

Review of Opera

Discussion Paper for Consultation, February 2015

Contents

1. ABOUT THIS REVIEW	4
Purpose of this review.....	4
The review process so far.....	4
Next steps	4
The context for this review.....	5
<i>Creative New Zealand's purpose and vision.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>The long-term outcomes we want to achieve.....</i>	<i>5</i>
What we mean by 'opera'	6
Creative New Zealand's current approaches to supporting the arts.....	6
2. OPERA AROUND THE WORLD	8
International trends in opera	8
Different international models for presenting opera.....	9
<i>The Opera House model.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Presenting companies</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>National and regional companies</i>	<i>10</i>
Levels of international support: Some examples.....	10
Rationales for public funding of the arts, including opera	11
3. OPERA IN NEW ZEALAND	13
Professional opera companies in New Zealand: Some history.....	13
Snapshot of opera in New Zealand today	14
<i>Professional staged productions from the traditional opera repertoire.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Creation and staging of productions of new New Zealand operatic works</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Semi-staged and concert performances of operatic works and excerpts.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Coaching, professional development, and performance opportunities for emerging and established singers/opera practitioners.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Singing competitions</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Tertiary training.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Other sources of support for opera</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Cinema screenings of filmed opera productions from leading overseas opera companies..</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Outreach and schools programmes</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Societies and foundations.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Funders.....</i>	<i>19</i>
4. CREATIVE NEW ZEALAND'S FUNDING SUPPORT FOR OPERA.....	20
A breakdown of our funding support for opera	20

Key Issues for opera in New Zealand.....	21
<i>New interpretations and artform development.....</i>	21
<i>New Zealand singers and other practitioners.....</i>	21
<i>Prioritising New Zealand-composed operas.....</i>	21
<i>How much should professional opera cost? And who should pay?.....</i>	22
<i>Boom and bust, or evolution?</i>	23
5. QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION	24
Deadline for sending us your feedback.....	24
The questionnaire is also available as a separate WindowsWord document in which you can directly enter your responses.....	24
How to provide your feedback.....	24
Our questions	24

1. ABOUT THIS REVIEW

Creative New Zealand is carrying out rolling reviews of each of the areas of artform practice that we support. Between 2011 and 2014 we have completed reviews of media arts, Māori arts, Pacific arts, music, dance, visual arts and craft/object art. A review of literature is also underway.

We're now reviewing our support for the creation, presentation, distribution and promotion of opera in New Zealand.

Purpose of this review

The purpose of the review is to identify:

- the rationale and focus for Creative New Zealand's investments, funding and other interventions in support of opera in New Zealand, taking into account the support and infrastructure provided by local and central government, the tertiary education sector, and the private sector
- what our development priorities for opera in New Zealand will be from 2016 to 2020
- the key roles in opera infrastructure that Creative New Zealand will support through our Toi Tōtara Haemata (Arts Leadership) investment programme over the next five years
- how our various funding and capability programmes and initiatives will support the creation, presentation, distribution and promotion of opera in New Zealand over the next five years.

By opera 'infrastructure', we mean all the elements that are necessary for groups and individuals to create, present, distribute and participate in opera in New Zealand.

The review process so far

For this review we've gathered information about past reviews and our recent support for opera in New Zealand across all our programmes. Your views on how Creative New Zealand can best support opera in New Zealand are critical to the success of this review. Our questions, and information on how you can respond to them, are set out from page 24 of this Discussion Paper.

Next steps

We'll carefully consider your responses to the questionnaire when we develop a set of recommendations to be presented in a report to the Arts Council.

The funding agreement for NZ Opera to deliver the current key role for opera under the Toi Tōtara Haemata programme will expire at the end of 2015. All our investment funding

agreements are for fixed terms and reviews like this give us and the opera sector an opportunity to consider changes and developments in the sector.

We plan to publish the results of this review in May 2015. Any changes made by the Arts Council to our priorities for opera and to the key infrastructure roles we support will apply from January 2016.

The context for this review

Creative New Zealand is established under the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 2014. Our funding comes from the Government through Vote Arts, Culture and Heritage and the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board.

Creative New Zealand's purpose and vision

The Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 2014 requires Creative New Zealand 'to encourage, promote and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders'.

The purpose and vision we've identified for our organisation reflect that statutory role.

The purpose statement in our 2013 Strategic Plan says that 'Creative New Zealand is the national arts development agency developing, investing in and advocating for the arts'.

By 'arts development' we mean not just the funding of artists and arts organisations, but also supporting their professional and artistic development, and supporting the ongoing capability, resilience and vitality of the arts sector.

Our vision is: *'Dynamic and resilient arts valued in Aotearoa and internationally.'*

We achieve our purpose through supporting:

- the creation and presentation of high-quality and innovative art
- the careers and work of individual artists and arts practitioners
- the growth and strengthening of New Zealand's arts infrastructure, arts communities and audiences.

We currently support artists, projects, groups and organisations across Māori arts, Pacific arts, literature, visual arts, craft/object art, theatre, dance, music, multidisciplinary arts, opera, interarts, and community arts.

The long-term outcomes we want to achieve

Creative New Zealand has specified four 'strategic outcomes' that describe the long-term effects on New Zealand arts that we aim to contribute to:

- **Outcome 1: New Zealanders participate in the arts** – By 'participate', we mean the direct involvement of individuals, groups and/or communities in making or presenting art.

- **Outcome 2: High-quality New Zealand art is developed** – Creative New Zealand seeks to ensure that artists, arts practitioners and arts organisations have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- **Outcome 3: New Zealanders experience high-quality arts** – Audiences are vital to a vibrant arts sector. Creative New Zealand aims to broaden the opportunities for all New Zealanders to experience the arts, providing them with access to a diverse range of artistic experiences.
- **Outcome 4: New Zealand arts gain international success** – Our international interventions connect high-quality artists with global markets and audiences through presentation, touring, relationship-building and collaborative projects, including cultural and artistic exchange.

What we mean by ‘opera’

An opera is a dramatic work that is mainly sung, accompanied by musical instruments, and presented theatrically. Because almost all the dialogue in an opera is sung, it can be distinguished from theatre works in which music is incidental or clearly secondary to the drama.

For Creative New Zealand the term ‘opera’ means a staged production of an opera rather than just one of its component parts (for example, a composer’s published or unpublished operatic score).

Creative New Zealand’s current approaches to supporting the arts

In 2010 we reviewed our approach to supporting arts infrastructure. At that time we were supporting 34 arts organisations within a portfolio of what we called ‘Recurrently Funded Organisations’. In 2012 we adopted a new approach, where we identified the roles (including activities and services) that we would support for each area of arts practice.

We identified the infrastructure roles that we would fund on the premise that each role will complement the responsibilities and activities of other agencies in central and local government, the education sector and the private sector. For some artforms, including opera, Creative New Zealand is the major funder of infrastructure.

In recent years we have also put in place a number of capability-building initiatives. These include support for:

- strategic planning – enabling practitioners in arts organisations to acquire and apply strategic planning skills
- strategic change – mentoring organisations through a strategic change process and identifying ways to improve their performance and/or achieve results for their clients, customers and audiences
- online marketing – increasing arts organisations’ understanding and use of best practice in key areas of online marketing

- audience development – upskilling arts organisations to maintain, diversify and grow their audiences, as well as deepening their engagement with their audiences
- access to commissioned research
- fundraising and developing support from trusts, foundations, businesses and individual donors, through our Creative Giving Programme.

Our new infrastructure investment programmes emphasise developing the arts sector. Through our dedicated Sector Development Incentives Fund we also provide incentives for high-quality projects that involve collaboration between arts organisations.

2. OPERA AROUND THE WORLD

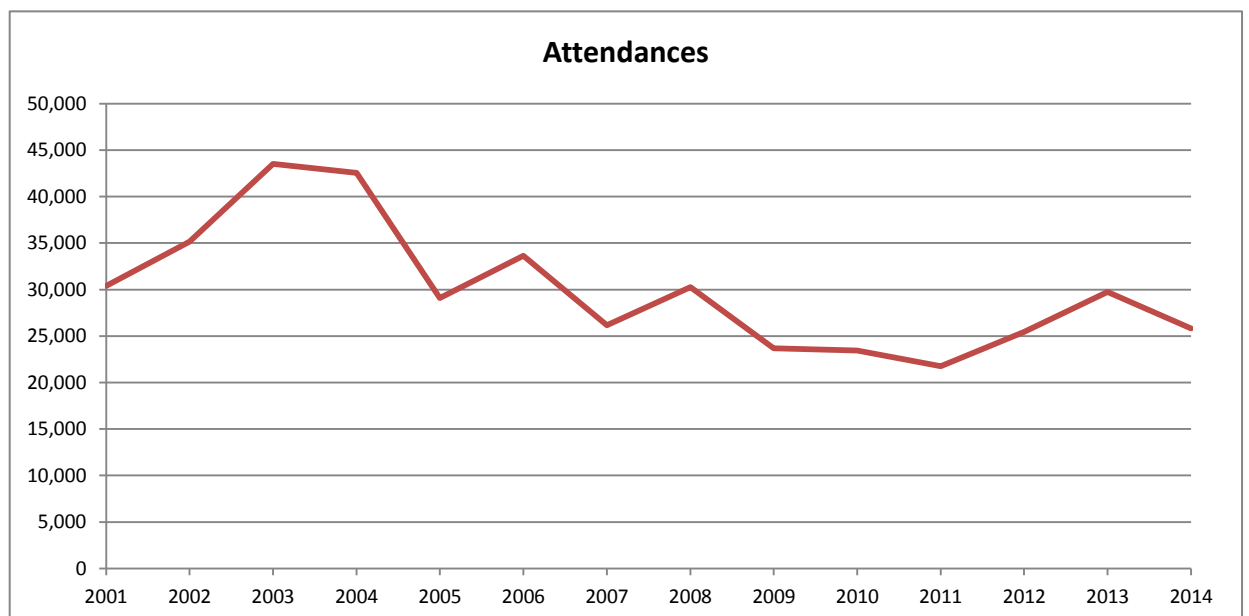
International trends in opera

Opera as an artform is facing change all around the world.

In the last decade new opportunities have arrived for audiences and practitioners to see the very best of contemporary Western opera productions through High Definition (HD) screenings at local cinemas, at a fraction of the price they would have to pay to see live opera. Some opera companies make their work available on HDTV using applications developed by each company.

The costs of staging and promoting opera have continued to rise, while audience numbers for some, though not all, companies have stagnated or fallen. Of particular concern for established companies is that their traditional supporters are ageing. Opera also has among the most expensive tickets for subsidised arts performances. Where opera companies report increased income this is often due to a rise in average ticket prices for fully staged operas.

As a broad indication of developments in New Zealand's opera audiences, the diagram below shows trends in total attendances at staged productions and performances presented by NZ Opera between 2001 and 2014. This also includes tours that took place in the years 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2008 (Source: Creative New Zealand data provided by NZ Opera)



Opera companies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have come to rely on a narrow repertoire of popular nineteenth-century operas that are familiar to their audiences. Staging less familiar works, especially contemporary and local ones, has been problematic for many companies.

The Australian government has commissioned a national review of opera, due to be completed by 30 June 2015. The review covers Opera Australia, Opera Queensland, State Opera of Southern Australia, and Western Australia Opera. The companies will be assessed for their financial viability, ongoing artistic vitality, and the level of access to opera that they provide.

Meanwhile a major international case study of Western opera has been carried out by Griffith University in Queensland, Australia as part of a five-year project *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures*. The team that developed the case study included Emeritus Professor John Drummond of Otago University. The study features music traditions including Australian aboriginal music, Amami Island music, and Balinese Gamelan. Although the complete study is not due to be published until later in 2015, the discussion on issues raised and the results of extensive international consultation on Western opera have already been canvassed in a 2013 Radio New Zealand documentary series; we have drawn on those results in preparing this Discussion Paper.¹

Those who provided information for the case study agreed that, in order to survive, opera needs to continue as a live experience and opera companies need to find ways to renew and develop the artform.

Opera is performed and supported in most developed countries. In Italy, Germany, Austria and France, for example, state and city support can meet some 80 percent of the costs of presenting opera. In the United States private giving and business sponsorship can meet up to two thirds of the costs. By contrast, New Zealand support for this artform is fairly low by current international standards. However, meaningful and accurate comparisons are difficult to make, and they need to take into account the various models for supporting the development and presentation of opera.

Different international models for presenting opera

The Opera House model

These handsome houses have usually been built for purpose. Typically they will have resident orchestras, choruses, and design, building and storage facilities, and they'll also have artistic, musical and management leadership. Examples are the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden (London), La Scala in Milan, and the Vienna State Opera. These are massively expensive to maintain. Some will certainly continue as long as they remain central to the culture and heritage of their nation. Interestingly, China and Russia continue to build new state-of-the-art opera houses.

Some of these houses are in trouble, however. The Metropolitan Opera's cost structures and near bankruptcy are constantly in the news. The latest available information on the Royal Opera House in London, however, indicates a success story, with strong box-office sales and private support meeting a high proportion of costs.

¹ John Drummond discussed this research project in four separate radio programmes in June 2013, now available online at: www.radionz.co.nz/concert/programmes/howwilloperasurvive

A variation on the Opera House model is the Resident Company model. Here an opera company will stage a large number of its productions in a purpose-built venue, but the building will also be hired out to other companies and be funded and managed separately from the opera company. Examples of this are the Welsh National Opera at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff and the Australian Opera at the Sydney Opera House.

Presenting companies

Increasingly more common (and more affordable) is the Presenting Company model. These companies will have the building base appropriate for their activities and scale – that is, offices, and design, building and storage facilities, as well as access to rehearsal spaces. They will hire venues appropriate for their productions and seasons. Companies working with this model will still need to have good access and good relationships with the venues they use, but they have far more flexibility in their planning than companies that are responsible for operating and maintaining their own venue. Presenting companies will also usually have artistic, musical and management leadership. Orchestras and choruses will be engaged where and when they are required, while singers, directors and designers will be engaged for each individual production.

The Presenting Company model provides flexibility around programming, targeted audiences, choice of venues, and partnership options. However, it also presents its own challenges for developing and maintaining quality standards.

National and regional companies

There is a great deal of variation in models for national and regional companies. Where countries and companies aspire to presenting professional-standard productions of the Western classics, it's more common for resources to be focused on one high-quality national company, and usually, but not always, with some touring. Scotland and Wales both do national touring. The Welsh National Opera also receives substantial separate funding from Arts Council England to tour to specific parts of England. In Australia the Australian Opera is the national company, performing mainly in Sydney and Melbourne, while Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland also support state opera companies. The Victorian Opera offerings are designed to complement the Australian Opera programme in Melbourne. (See page 9 for comment on the national review that is currently underway in Australia.)

Levels of international support: Some examples

The information in the table below is drawn from published annual reports and relates to the 2013 calendar year or the 2012/13 financial year, depending on the individual company's reporting practice. The companies are listed in ascending order according to their annual operating costs (beginning with West Australian Opera at NZ\$5.3m and ending with the Royal Opera House London at NZ\$231m). The figures for performances and attendances include the total number of mainstage productions, as well as regional tours.

Company	Annual operating costs (NZ\$ equivalent)	% revenue from box office	% revenue from public funding	% revenue from other sources	Number of performances, attendances and broadcasts (if published)
West Australian Opera	NZ\$ 5.3m	26%	42%	32%	21 performances 48,350 attendances
State Opera of South Australia	NZ\$ 5.3m	46%	40%	14%	26 performances 22,962 attendances
Victorian Opera Australia	NZ\$ 6.4m	21%	64%	15%	174 performances 41,404 attendances
Opera Queensland	NZ\$ 6.7m	18%	61%	21%	102 performances 14,587 paid attendances 297,709 unpaid attendances
NZ Opera	NZ\$ 7.7m	27%	50%	23%	31 performances 29,761 attendances
Australian Opera	NZ\$ 106.3m	55%	25%	20%	605 performances 835 broadcasts and cinema screenings (attendance figures unavailable)
Bavarian State Opera Munich	NZ\$ 149.2m	28%	65%	7%	446 performances 540,000 attendances
Royal Opera House London	NZ\$ 231m	33%	24%	43%	415 performances 675,000 attendances (3 million+ people have watched Royal Opera House's live streaming since 2012)

Rationales for public funding of the arts, including opera

The generally accepted rationale for government support of the arts and culture (whether directly or through an arm's-length agency like Creative New Zealand) is that market forces are inadequate to sustain them, and therefore, in the interests of social and cultural equity, the state should fund arts and culture as a public good to make them available for those who can't afford to access them. This also involves the concept of 'option value' –

that is, the value of supporting arts, culture and heritage as an investment in the future and as insurance that they will be available to future generations.

It is of course a basic assumption of that rationale that the arts have significant value to society.

If that general rationale is accepted, then a given society will need to make a variety of policy and allocation decisions, selecting the kinds of arts and culture that it wants to make accessible, and weighting and prioritising them.

Some commentators also distinguish between the 'intrinsic' and the 'instrumental' value of arts and culture. Arguments for the instrumental value of the arts gather evidence that the arts in general, and sometimes particular artforms, can achieve benefits for society – including better educational results, more employment, a more skilled workforce, social and cultural cohesion, higher living standards and greater social well-being, and more successful cultural tourism.

Cultural economists have also commented that state support for the arts isn't always the direct result of market failure and welfare economics, but rather the result of former policies implemented by generations of elected governments that have assumed the roles of patron or architect for funding allocation policies. On this view, continued funding in established and unchanging patterns can hinder public support for artistic diversity, experimentation and innovation.

3. OPERA IN NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand audiences experienced opera from early colonial times, along with other Western performing artforms such as ballet, theatre, circuses, music halls and music theatre. International touring companies performed in these genres from the mid-1800s, at first in makeshift venues, then in extensive networks of purpose-built touring venues.²

From the 1870s amateur operatic societies (now usually called ‘musical theatre societies’) were established throughout the country. These grew in strength in the next century and continue to operate today.

Professional opera companies in New Zealand: Some history

The establishment of the National Orchestra in New Zealand and the creation of the National Opera of Australia led to the foundation of the **New Zealand Opera Company (1954 – 1971)**. The company employed professional New Zealand artists and began with small-scale productions (using piano accompaniment in small centres and orchestras in cities) and also undertook some ambitious touring, including *Porgy and Bess* with Inia Te Wiata. The collapse of this company was followed by a period of support for regional arts infrastructure for orchestras, theatres and opera. Parts of the opera infrastructure were semi-professional, with support from the Arts Council targeted at the professional, and New Zealand, components of activities.

A second attempt at a national company resulted in the formation of the **National Opera of New Zealand (1979 – 1982)**. This company was based in Auckland and in its three years of existence it undertook limited touring and also some risk-taking in its choice of repertoire. A transitional partnership arrangement between the National Opera of New Zealand and Auckland’s Mercury Theatre, **Mercury Opera (1984 – 1991)**, provided professional opera to the Auckland region until this company merged with Auckland Metropolitan Opera to become Auckland Opera in 1991. At this point, following an extensive review by the Arts Council of its support for opera, some sustained advocacy for more equitable access for audiences around the country, as well as the impending opening of the Aotea Centre in Auckland, the Arts Council reverted to support for opera on a regional basis and a mixed professional and professional-amateur (‘pro-am’) model. Annual funding went to **Auckland Opera (1991–2000)**, **Wellington City Opera** (later **National Opera Wellington**) and **Canterbury Opera** (later **Southern Opera**). Support for other opera activities was also made available on a contestable basis for individual projects from 1991.

A third national opera company **NZ Opera (established in 2000)** evolved from a negotiated merger of Auckland Opera and Wellington City Opera. Canterbury Opera (later

² Lindis Taylor: *Opera and musical theatre – Early years of opera*, Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 16 October 2014, www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/opera-and-musical-theatre/page-1

Southern Opera) elected not to join at that time, but by 2012 agreement was reached for New Zealand Opera to tour annually to Christchurch.

Snapshot of opera in New Zealand today

In recent years there has been a considerable amount and variety of opera activity in New Zealand, including:

- professional staged productions of works from the traditional operatic repertoire
- the creation and staging of productions of new New Zealand operatic works
- semi-staged and concert performances of operatic works and excerpts from operatic works
- coaching, professional development, and performance opportunities for emerging and established singers/opera practitioners and young people
- tertiary training
- cinema screenings of filmed opera productions from leading overseas opera companies (for example the Metropolitan Opera New York)
- community outreach and schools programmes.

These types of activity are described in the following sections.

Professional staged productions from the traditional opera repertoire

Major professional productions of traditional operas are presented to New Zealand audiences as part of NZ Opera's annual programmes of activity. Since 2013 NZ Opera has presented three large-scale staged productions each year. As reflected in the company's 2013, 2014 and 2015 seasons below, two productions are presented each year in Auckland and Wellington and one in Christchurch. Some of these productions are collaborations with opera companies in Australia, particularly Opera Queensland.

- **2013** – Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* (Auckland and Wellington), Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (Christchurch), and a co-production with Opera Queensland of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* (Auckland and Wellington). In February 2013 NZ Opera also presented one performance of a smaller-scale production of Händel's *Acis and Galatea* at the Tipapa Estate in North Canterbury.
- **2014** – A co-production with the State Opera of South Australia and Opera Queensland of Verdi's *La Traviata* (Auckland and Wellington), Puccini's *La Bohème* (Christchurch), and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (Auckland and Wellington).
- **2015** – A co-production with Opera Queensland of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (Auckland and Wellington), Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* (Christchurch), and Puccini's *Tosca* (Auckland and Wellington).

In addition to NZ Opera's performances, multidisciplinary arts festivals sometimes stage their own opera productions or import a production from overseas as part of a festival

programme. For example, in 2015 the Auckland Arts Festival is presenting Verdi's *Macbeth* in a production by Third World Bunfight Productions, South Africa.

Creation and staging of productions of new New Zealand operatic works

In recent years the following new New Zealand operas have been performed as staged productions:

- *This Other Eden* (2014), by Anthony Ritchie (composer) and Michelanne Forster (librettist), produced by Opera Otago
- *Len Lye* (2012), by Eve de Castro-Robinson (composer) and Roger Horrocks (librettist), produced by University of Auckland's National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries (NICAI). This opera was composed in 2003 through a Creative New Zealand grant, and in 2011 we provided funding for the film-maker Shirley Horrocks to create a moving-image work for the opera's final production.
- *Hohepa* (2012 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts), by Jenny McLeod (composer and librettist), produced by NZ Opera
- *The Electrical Eclipse* (2011), a student chamber opera project performed at the Kenneth Myers Centre with support from the Morrison Music Trust in May 2011 and involving students and staff from Auckland University's School of Music, Elam School of Fine Arts and the Faculty of Arts. The composer was Celeste Oram and the librettist Claire Bracegirdle.

Most of those operas listed above involved small- to moderately sized forces and were presented in chamber format: none was produced on a grand scale.

A New Zealand opera *Brass Poppies*, by Ross Harris and Vincent O'Sullivan about New Zealand and World War I, is planned to be performed as part of the 2016 International Festival of the Arts in Wellington.

Opera Factory

The Opera Factory Studio (established in 1994 in Newmarket, Auckland) has also contributed to the development of new New Zealand chamber operas over the years. Describing itself as a 'fringe theatre' and seating 140 people, the Opera Factory regularly organises and hosts projects in which opera practitioners can create, workshop and present new work and develop their skills. Opera Factory projects offer opportunities for emergent and established composers, pianists, musical and stage directors, costume, lighting and stage designers, theatre technicians, and stage managers.

Notable presentations of new New Zealand opera by the Opera Factory in recent years have included:

- A short chamber opera composition contest (2011), which included these three categories: open age; emerging or intending composers under 30; and secondary school students 18 and under. Creative New Zealand supported the workshopping of the operas in development. The competition resulted in a fully staged season in 2012

of the winning compositions *Ulla's Odyssey* by Anthony Young and *Love Thy Neighbour* by Callum Blackmore.

- The Kiwi Shorts Opera Festival (2008), featuring David Griffiths's three short operas *The Three Franks* (based on short stories by Frank Sargeson), Philip Norman's two short operas *A Factory Opera* and *The Pleasure Garden*, and Rod Biss's *Mariage à la Mode*. The festival also included touring performances from the Wellington-based NIMBY Opera Company of Lyell Cresswell's *Good Angel, Bad Angel*.

Works in development

In March 2015 the Auckland Arts Festival, in collaboration with NZ Opera, is presenting excerpts from Tim Finn's new work, *Star Navigator*. This work has been commissioned by West Australian Opera, NZ Opera and Victorian Opera with funding from the Government of Western Australia through the Department of Culture and the Arts. These excerpts are part of the festival's *RAW* programme, which features works at different stages in development, allowing other presenters, festival directors and potential sponsors, as well as Auckland festival patrons, to experience the processes involved in creating a production. Showcasing an opera while under development can help attract other parties with an interest in supporting it in some way, whether through sponsorship or offering an opportunity to present it.

The approach of showcasing an opera under development underpinned Creative New Zealand's 2002 *Wild Opera* initiative, the aim of which was to stimulate collaborations between festivals, sponsors, funders and companies to present new New Zealand work. The Auckland University production of *Galileo* by John Rimmer (composer) and Witi Ihimaera (librettist) was a direct result of this initiative.

Semi-staged and concert performances of operatic works and excerpts

These performances are generally presented in a concert setting with limited theatrical elements. In recent years notable large-scale events of this kind have included the following:

- Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra: Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* (2013, Auckland première), Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (2014, New Zealand première). In July 2015 the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra is presenting a concert performance of Puccini's *Turandot* with guest soloists and the NZ Opera Chorus.
- New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (2012): Wagner's *Die Walküre* with New Zealand singers Margaret Medlyn, Simon O'Neill and Jonathan Lemalu
- New Zealand Festival / New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (2013): Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*

Recitals given by professional opera singers often feature individual arias and extended excerpts from different operas and their recital programmes are sometimes even themed around operatic performance – for example in vocal recitals with titles such as *A Night at the Opera*. The Auckland-based company Operatunity Ltd specialises in presenting groups of singers in specially tailored concert series that draw on famous operas and musicals. Similarly the Opera Club, based in Christchurch, presents concerts that feature opera

singers. In 2013 the Auckland Festival of the Arts presented Whaka-Aria Mai, a concert of waiata and well-known operatic arias translated into te reo Māori.

Coaching, professional development, and performance opportunities for emerging and established singers/opera practitioners

For trained opera singers, opportunities for coaching and professional development in vocal performance, languages, stagecraft and movement are available through a variety of programmes in New Zealand:

- **New Zealand Opera School:** an annual residential training course held in Wanganui for young emerging New Zealand opera singers (supported by the Dame Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation)
- **New Zealand Singing School, Te Wānanga Toi Waiata:** an annual residential singing course held in Hastings covering a range of genres including opera, oratorio, Lieder, musical theatre, popular, jazz, and contemporary song
- **NZ Opera's Internship Programme:** NZ Opera offers a three-tier approach, providing singers with support through each stage of their career. Selected singers can start as Emerging Artists and might at a later date be selected as a Young Artist; then, after some time overseas training and performing, they may return home and apply to be Resident Artists. The programme is supported by the Freemasons Roskill Foundation and the Dame Malvina Major Foundation.
- **Opera Factory Studio:** offers special coaching, guidance and performance opportunities to singers who intend a professional opera career. As well as singers, Opera Factory also provides opportunities for pianists, musical and stage directors, costume, lighting and stage designers, theatre technicians, and stage managers, and more. In February 2014 Opera Factory hosted a season by the Australian company Opera Bites, which specialises in the performance of miniature operas.
- **Auckland Opera Studio:** this was established to provide New Zealand professional singers with personalised coaching within an environment of knowledge, enthusiasm and support.
- **New Zealand School of Music:** a production of Verdi's *Il Corsaro* (2013) featuring students enrolled in the school's voice programme.

To complement those coaching and professional-development opportunities, small-scale semi-professional opera productions provide singers (and instrumentalists) with real opportunities to perform opera repertoire publicly, giving local audiences a chance to experience live opera. Such recent and current productions include:

- Auckland Opera Studio (2014): Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*
- Boutique Opera Wellington (2015): Pergolesi's *Livietta e Tracollo* and *La Serva Padrona*
- Days Bay Opera Wellington: Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* (2014) (in a specially arranged chamber version) and Cavalli's *La Calisto* (2015)

- Festival Opera Hawke's Bay: Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* (2014) and Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* (2015)
- Opera Factory: Menotti's *The Medium* (2014)

In 2008 and 2010 the innovative chamber opera company *Nimby Opera* toured a number of main and regional centres with their productions of Lyell Cresswell's *Good Angel, Bad Angel* and Leoš Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

Singing competitions

Competitions also provide significant opportunities for young singers to perform and further their operatic careers. These include the prestigious Lexus Song Quest and the New Zealand Aria Competition.

Tertiary training

A number of tertiary training providers offer graduate and post-graduate qualifications specifically in opera singing as well as in other fields related to the staging of operatic productions. The University of Auckland, the New Zealand School of Music, the University of Canterbury and the University of Otago all offer undergraduate and post-graduate degree programmes. Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School in Wellington and Unitec in Auckland also offer courses relating to direction, stagecraft, dramaturgy and technical support in the performing arts.

Other sources of support for opera

Other organisations that have supported opera production in recent times include: the Auckland Private Education Charitable Trust, Cut Above Academy, the David Levene Foundation, the Len Lye Foundation, MusicWorks, NZ Opera, the New Zealand Film Archive, Point of View Productions, Ross Charitable Trust, Todd Energy, Unitec (Department Of Performing & Screen Arts, Costume Technology), the Wallace Arts Trust, and Yamaha Commercial Audio.

Cinema screenings of filmed opera productions from leading overseas opera companies

The Metropolitan Opera presents an annual season of live transmissions of its productions in selected cinemas throughout New Zealand. More detailed information about these productions is available on the website www.metopera.co.nz

Regional branches of the New Zealand Opera Society (see 'Societies and foundations' below) also present DVD screenings of selected opera productions from around the world in selected cinemas.

Outreach and schools programmes

NZ Opera has offered expanded education opportunities since 2000. Programmes include design and creative workshops, vocal and creative workshops, and low-price tickets to dress rehearsals for young people. Its highly successful recent production of Britten's

Noye's Fludde was produced with school students and teachers in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch in 2013 and 2014. The company has specialist staff to develop their youth and community engagement programme.

Societies and foundations

New Zealand Opera Society: Established in 1953, the Society encourages interest in opera from the national perspective largely through its monthly magazine, *New Zealand Opera News*. In Auckland and Wellington the Society screens opera films and presents recitals and concerts for New Zealand singers, both established professionals and those beginning their professional careers. Over the years the Society has offered a variety of scholarships and prizes for opera singers and opera professionals.

Wagner Society of New Zealand: Established and incorporated in 1994, the Wagner Society has branches in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Affiliated to the worldwide network of Wagner Societies, it aims to extend the knowledge and appreciation of the life and works of Richard Wagner (1813–1883), his times, his artistic contemporaries, and his successors.

Funders

The following is an indicative list of local government and non-government organisations that have in recent years provided financial support for opera in New Zealand alongside a broad range of corporate sponsors:

- ASB Community Trust
- Auckland Council
- Auckland Regional Amenities Funding Board
- Christchurch City Council
- Dame Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation
- Dame Malvina Major Foundation
- Freemasons Roskill Foundation
- New Zealand Community Trust
- Pub Charity
- The Canterbury Community Trust
- The Southern Trust
- The Trusts Community Foundation
- Wellington City Council
- Wellington Regional Amenities Fund

4. CREATIVE NEW ZEALAND'S FUNDING SUPPORT FOR OPERA

A breakdown of our funding support for opera

As well as providing annual core funding to NZ Opera of \$2.4m (since 2012), Creative New Zealand has also supported other kinds of opera activities in New Zealand through our project funding and investment programmes.

This funding is shown in the following table:

Creative New Zealand's funding support for opera in the calendar years from 2009 to 2014 through Quick Response Grants (QR), Arts Grants (AG), Sector Investments (SI) and Toi Uru Kahikatea (KA)					
Year	Recipient	Project Description	Amount		
2009	QR	New Zealand Aria Trust	towards adjudicator fees for the New Zealand Aria Competition in Rotorua	\$5,000	
	AG	Nimby Opera	towards touring <i>The Cunning Little Vixen</i> to Auckland, Kerikeri, Hamilton and Tauranga	\$10,000	
		Ross Harris and Vincent O'Sullivan	towards developing the score and libretto of the chamber opera <i>Brass Poppies</i>	\$36,000	
		The Opera Factory Trust	towards an annual programme of activity	\$24,090	
		YMB Ltd.	towards the development and workshopping of a new work <i>Electric</i>	\$28,900	
SI	New Zealand Opera School	towards tutor fees for the New Zealand Opera School in 2010	\$12,150		
			\$116,140		
2010	QR	James Ioelu	towards the costs of attending the Manhattan School of Music	\$5,000	
	AG	The Opera Factory Trust	towards the opera development programme	\$25,000	
	SI	New Zealand Opera School	towards tutor fees for the New Zealand Opera School in 2011	\$12,150	
				\$42,150	
2011	QR	Christopher Adams and Fiona Farrell	to stage a workshop performance of a new chamber opera	\$7,500	
		Motone Productions	towards workshops and a performance by Pacific opera singers in Rarotonga	\$5,950	
		Opera Otago	towards performers' fees for a tour of two one-act comic operas around the South Island	\$7,500	
		The Opera Factory Trust	towards workshopping short new New Zealand opera works	\$7,500	
		World of Wearable Art Ltd.	towards Aivale Cole's performance at the Hong Kong Arts Festival 2012	\$2,034	
	AG	New Zealand Opera School	towards the 2012 New Zealand Opera School	\$13,000	
		The Opera Factory Trust	towards the opera performance and development programme	\$30,500	
				\$73,984	
	2012	QR	Anthony Young	to attend opera development workshops in Canada	\$2,900
		AG	New Zealand Opera School	towards the fee for the international principal tutor at the 2013 New Zealand Opera School	\$15,000
The Opera Factory Trust			towards a programme for developing young opera practitioners	\$33,000	
				\$50,900	
2013	QR	James Ioelu	towards professional development in language skills	\$7,000	
	AG	The Opera Factory Trust	towards skill development in opera performance for young and developing singers	\$33,000	
		Alexander Wilson	towards asters study in advanced vocal studies at The Welsh International Academy of Voice, Cardiff	\$5,000	
	KA	New Zealand Opera School	towards opera skills tuition for young New Zealand singers and associated performances 2014, 2015 and 2016	\$70,000	
				\$115,000	
	2014	QR	Motone Productions	towards international travel and marketing for two opera artists to Rarotonga	\$3,323
		Motone Productions	towards airfares for a New Zealand Pacific opera singer Elisha Fa'i Hulton	\$2,050	
		Opera Otago	towards the production of the new New Zealand opera <i>This Other Eden</i>	\$7,500	
			\$12,873		
			Total	411,047	

Key Issues for opera in New Zealand

New interpretations and artform development

The New Zealand opera sector is facing many of the same issues as in other countries. Singers, practitioners and supporters generally acknowledge that if this 400-year-old artform is to survive it has to find ways to develop and renew itself in the local context. It may not survive in New Zealand or elsewhere if it remains an unchanging heritage form endlessly recycling the same top ten operas.

That said, new productions do offer fresh interpretations and perspectives for new generations of opera-goers. Production styles have not frozen in time. Technology, too, offers new dimensions for performances, particularly in lighting, design and the use of film. Possibilities for simultaneous participation in multiple centres are also emerging.

Interarts and new forms of collaboration across artforms (including opera) can produce ambitious, exciting and original work. Internationally, artists often resist a genre straitjacket. Whatever the preferred approach may be, audiences will have to be retained, replaced and grown significantly.

New Zealand singers and other practitioners

Creative New Zealand focuses on art produced by New Zealanders for New Zealand audiences, and our funding is expected to provide opportunities for New Zealanders to develop their skills for the benefit of New Zealanders.

New Zealand produces fine singers, and some stay in the country and participate in various music activities at community and professional levels. New Zealand opera companies have needed to balance casting overseas singers with providing New Zealand singers with opportunities at the right stage in their careers. However, successful opera singers need to work internationally to pursue a full career, and we can point to a good number of outstanding New Zealand artists with international reputations in opera. New Zealand does not have enough opportunities for professional New Zealand opera singers to pursue long-term sustainable careers at home.

Since Creative New Zealand began to support professional opera performance in New Zealand, the companies we support have been expected to give appropriate consideration to New Zealanders for casting and for development opportunities. It has been possible for individuals to progress from initial training here to taking up different forms of internships within New Zealand, sometimes leading to smaller singing roles before they start further training and an international career, sometimes involving New Zealand engagements.

We have produced a small number of New Zealand directors and designers, sometimes with cross-over from the theatre sector.

Prioritising New Zealand-composed operas

One of Creative New Zealand's explicit priorities is New Zealand-composed work. However, this has been difficult to achieve in practice. Unlike in the United States, where

the boundaries between popular musical theatre and contemporary opera can be quite blurred for audiences and practitioners (as with Sondheim, Bernstein, Adams and Heggie for example), New Zealand-composed opera has generally been seen so far as only a challenging, minority interest. It has been noted that the festivals have been more successful than the opera companies in enticing audiences to sample more innovative and challenging work.

How much should professional opera cost? And who should pay?

If New Zealand is to continue to support and develop opera, the crunch issue becomes how to decide on the appropriate level of investment relative to other artforms or to the level of broader public benefit that such an investment may deliver. There is no fair, standard international formula for arriving at the appropriate proportion. Different countries will have different priorities and different policy and funding settings. If New Zealand continues to support a professional opera company, the appropriate amount of public support has to be decided on and fixed for a reasonably extended time, so a company can plan with some certainty. If the company is to engage international artists and/or work in partnerships or in ambitious joint ventures, they need lengthy planning cycles and some financial certainty.

Our 2010 review of Recurrently Funded Organisations (RFOs) produced some funding formula guidelines as the basis for establishing the proportion of funding Creative New Zealand would expect to contribute to particular types of professional activity. At that time the Arts Council agreed to fund one professional opera company. The funding guideline for public funding of opera at that point was set at between 40% and 50% of revenue, with 25% of public funding expected to come from sources other than Creative New Zealand – usually local authorities.

The underlying principle for this formula is that the company plans its activities and budgets to produce an agreed percentage of its revenue from the box office. They are expected to obtain additional revenue from local authorities, community trusts, business sponsorships and partnerships, and private donations.

Percentages and ranges are based on:

- the scale of an organisation's operations
- where an organisation is based and the relative size of the communities it serves (its population, rate-payer and audience base)
- the organisation's breadth and reach – especially activities that it delivers outside of its immediate area (activities that may be delivered regionally, nationally or internationally)
- the types of activities the organisation undertakes and the costs involved
- the organisation's revenue-earning potential and the levels of financial risk involved for the organisation
- the public subsidy ratios of overseas organisations undertaking similar activities in countries where there is a similar funding model (that is, a mixture of funding sources).

Boom and bust, or evolution?

New Zealand's first two national opera companies proved unsustainable and were wound up.

The current company has evolved and, like many of its international counterparts, it has needed to re-consider how it operates in order to plan for a sustainable future. As Creative New Zealand undertakes this review and consults about future support for opera, NZ Opera has itself been examining options for its future development.

We will be considering NZ Opera's proposals as part of this review.

5. QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

Deadline for sending us your feedback

Please use the questionnaire below to provide your feedback on this Discussion Paper by:

5.00 pm on Tuesday 17 March 2015

The questionnaire is also available as a separate WindowsWord document in which you can directly enter your responses.

How to provide your feedback

You can send us your feedback by:

- emailing it to: opera-review@creativenz.govt.nz, or
- completing the questionnaire online at:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Opera-Review>
- or posting it to:

Creative New Zealand
Opera Review
PO Box 3806
Wellington 6140

Our questions

Your name:

E-mail address:

Name of organisation (if you are answering this questionnaire on behalf of an organisation):

State of play for opera in New Zealand

Q1 What works well in the presentation of opera in New Zealand? What doesn't?

Which model for presenting opera is right for New Zealand in the twenty-first century?

On pages 9 and 10 of the Discussion Paper we refer to the different the ways – that is, the (models) – through which opera is currently presented and supported in various countries. New Zealand's current model is one of a national presenter, NZ Opera, which presents fully staged operas in Auckland and Wellington twice a year, with one annual production in Christchurch.

We would like to know if you think this model is the best option for opera in New Zealand or if another model is more suitable. One alternative, for example, could be to replace some of the company's large-scale opera productions with small-cast, small-ensemble touring productions that could reach regional centres beyond Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

Q2 Should the current model of one national presenter be changed? If so, what changes do you think should be made?

What kinds of operas and opera presentation are right for New Zealand in the twenty-first century?

NZ Opera's core programming aims to present two or three fully staged productions each year, with an emphasis on well-known nineteenth or eighteenth century operas. However, as summarised in the Discussion Paper (pages 15 to 19), there is also considerable smaller-scale opera activity occurring in New Zealand (for example, the Opera Factory, Festival Opera, and the Auckland Opera Studio etc.), involving New Zealand singers and including the development and production of new New Zealand chamber operas.

Q3 What kinds of operas and opera productions do you think Creative New Zealand should support?

Please rank the following in order of importance, with 1 being the most important and 5 the least important:

- Large-scale professional staged productions of traditional grand operas
- Smaller-scale professional chamber opera productions
- Smaller-scale professional touring productions

- Smaller-scale professional semi-staged or concert performances
- Other (please specify below)

How to develop audiences for opera in New Zealand?

Around the world a particular challenge for opera today is how to grow audiences and raise people's interest in, and demand for, live opera. We would like to know how you believe audiences for opera could best be developed in New Zealand.

Q4 How do you think audiences for opera could be most effectively developed in New Zealand?

Please rank the following six strategies in order of importance, with 1 being the most important and 6 the least important:

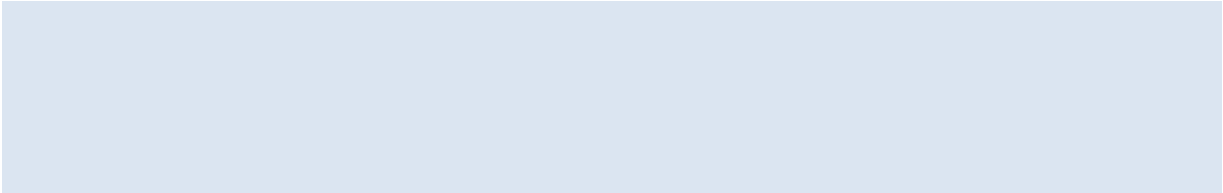
- Digital channels and tools, including social, video and mobile and broadcasting / online streaming
- Touring to regional centres
- Cheaper ticket prices
- Opportunities to experience opera for first time attenders in different settings
- Education and outreach
- Presenting opera in different places or spaces, and/or with other artforms, e.g. dance

Please provide any additional comments you may have, including any further strategies or approaches for developing audiences

Capability-building opportunities for opera practitioners

On page 18 of the Discussion Paper there is a summary of the range of opportunities available to singers and other opera practitioners for coaching, professional development and performing.

Q5 Is this range of capability-building opportunities adequate? Is there a specific gap you think needs to be filled?



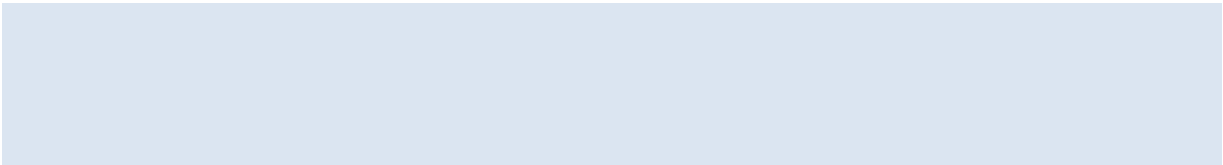
Composers

It has been difficult to establish opera by New Zealand composers as part of the repertoire of professional companies in this country.

As summarised from page 15 of the Discussion Paper ('Creation and staging of productions of new New Zealand operatic works'), new operas have been commissioned and some have been further developed and staged by national companies, by university departments and by smaller independent companies. Festivals have also staged full and concert versions of new operas, sometimes independently and sometimes in partnership with the national company.

Creative New Zealand acknowledges that it is expensive to develop new work and that it requires particular skills and experience.

Q6 How can support for the creation and staging of new New Zealand opera be improved?



Toi Tōtara Haemata (Arts Leadership) Investment Programme

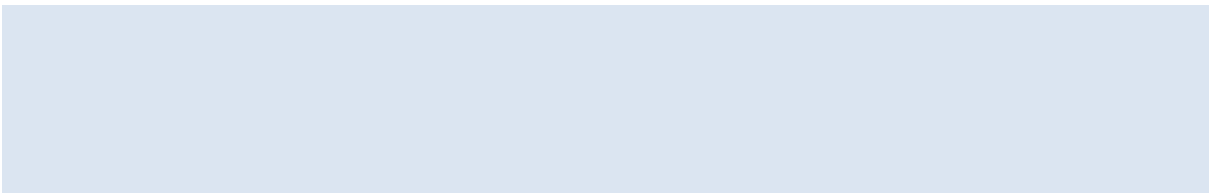
Creative New Zealand supports arts organisations to fill particular key roles in our arts infrastructure through our Toi Tōtara Haemata (Arts Leadership) investment programme. This review of opera is part of our regular consultation on whether the way we describe and invest in these roles is up to date and appropriate for current needs and available resources.

These are the current key roles for opera:

- maintaining a consistently high standard of opera production to provide access for New Zealand audiences
- developing and presenting operas composed by New Zealanders
- developing and presenting New Zealand singers.

NZ Opera is contracted to fill these roles up until the end of 2015.

Q7 Taking into account your answers to the earlier questions and the topics raised in the Discussion Paper, do you think these key roles should be changed? If so, how?



Creative New Zealand's other funding and support for opera

Creative New Zealand can support projects and initiatives through programmes other than the Toi Tōtara Haemata (Arts Leadership) programme. A second investment programme, the Toi Uru Kahikatea (Arts Development) programme, is able to support established New Zealand artists, arts practitioners, groups and arts organisations, for periods of one to three years, to do one or more of the following:

- develop creative and professional skills, resources and networks – for example, through workshops, mentoring programmes, internships, wānanga, fono, seminars and symposiums
- develop, present, tour and/or distribute New Zealand arts to a wide range of audiences within New Zealand or overseas – for example, through developing and presenting exhibitions, presenting concerts or a season of works, touring one or more productions, or publishing a number of titles by New Zealand writers
- strengthen the organisational development of New Zealand artists, arts practitioners, groups and arts organisations.

Individual projects can be supported through **Arts Grants** and **Quick Response Grants**.

Creative New Zealand's priorities

We have two priorities that apply across all art forms :

- projects or programmes of activity that are by, with, or for young people (that is, people up to the age of 18)
- projects or programmes of activity that involve the innovative and cost-effective use of digital technologies to create high-quality New Zealand work and/or to engage and interact with audiences.

Q8 In addition to those two priorities, what should Creative New Zealand's priorities be for opera projects? Please rank the following priorities in order of importance, with 1 being the most important and 6 the least important:

- Development and presentation of opera by New Zealand composers
- Live performances of opera of a professional standard
- Increasing and diversifying audiences for opera in New Zealand
- Professional- development opportunities and performance opportunities in New Zealand for New Zealand singers
- Professional- development opportunities and performance opportunities internationally for New Zealand singers
- Other

