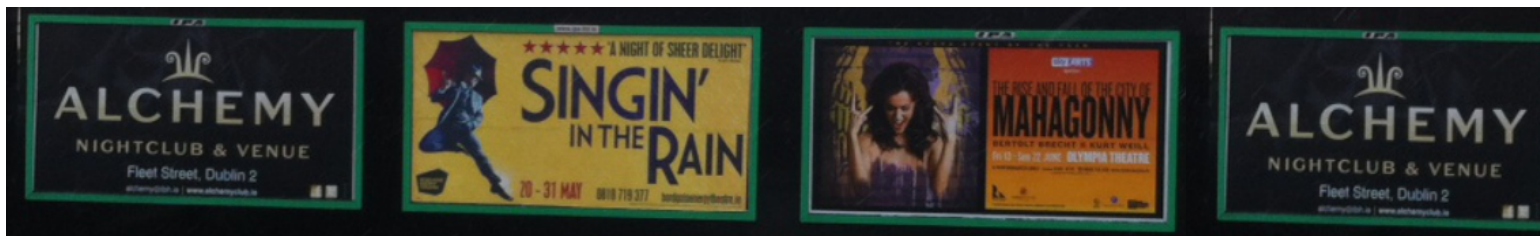


OPERA IN IRELAND:
AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT 2014

APPENDIX IV: GUIDE TO MARKETING OPERA



GETTING BIGGER AUDIENCES FOR OPERA: TEN TOP TIPS

HEATHER MAITLAND / ANNETTE NUGENT

1. Embrace the potential

Research shows there is potential to double the audience for live opera. As many as two thirds of people who say they are interested in opera do not attend live performances.

2. Target arts enthusiasts

Why don't they attend opera? Because we don't tell them about it. We assume opera attenders are opera enthusiasts. They're not – they are arts enthusiasts who attend frequently, seeing a wide range of artforms. Only around a third are classical music fans – and even then they tend to go to popular, high profile concerts. The rest love plays or musicals. As Melanie Kavanagh from the Everyman, Cork says, *"Go for the cultural omnivores. They are ready to convert!"*

3. Reactivate interest

Paul McNamara of Irish Youth Opera says, *"There has always been an interested public for opera in Ireland, for example the people who go to performances when they are abroad or those who go to live screenings of opera in cinemas. Owing to the lack of opportunity at home they have simply got out of the habit of going to live performances – we need to mobilise these "disenchanted" audiences."* The research backs him up: three quarters of Opera Theatre Company's audiences regularly listen to opera on radio or CD.

4. Don't assume knowledge

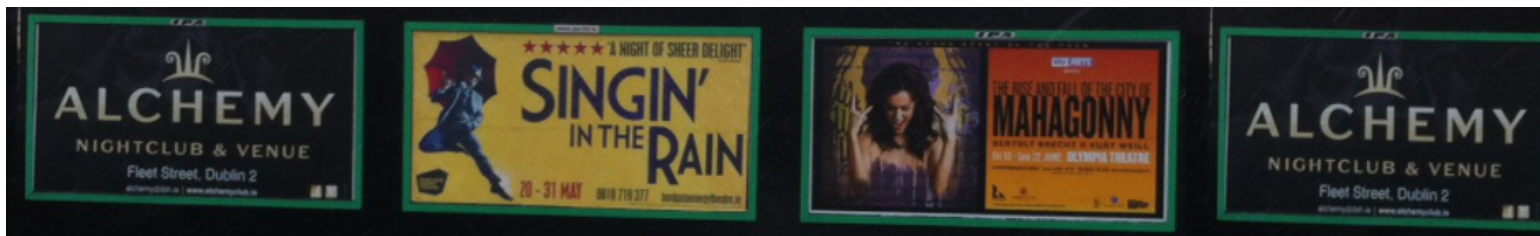
Most current opera attenders recognise the mainstream operatic classics like La Traviata or Rigoletto but a quarter had never heard of Boris Godunov and a fifth had never heard of Lucia di Lammermoor. So if current attenders don't know, potential attenders certainly won't!

5. Be persuasive

To current attenders, opera is thrilling, passionate, dramatic, romantic, an escape from reality and the best of all the other artforms combined together.

But non-attenders think the opposite. They think they won't understand it, it's long and boring, it's not relevant and it's too expensive. Melanie Kavanagh recommends, *"Use every aspect of your marketing campaign to break through their misconceptions about opera"*. We can convince them through recommendations and endorsements, information about what they will experience and taster events that focus on the social aspect of attending opera.

Don't talk about the artists, unless they are very well known: it puts people off if they haven't heard of them. **Don't** talk about the company or the complexity of producing opera. **Don't** explore the abstract themes of the opera. **Do** tell them what they story is. **Do** use images that directly illustrate the story line rather than symbolise it. **Do** grab attention with simple messages about its emotional impact.



6. Sell the experience

“We need to create awareness about the different elements of an opera production. Unless someone has been to an opera it is hard for them to understand the extent to which the productions are world-class works of art. So, communicate the visual and musical elements of opera through trailers, sampler CDs and amazing images on banners, in print and online,” says Seamus Redmond of Wexford Festival Opera.

7. Reduce the risk of the unknown

Only 10% of opera audiences say they would definitely not try a new opera. We can persuade the rest to attend unfamiliar operas with more information on the composer, storyline and artists, an introduction by the artistic leader saying why they chose it and what to expect, reviews of other works by the composer and samples of the music on CD or the website alongside links to more information.

8. Go local

At least three quarters of ticket buyers for opera live within a 30-minute drive of the venue so make sure you focus on persuading local audiences to give opera a try.

9. Don't assume they're posh

Social grade C2DEs made up a third of the audience for opera in 2013 and almost a half in 2012. Audiences do tend to be older and well educated, but that's no different to arts audiences in general.

10. Get to know the potential audience

Want to know more about audiences for opera? Download “Audiences for Opera in Ireland” from the Arts Audiences website, a 2014 report on audiences for opera in Ireland by Heather Maitland, which also features insights from research on opera audiences in the UK, Australia and the USA.

If your opera is touring....

Do read “A Guide to Marketing Your Production on Tour” by Coiscéim Dance Theatre with Heather Maitland, an informative, in-depth handbook for anyone touring a production around Ireland. Available on the Arts Audiences website - www.artsaudiences.ie.