleitet wird.
- Der Weg ist frei für die Neuordnung von Frankfurts Theaterlandschaft: Opernchef Martin Steinhoff wird wegbezahlt.

..  
Die Nachricht klingt wie ein kleines Wunder. .... Sein 30-Millionen-Konsolidierungsprogramm hat Frankfurts Bürgermeister vor Jahren überzeugt. Dass er das Theater ohne inhaltliche Ausrichtung auf Raten totgespart hat, bemerken sie zu spät. ...

...  
So viel Anfang wie mit dem Ende Steinhoffs war lange nicht.

### Section 13

- Wer ausschliesslich mit der Selbstbehauptung von Kultur meint, Mehrheiten in einem Stadtparlament erreichen zu können, der irrt.

## Chapter X

### Section 1

- Bayern ist ein Rechts-, Kultur- und Sozialstaat. Er dient dem Gemeinwohl. Der Staat schützt die natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen und die kulturelle Überlieferung.
- Kunst und Wissenschaft sind von Staat und Gemeinde zu fordern. Sie haben insbesondere Mittel zur Unterstützung schöpferische Künstler, Gelehrter und Schriftsteller bereitzustellen, die den nachweis ernster künstlerischer oder kultureller Tätigkeit erbringen. Das kulturelle Leben und der Sport sind von Staat und Gemeinden zu fördern.

### Section 3

- ...wir haben natürlich den Grundsatz der Kunstfreiheit ... mir gefällt bei weitem nicht jede Inszenierung die an der Staatsoper stattfindet, aber ich halte es nicht für meine Aufgabe da einen Landtagsantrag zu machen, ich kann natürlich informel das eine oder das andere loswerden.

...  
ja ich habe schon öfter one-to-one meetings mit ihm (Peter Jonas) gehabt. ..schon auch um die Kunstpolitik zu beeinflussen. ..z.B. die Auswahl der Stücke, oder gewisse Arten von Inszenierungen haben wir freundlich besprochen. ... aber das ist nicht eine Zuständigkeit des Ausschusses...

### Section 4

- Das Parlament interessiert sich für Kulturpolitik schon mal herzlich wenig. Und interessiert sich innerhalb der Kulturpolitik für den Theaterbereich am allerwenigsten. Wenn, dann noch für den Museumsbereich, für die Medien, Film, sogar für Bibliothekswesen, Urheberrecht, Stiftungswesen und so. Mein Bereich hier ist also völlig out of interest. Für mich interessiert sich hier kein Kabinett, kein Landtag, kein Bundesrat, keine Kultusministerkonferenz, eigentlich letztlich keiner.

- ...im Bezug auf die Oper wird wenig initiiert. Bei der Oper ist nicht viel Spielraum. Wir haben Theaterdebatten aber das ist über das Notleiden der nichtstaatlichen Theater.

## Section 5

- Die Auführungen der Staatstheater sollen möglichst vielen Interessenten zugänglich sein. Soweit dies im Rahmen der zur Verfügung stehenden Haushaltsmittel und ohne unangemessene Beeinträchtigung des normalen Spielbetriebs möglich ist, sollen auch Gastspiele in anderen Bayerischen Orten durchgeführt werden.
- Die Spielpläne sollen Werke aus den verschiedenen Epochen enthalten und auch zeitgenössische Werke angemessen berücksichtigen. Sie dürfen erst nach vorheriger Information des Staatsministeriums für Unterricht, Kultus, Wissenschaft und Kunst der Öffentlichkeit (Presse) bekanntgegeben werden.

### Section 5.2

- ...die (Staatsoper) ist unser Flaggship, unser kulturelles Flaggship, Aufhängeschild, grossartiges Haus, konkurriert mit den besten Opern der Welt. Da wollen wir gut sein. Deswegen kriegen sie viel Geld. ...das politische ist dass wir den Wettbewerb gut bestehen wollen. ..
- ..der Staat .. betreibt in München drei Staatstheater, nämlich die Bayerische Staatsoper, das Bayerische Staatsschauspiel und das Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz. Alle drei Institutionen geniessen über die Grenzen Bayerns hinaus bundesweit einen hervorragenden Ruf. Namentlich die Bayerische Staatsoper zählt zu den international führenden Musiktheatern.
- Ziel ist es, dass von Bayern wie schon in den zurückliegenden Jahrhunderten weiterhin Impulse für die deutsche und europäische Kultur ausgehen...

## Section 8

- Die Spielpläne und Konzertprogramme der Städt. Bühnen enthalten seit etlichen Jahren einen weit grösseren Anteil moderner Werke. Sie führen im Ergebniss dazu, dass die erheblichen Subventionen am breiten Publikum vorbeigeleitet werden ...Wir halten eine publikumsorientierte Änderung der künftigen Spiel- und Konzertpläne für unerlässlich.
- Beim Einsatz öffentlicher Mittel für Experimentierbühnen kann nicht ausser Betracht bleiben, dass nichtstaatliche Bühnen in Bayern für weniger Geld abenfüllende Werke inszenieren, die jahrelang im Repertoire verbleiben und von vielen Personen besucht werden..

## Section 9

- Es läuft hier geräuschlos, weil es einen Konsens und viel Kommunikation zwischen uns und unseren Rechtsträgern gibt.  
..wir kämpfen beispielsweise darum, dass die Tarifierhöhungen wie bisher auch in Zukunft vom Freistaat aufgefangen werden. Bei uns gibt es, im Gegensatz zu Berlin, nur Schwierigkeiten, aber kein Chaos.
- Sorry, aber über München hatten wir leider nix. Die sind einfach zu reich für solche probleme..

## Chapter XI

Herr Wowereit, wann wird eins der drei Opernhäuser geschlossen? Wowereit: Nie!

### Section 1

- Das gesamte Deutsche Volk bleibt aufgefordert, in freier Selbstbestimmung die Einheit und Freiheit Deutschlands zu vollenden.
- Entsprechend der besonderen Herausforderung, in der Bundeshauptstadt Berlin unübersehbare Zeichen für Einheit und Freiheit auch im Bereich von Kunst und Kultur zu setzen, floss bereits Anfang der achtziger Jahre ein bedeutender Anteil der gesamten Fördermittel des Bundesinnenministerium für die Kulturarbeit nach Berlin. Gleichzeitig war der Ostteil der Stadt ein Schwerpunkt der Kulturförderrung durch die Regierung der DDR.
- In west Berlin war die situation die, das als Zeichen der Freiheit, .. von der Welt unterstützt worde und vorallendingen auch unterstützt worde im kulturellem Gebiet weil man gesagt hat hier können wir mit der Kultur zeigen das wir die demokratischeren , die besseren, die interessanteren sind als gegenüber einem doch totalitärem Regime und deswegen hat im grunde west Berlin eine Funktion des kulturellen Schaufensters für die ganze Bundesrepublik und darüber für den ganzen freien Westen .. das war also eine klar definierte politische Zielstellung. Die ist mit der Wiedervereinigung weg weil die Notwendigkeit dieser Schaufensterposition nicht mehr gegeben war ..  
...  
... West Berlin war ja kein normales Land, da war ja leicht über Geld reden, weil in dem Moment wo in west Berlin Geld fehlte da hat man die Hand gehoben und die Bundesrepublik war dankbar dass sie noch ein paar Millionen überweisen durfte. .. in Berlin musste man immer nur nachdenken wie man Geld ausgiebt nicht wie man Geld einspart.

### Section 1.1

- .... diente der schmucklose Schachtelbau im Stadtteil Charlottenburg nicht nur als Spielplatz der Aidas und Elektras, sondern vor allem als geistiges Bollwerk einer Frontstadt. Jeder Lohengrin und jeder, Rosenkavalier auf dieser Bühne war auch eine Demonstration des segenreiches Kapitalismus: Hier wurde allabendlich das hohe Lied auf westliche Daseinsfreude angestimmt. Bei Friedrich, Figaro und Freischütz entspannte sich die Politische Prominenz, nachdem sie am Tag das sogenannte Gebilde jenseits der Mauer verteufelt hatte..... Bis zum Mauerfall machte die Deutsche Oper Berlin richtiges Staatstheater, und dem fehlte es an nichts, vor allem nicht an Geld.

### Section 3

- ...die haben wirklich power. Die haben sogar die entscheidende power.. sie können wirklich sagen sie wir nehmen hier was weg und geben es dorthin. Letztenende macht das die Legislative. ...

...

es gibt ein paar Theater die werden groszügiger behandelt als andere vom Abgeordnetenhaus. Sie sind besser in ihrem lobbying

...

.. der ist ein sehr wichtiger Mann und er ist ein knalharter Typ. . Der sagt also wenn die Frau Thoben (The KulturSenator of Berlin at the time) irgend einem Theater mehr Geld geben wollte sagen wir nein... und da kann sie auch nichts machen. .. jetzt am Wochenende hat er gesagt Barenboim soll hier arbeiten zu unseren Bedingungen sonst soll er gehen.

### Section 3.1

- Eine Bühne, die selbst nicht mehr die hinreichende künstlerische Qualität bringt, einzelne Theaterleute oder generell Künstler, die – wie man im künstlerischen Bereich sagt – abgetanzt, abgelatscht sind, die werden nicht weiter künstlich durch öffentliche Subventionen gefördert werden können – das muss klar sein -.

### Section 4

- ... das beklage ich ja auch. Es gibt überhaupt keine inhaltliche diskussion. Es wird eben nicht darüber gesprochen was dieses haus oder ein anderes erfüllen soll, welchen kulturauftrag welches programprofil, es wird zwar gerne geschrieben und darüber geredet aber es wird nicht darüber diskutiert, die profile werden von den häusern definiert und bestimmt. Es gibt keine politische diskussion. Der einzige auftrag der uns erteilt ist wir sollen das musikalische theater hier weiter entwickeln. .. das steht im haushalt als überschrift warum subvetionen gegeben werden.
- .. aber weil ich mistrauen habe gegen all das was den inhalt anbetrifft wenn es aus einem ministerium kommt. ...

### Section 4.5

- Kein Mensch traut sich, jeder guckt auf den anderen: Wer verliert die Nerven und sagt einmal das Wort "betriebsbedingte Kündigung". – Ich werde es auch nicht sagen.
- Wenn ich heute eine Oper schliesse, dann muss ich noch in 10 Jahren die Gehälter wegen der Sozialpläne weiterzahlen.
- Die Kultur hat eben nicht eine solche Lobby wie z.B. die Polizei. Dadurch versteinert der Sozialstaat die Kultur.
- Wenn gekürzt wird, wird bei allen dreien gekürzt. Ist doch klar, weil sonst sich jener benachteiligt fühlt. ..in jedem dieser Häuser sind ja Personen, sind ja Intendanten, und mit den Intendanten müssen Sie ja umgehen. Und wenn sie da solche schritte machen, sagen die Intendanten nein, dass ist in meinem Vertrag nicht vereinbart, dann mache ich nicht mehr mit, dann gehe ich.

### Section 5

- Ich möchte im Hinblick auf den Kulturetat dem öffentlichen Eindruck entgegenwirken, der in Deutschland und insbesondere im Ausland entstehen könnte, es lohne sich insgesamt nicht mehr, nach Berlin zu kommen, weil die Kulturszene hier kaputt gespart würde.
- Es fehlen aber in Berlin aber noch mehr die politischen Kräfte, deren Kulturelle Vorstellungen der Grössenordnung einer Metropole entsprächen. Eberhard Diepgen passte natürlich unbedingt für Vaduz.



- In all der Zeit hat er im Grunde nie ein eindeutiges Bekenntnis zur Kultur abgelegt, sie war ihm immer fremd. Diepgens Einlassungen zu kulturpolitischen Fragen haben auch stets eine leichte Aversion im Unterton.
- "Bei der Kultur überkommt mich abgrundtiefes Misstrauen". Roloff-Momin attestiert dem Regierenden Bürgermeister Kleingeisterei und Krämermentalität. .... "Mir war klar, dass ich mich bei der Verteidigung der Berliner Kultur nicht auf Diepgen würde verlassen können."

## Section 6

- Die Politisierung der Kultur 1949-89 versuchte auf beiden Seiten der Mauer, Theatern verschiedener Tradition und Prägung den gleichen repräsentativen Auftrag aufzudringen. Die Kulturpolitik heute soll sie anregen, ihre Individualität zu entfalten. .. Das Ziel darf nur sein: Profilisierung jeder einzelnen Institution, Vielfalt einer Metropole.
- ... wir haben eingesehen dass beides, also die grosse Oper insbesondere Wagner zu machen und dieses barock , beides nicht verträglich ist...aber Barenboim will Wagner machen und Punkt...
- ..ich glaube schon dass es unter anderen auch damit zusammenhängt dass die bestehenden Personen Verträge haben oder hatten und dass man mit denen so eine Diskussion nicht führen will oder nicht führen wollte. Und zwar von dem Hintergrund dessen das man sagte beschneide jetzt nicht auch die Künste oder die künstlerische Entwicklung wenn du schon die Finanzen beschneidest. Dass aber die Beide miteinander in Verbindung stehen hat man möglicherweise dann zu spät gesehen. ...in den Gesprächen jetzt mit Barenboim ist das ein Thema. ... natürlich schon in die Richtung wie soll die Staatsoper sich dann entwickeln schwerpunktmässig. Dazu gehört für uns das ist ganz klar dieser vorklassische Bereich. Das steht ausser Frage.

## Section 7

- Mit drei international anerkannten Opernhäusern besitzt Berlin die einmalige Chance, sich weltweit als Opernmetropole zu profilieren. Die drei Opernhäuser Berlins sollen deshalb im internationalen künstlerischen Wettbewerb den gewollten Qualitätsanspruch weiterhin gerecht werden, zur Pflege und Entwicklung des Musiktheaters über die Grenzen Berlins hinaus beitragen und ihm bedeutende Impulse verleihen.

...

...

Die Deutsche Oper Berlin hat den Auftrag, "das musikalische Theater zu pflegen und weiterzuentwickeln". Sie steht damit zunächst in unmittelbarer Konkurrenz zur Staatsoper. .... konsequent weiterzufolgen mit der Zielsetzung, das Angebot eines breiten Opernrepertoires auf hohem internationalem Niveau, allerdings akzentuiert durch ein besonderes Gewicht im zeitgenössischen Bereich, aufrecht zu erhalten. Mit dieser Aufgabe stellt sich für die Deutsche Oper jedoch die Problematik eines für zeitgenössisches Musiktheater überdimensionierten Hauses. ... Auftragswerke für die Bereicherung des Spielplanes unter dem Aspekt der Weiterentwicklung des Musiktheaters zwar von grosser Wichtigkeit, allerdings auch mit entsprechenden wirtschaftlichen Risiken verbunden. Es ist deshalb zu prüfen, ob diesem Umstand nicht dadurch begegnet werden kann, dass die Deutsche Oper in der Konsequenz im Gegensatz zur wirtschaftlich weniger risikobehafteten Staatsoper einen ... höheren Zuschuss erhält.

...

...

Aufgrund ihrer historischen Bedeutung, ihrer Stadträumlichen Einbindung und ihrer unbestrittenen kulturpolitischen Leistungen in über 250 Jahren ihres Bestehens (Staatskapelle seit 300 Jahren) sowie im Hinblick auf repräsentative Funktionen Berlins als künftigem Regierungs- und Parlamentssitz ist die Staatsoper prädestiniert für eine schwerpunktmässige programmatische Ausrichtung am klassischen Opernrepertoire. ... Besonders hervorzuheben ist auch die Hinwendung zum vorklassischen Opernrepertoire. Diese Ausrichtung ist – auch in Abgrenzung zur Deutschen Oper – weiter zu entwickeln und aktiv zu vermitteln. Der bereits in Teilen vollzogene Wechsel vom Repertoire- auf einen Serienbetrieb kann – insbesondere zu erfahrungsgemäss touristenfreundlichen Zeiten (Sommer, Wochenende) - noch verstärkt werden. Auch eine Verkürzung der Jahresspielzeit sollte nicht ausgeschlossen werden.

...

...

Die Konzentration auf ein Regietheater, geprägt durch ein junges Ensemble und Regiearbeiten junger Regisseure, sollen auch in Zukunft der Komischen Oper das besondere künstlerische Profil erhalten. ... Mit der konsequenten Opernaufführung in deutscher Sprache verfügt das Haus über ein weiteres Unterscheidungsmerkmal zu anderen Häusern.

- Man sieht nur noch die Eigenwirtschaftlichkeit der Kunst, aber nicht mehr ihre Funktionen in einer Demokratie, und als Folge davon entwickelt sich der Kulturbetrieb zur Massenkonsumption... Die Aufgabe von uns Kulturschaffenden und der Politiker ist es, die Kulturpolitik nicht an der grössten Einschaltquote auszurichten, sondern an dem Kulturauftrag, den wir haben.

## Section 8.1

- Ich verbringe die Hälfte meiner 16 Stunden-Tage damit, 13 Millionen Mark sponsorengelder für mein Haus zusammenzubetteln.
- Zum ersten Mal seit der Reichsmusikkammer versucht der Staat, die Kunst zu gängeln, indem er den Häusern vorschreibt, wer welche Stücke zu spielen hat!
- Man hat nach dem Fall der Mauer und der aufkommenden Konkurrenz nach Stücken gesucht, die im besten Sinne populistisch sind und die somit Einnahmen erzielt haben. Drei Zauberflöten, zwei Don Giovannis. Das Papier ist eine konstruktive Diskussionsgrundlage. Herr Pereira, Herr Jonas, Sie sitzen im gelobten Land Gottes. Von ihren Politikern höre ich: Die Oper ist ein Geschenk Gottes. Das möchte ich einmal hier in Berlin hören....
- Für die jetzt beschlossene Hilfe des Bundes gibt es einen einzigen Grund... Wir wollen den Opernreformplänen des Berliner KulturSenators Christoph Stölzl nicht kontraproduktiv entgegenwirken. ....

## Section 9

- Man kann nur immer wieder sagen, dass man die drei Häuser inhaltlich differenzieren muss. Die Staatsoper ist das klassische Haus für das frühromantische Repertoire und für das Repertoire des 20. Jahrhunderts. Es ist nun wirklich kein Wagner-Haus. ... und dass Barenboim einen guten Wagner dirigiert, dass ist alles bekannt, aber Barenboim hätte Musikdirektor der Deutschen Oper sein müssen, damit er das Repertoire, dass ihm so am Herzen

liegt dort dirigieren kann. Ein anderes Problem ist, dass man mit Barenboim und Thielemann zwei Dirigenten engagiert hat, die genau das gleiche Repertoire dirigieren.

- Nachdem Barenboim an der Staatsoper seine Arbeit aufgenommen hatte, liebäugelte ich mit der Idee, einen zweiten grossen, welbekannten Dirigenten nach Berlin, an die Deutsche Oper zu holen. Es sollte ein kreatives Spannungsfeld zwischen dem Berliner Philharmonischen Orchester mit Claudio Abbado, der Staatsoper mit Daniel Barenboim und der Bühne in der Bismarckstrasse entstehen. Ich führte Gespräche mit und über Zubin Mehta. Er war mein Wunschkandidat, es war mein Traum, eben diese drei Dirigenten, die zu den grossen acht der Welt zählen, in Berlin zu haben. Doch Mehta sagte ab. ....

...

vom musikalischem Können erschien mir Thielemann, auch nachdem ich exzellente Kenner zu Rate gezogen hatte, als ein geeigneter Kandidat.

### Section 9.1

- Der Intendant hat viel geleistet und leistet viel. Es kann nicht sein, das Buchhalter die Kunst und Kultur stürzen.
- Aus CDU-Kreisen wird kolportiert, dass man auch deshalb unbeirrt an dem angeschlagenen Generalintendanten Götz Friedrich fetshält, weil sich die SPD inzwischen auf KulturSenator Radunski eingeschossen habe und man den Genossen "keinen Stich gönnen will".
- So habe sich aus alten Westberliner Zeiten eine Art "Ellenbogen Syndrom" herübergerettet, bei dem man sich unter möglichst politisch gleichfarbigen Kungelbrüder kumpelhaft anstosse: "Los, das machen wir jetzt mal." Lust und Gefallen führten dabei die Hand, anstelle sachlicher Kriterien und Überlegungen. Ich habe es nicht gesvhafft diesen Stil zu ändern. .. Und dann sind da immer noch die Strippen, an denen nach Belieben ziehen könne, wer einmal in den inneren Kreis der lokalen Kungelkaste aufgenommen sei. Da hatte ich wohlweislich den Vertrag von Götz Friedrich nur bis 1999 verlängert, damit es auch wieder die Chance für neue Akzente und neue künstlerische Kreativität gibt. Kaum war ich aus dem Amt, wurde erst einmal bis 2001 aufgestockt. Die Strippen hängen sogar im Intendantenbüro, man muss nur daran ziehen...
- ... mutig und selbstbewusst ein Profil in die obengenannte Richtung entwickeln kann bzw. welches Profil er sich vorstellt.

### Section 9.2

- Alle wichtigen Punkte sind bei Zimmerman in seiner Pressekonferenz aufgetaucht kann ich dazu nur sagen, bis in Namen hinein, Verwaltung dort ist auch sehr porös.

## Chapter XV

Die Forderung der Verwaltung an die Kultur ist wesentlich heteronom: sie muss Kulturelles, was immer es auch sei, an Normen messen, die ihm nicht innewohnen, die nichts mit der Qualität des Objekts zu tun haben, sondern lediglich mit irgendwelchen abstrakt von aussen herangebrachten Massstäben, während gleichzeitig nach seinen Vorschriften und der eigenen Beschaffenheit nach der

Verwaltende meist ablehnen muss, auf Fragen der immanenten Qualität, der Wahrheit der Sache selbst, ihrer objektiven Vernunft überhaupt sich einzulassen.

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