

## Research Article

# Modification of Opera/vocal education in the covid-19 period in Turkey<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The Covid-19 process has deeply affected the act of many professions like fine arts and education in our country similar to the globe. From this point of view, the education of Art can be considered as the most influenced field by this situation. The applied courses conducted by state conservatories have undergone a great methodological change due to this interaction. By adapting to distance education, the question of how and to what extent the course of voice training has changed constitutes the basis of our research. Therefore, by using a semi-structured interview form, online interviews have been conducted with vocal coaches from five different provinces on a voluntary basis to collect the data. Since it is a descriptive research, “case study” model has been used in the study. Content analysis and descriptive analysis methods have been used to analyze and interpret the data. The obtained findings have been analyzed by dividing them into time, method, measures taken, motivation, repertoire, accompaniment and assessment and evaluation themes. During the adaptation process, it has been determined that both the instructors and the students learned how to use online systems like Zoom, Whatsapp, Skype, YouTube to apply technology in the practice. On one hand, it has been determined that they try to protect the continuation of the applied courses, and on the other hand, they try to keep their motivation high against the negativities experienced. In addition, it has been concluded that the vocal coaches became available 24/7, and the curriculum, activity and assessment criteria were transformed due to the process.

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### Introduction

In opera / singing education, the instrument is the whole body of a person. The vocal instructor determines the vocal exercises and repertoire specifically, by a consideration of the student's anatomical structure and vocal characteristics. In order to recognize the student's voice and discover the positive and negative aspects of his/her voice, the instructor may apply different vocal exercises during a few courses and sometimes may use the experimental approach. For example, instructor discovers a natural tendency for agility in a student's voice, applies exercises to improve it, and discovers the extraordinary, beautiful sound qualities of his/her voice. The instructor uses these discovered qualities as a guide and supports the education with a selection of appropriate repertoire in transforming the sound into superior quality. To give another example; the instructor discovers that the student's voice nature has very good pianissimos and that his/her breath capacity allows to perform long musical sentences and then shapes his/her repertoire by choosing more intense legato pieces that support these aspects. In brief, a vocal instructor begins the education with the positive aspects in the material of the student and fills the gaps with this style of study. This method of study is also healthy in that the student establishes the sound-breath control, which is the basis of singing, in a shorter time. The student, who sees that he/she can easily succeed it with the material and skills that are inherent in his/her nature, begins to trust this studying method and the instructor, becomes encouraged, progresses quickly and healthily. In order to study all these aspects and protect the voice

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health of the student, control and instant intervention are essential in courses. Unlike other instrument branches, it would not be wrong to say that the student grows and develops under the wings of the vocal instructor, since it is an education based on abstract concepts, intuition, sensation and imagination, as well as the absence of any concrete instrument other than the human body. Therefore, it is an undeniable fact that this is a master-apprentice relationship.

While referring the principles of an ideal voice instructor, Miller (1996) mentions that the instructor should be open to the idea of combining and changing his/her knowledge with new concepts. By being open-minded, it means to have an approach without prejudice to new knowledge, teaching-oriented elements and concepts that can be used in teaching.

Opera / singing education has been moved to the online platform in the process of change which we are in at the moment and it exposes educators with quite different concepts from those mentioned by Miller. Thus, the need for research has emerged on how this change affects opera / singing education in terms of pedagogical standards and productivity. In the Covid-19 period, music and opera singing education, like all branches of applied education, is subject to an unplanned change. Calderón-Garrido and Gustems-Carnicer (2021:140) define this change as 'emergency remote teaching'. While making this definition, they draw attention to the fact that the practices in the current period should not be confused with the 'distance education' method, which has a development process of more than 120 years. In addition, as stated by Schiavio, Biasutti and Philippe (2021:2), instructors are expected to adapt to the sudden change on one hand, and to maintain high professional standards in this adaptation process on the other hand.

With the outbreak of the epidemic, as an 'emergency action plan' universities decided to transform all courses into theoretical method and continued on the distance education platforms they have. Opera / vocal training was also included in this regulation, like all application areas within conservatories. While discussing the ideal opera / singing education, Hines (1997: 122) points out that theoretical scientific analyzes based on theory, which will be carried out in depth, may sometimes contributes nothing to the pragmatic learning experience. In addition, he emphasizes that theory is necessary in opera / singing education, but it should never prevents practice. Realizing that the applied courses cannot be continued theoretically, university administrations decided to carry out applications on online platforms at the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year. Johnson (2017, 442-443) mentions that the lesson design approaches encountered in the online environment, the level of interaction between the teacher and the student, and the pedagogical choices regarding the learning activity styles of the student are different from traditional music education. The fact that a general pedagogical approach to online music teaching has not been developed yet has forced the trainers to adhere to the methodology they use in face-to-face education. Kruse et al. (2013:54-55), list the conditions of successful online music education as the ability to vocalize, effective use of technology, and a pre-structured communication between the instructor and the student. Considering all these points, the online real-time (synchronic) education decision made by universities has made it necessary to make changes in the usual teaching methods of opera / singing education.

### **Problem of Study**

In this context, the question of what aspects and in what range the opera / singing education, which should be done face to face under normal conditions, has modified under pandemic conditions constitutes the basis of our research. In the research, some answers have been sought by diversifying this basic question with the following sub-problems:

- Have the singing courses been modified in terms of duration?
- What are the differences of the methods applied in singing courses?
- What is the situation in terms of self-assessment in the courses?
- Have the singing courses modified in terms of repertoire?
- Have the singing courses with piano accompaniment undergone a change?
- Has motivation changed in the lessons?
- Has measurement-evaluation changed in singing courses?

The aim of the research is to reveal the common problems and common or non-common solution suggestions of the opera/vocal instructors who adapt the opera / singing courses that need to be done face to face to the online system.

## Method

This study is a descriptive research, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is a method that adopts an interpretative approach to examine the research problem, based on an interdisciplinary holistic perspective. The facts and events on which research is conducted are handled on their own context and interpreted in terms of the meanings that people attribute to them (Altunışık et al. 2010: 302).

### Research Model

The case study is one of the research survey models. Survey model is a research approach which aims to describe a past or present situation as it is (Karasar, 2000:77). Case study survey models are also survey arrangements that aim to reach a judgment about a certain unit (individual, family, school, hospital, association, etc.) in the universe by considering every aspect of its relations with itself and its surroundings (Tütengil, 1995:78).

### Study Group

The participants who create the study group of the research were determined as “simple random sampling” which is disproportionate element sampling and in which those who entered the sample were left to chance and random sampling (Karasar, 2000; 113). The studying group was constituted by the voice trainers who work in opera/voice majors in five conservatories’ performing arts departments in separate provinces, and can be reached during the pandemic process. The names of the educators were not included in the study, they were coded as “P1, P2...”.

**Table1.**

*Demographic Specifications of Participants*

Participant	Affiliation	Professional Experience (Years)	Interview Method	Date of Interview
P1	Bulent Ecevit University State Conservatory	15-20	Online	03/07/2021
P2	Mersin University State Conservatory	20-25	Online	03/09/2021
P3	Dokuz Eylul University State Conservatory	10-15	Online	03/11/2021
P4	Baskent University Conservatory	< 25	Online	03/14/2021
P5	Istanbul University State Conservatory	< 25	Online	03/12/2021

### Data Collection Tools

The data in the study have been collected by semi-structured interview method. Interview is one of the basic data collection methods in qualitative research. Semi-structured interview is based on an interview guide including certain guidance. Guidance, rather than being the questions to be asked in the interview, indicates the points where data will be collected and / or the points where the data to be collected will be contextualized (Özer, 2002: 50). First of all, a draft interview form was prepared. For the final version of the questionnaire, the opinions of three subject area experts were consulted. The semi-structured interview form, which was finalized with expert opinions, consisted of fifteen questions. The prepared interview form was sent to the voice trainers via e-mail and the appointment date and time for the interview were determined with them. The participants were reached through the internet "Zoom" program and interviews were held. The transcriptions of the records of the interviews have been made and added a textual dimension to the data.

### Data Analysis

The findings obtained in this research were analyzed with the content and descriptive analysis methods in which the data were organized. Themes and codes were created from the findings obtained through interviews. The status of the online courses and the views of the participants on the targeted success were analyzed by the content analysis method. Reaching students through online courses and methods related to voice training were examined descriptively. With the analysis carried, 7 themes and 17 sub-themes were obtained.

## Results

### Usage of Technological Resources & Time

The data obtained as a result of the interviews with the singing instructors were examined under two themes. From the data obtained, the views of the participants on the themes of technological resource and time used are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*Content Analysis of Educators' Views Regarding the Usage of Technological Resources & Time in Opera/Singing Education During the Pandemic Period*

Theme	Categories	Codes	Participants
Time	Process	University Systems	P1, P2, P3
		Infrastructure	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
		Synchronization	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
		Continuity	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
		Efficiency	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
Use/Technological Resource	Applications/Softwares	YouTube	P1
		Skype	P3, P4, P5
		Zoom	P1, P5
		Whatsapp	P2, P3, P4, P5
		Facetime	P5,
		Teams	P4
		Google Meet	P3, P4

When Table 2 is examined, the opinions of the participants about the course processes in the use of time in the online course are given below. Due to the decisions of the universities that participants affiliate, it was determined that they instruct online live courses through the systems purchased by their universities. P1 and P4 stated that they uploaded recordings of online courses from other platforms to the university system. Among the participants, P5 stated that the administration of the conservatory informed the university administration about the inadequacy of the system with reasons, and stated that they received approval to continue their education through Zoom independently.

**University Systems:** *"The University did not limit us. No matter what platform you use to lecture. As long as you upload a link to UZEM" (P1) "I did not use the system of our university. I instruct and record the lecture by Skype" (P4). "Moreover, our rector mentioned that in some cases, it may not be recorded. I also use Whatsapp a lot" (P4). "We reported to the university administration that we will do individual lessons over Zoom and we made it accepted" (P5).*

All of the participants stated that they had problems with their internet connections during the online courses and added that they were disconnected from the systems occasionally due to insufficient infrastructure.

**Infrastructure:** *"Our internet service may not be enough; sometimes there is no connection anywhere in the school. On such days, we live a lot of difficulties during the courses or we have to end them before their actual times" (P5). "There is a gendarmerie section in the university campus. We experience a lot of interruptions in during the courses when Jammers turned on." (P4). We definitely have problems connecting to the course by a third. The student's or my internet connection fails" (P1). "There are a lot of connection problems at the university during the online exams. Even though we switch to Whatsapp, sometimes we have great difficulties in teaching because of the shortage of the internet package of students." (P2). "We have connection problems very often. Especially if the student attends the course with a mobile phone..." (P3).*

All of the participants stated that the courses were affected by the synchronization problem.

**Synchronization:** *"I can't accompany the students because of the unsynchronized systems. Upper grades accompany themselves while they exercise. Beginners can't handle it and lose their intonation. I have to guide them using my voice. I can't accompany synchronously. Sound of piano delays because of the systems and the exercise becomes unmanageable. Thus, cacophony occurs. Formerly I preferred to play piano as a guide to their intonation. Then there was conditioning. With the support of accompaniment the intonation of the student becomes proper. During this period I can't accompany. In the beginners' courses they act like a parrot. First I sing or play, and then they repeat. After each lesson, they mail me their exercise recordings." (P5). "Since it is not possible to play the piano and exercise at the same time, I uploaded the exercises to YouTube as sample videos to overcome the synchronization problem." (P1). "Since there is a synchronization problem in the exercises, I play the basic chords and if necessary, I exemplify the exercise with my voice and then I expect it from my student." (P3).*

**Continuity:** *"I organize the duration of the course as 50 minutes. "Continuity of the course is interrupted by the connection failures. If the student has connected with a mobile phone, this causes even more problems." (P3). "My*

course duration is approximately 40-45 minutes. This duration is not sufficient because of the connection failures. We always communicate with each other. We have a Whatsapp group. Additionally, I gave permission to all my students for to reach me individually on any subject at any time. Traditionally communication cannot be limited by the course time" (P5). "The University requests the duration of course recordings 20 minutes as a minimum from us. Our course duration is 40 minutes. The students act in a more disciplined manner for to use the course duration more efficiently." (P2). "The course duration in our faculty is 50 minutes. Continuity decreases because of some of the levity and connection failures of some students." (P1). "Our course duration is 40 minutes. The students mail me video recordings when it is not enough for training. In this way, we are trying to ensure continuity." (P4).

**Efficiency:** "One of my students opened a YouTube channel. She found a pianist. They study remotely. They built a terrific repertoire and uploaded video recordings with costumes and mise-en-scene up to 30 pieces which contains Contemporary French Repertoire, Turkish Pieces, Tangos, Modern Pieces, Lieder, Arie-Antiches and Arias. So the young people adapted the situation much better than us. We accept many students from Anatolia to school. Most of them went to their hometowns. They connect to courses from their father home. Our school is in close proximity to Süreyya Opera House. Before the outbreak, we used to go to performances, concerts, rehearsals. This education is not solely voice training. There's a terrific world around it. There's no such acculturation at the moment." (P5). "Singing at home is particularly difficult for students. Because of this situation, we reduced our expectations from the courses." (P4). "I can say that the course efficiency has dropped by fifty percent."(P3).

In Table 2, it is revealed that the participants utilize many websites and softwares in the use of technological resources in their online courses, and they are not limited to the softwares purchased by universities.

**Applications / Softwares:** "I got the best efficiency from Skype and Whatsapp applications in my lessons. I'm having a lot of interruptions in Teams and Zoom." (P4). "Apart from the university system UZEM, I use YouTube and Zoom." (P1). "Our university uses AXIS, but the conservatory does not. We use Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp and Facetime individually." (P5). "I use Whatsapp apart of our university system." (P2).

### Method Applied in Online Courses

Singing instructors were asked what the methods they used in online lessons were and the data obtained as a result of the interviews were coded as in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Content Analysis of Educators' Views Regarding the Method Applied in Online Courses in Opera/Singing Education During the Pandemic Period*

Theme	Codes	Participants
Application Method	Preliminary Preparation	P1, P3, P4, P5
	In-course Time Segmentation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
	Exercise Diversity	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5
	Piece Interpretation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5

#### Preliminary Preparation:

Students are less serious now. Before the pandemic, the students were more careful because they were face to face with their instructor. They took care of their sleep and paid more attention to their vocal health. In the pandemic period you start the course on time but no one joins. 'I couldn't wake up. I couldn't come. Last night I had an issue etc.' I think the preparations for the course is sloppy. This is not a home office job." (P1). Time is precious now. A student has 40 or 80 minutes for singing course in a week. They lose their chances if they don't warm up their voices before the course. The program is so strict. Another student waits his/her course time. Because of this situation they began to prepare themselves in a more disciplined way. For the morning courses, they get up early, eat breakfast, prepare a cup of tea or coffee and review the piece they study on before the course time. That's the beneficial part of this period." (P2). "In this period, homework has increased in collective and theoretical online courses. In addition, some professors extended the duration of the courses. Therefore, the student had to attend the singing courses without being fully prepared and concentrating."(P4). "Indeed, I love to do face to face course with students. This education is so physical. We have to make the students bodily move. We have to check their diaphragm with our hands. We must be side by side with the student. Frankly, I can't get as excited as I used to when courses are remote. On the contrary, I worry. What if the internet connection fails? This makes me anxious. Of course, our students were also demotivated. Of course, they want to feel their instructors and pianists with them. Mostly I saw them depressed. That's the cause of lost of the preliminary preparation."(P5).

Participants expressed their views on the methods they used in online courses, studying on both exercise and piece, as follows:

**In-course Time Segmentation:** "I am opening a forum from UZEM for 20 minutes of 50 minutes of course time. I instruct live courses for at least half an hour. In our department, there are two separate hours of singing courses

per week. That goes up to three hours in senior years. I usually try to dedicate one of the courses to exercise. In the morning courses, I prefer exercise instead of performance. If I have time, I also make study the student on piece. In the afternoon courses, after a short exercise, I make the student study on the piece for about 20-25 minutes.” (P1). “Our course duration is 40 minutes. Honestly, I don't spend much time on exercising because of the agreement between students and me. They have to warm their voices, masks and breathe. I only control their voice and position condition via one or two exercise. Then we continue our course with interpretation of pieces.” (P2). “Our face to face course is 50 minutes. However, online courses are limited period of 40 minutes. Due to this limitation, I instruct my courses up to 35 minutes because of the environmental conditions of the students. About 15 minutes of this time fills with exercise and we can study on pieces for about 20 minutes.”(P4).

Participants refer to the exercises they practice in online classes, the variety of exercises and how the interpretation of the given parts can be as follows:

**Exercise Diversity:** “I try to adapt, apply and do all my exercises in some way. However, this makes me very tired especially with beginners. The upper class understands without me saying anything. I say: ‘Come on, we're moving down as arpeggio.’ they apply it right away. They exercise on piano while they are singing. I'm doing the whole exercise to explain it to a beginner. This is what makes me so tired. They say, ‘We understand when you sing it.’ That's why I do all the exercise. Then the student does the exercise. He/she imitates exactly like a monkey or a parrot. This is why it is difficult to study with a beginner. I instantly determine the diversity of exercises according to the needs of the student.” (P5). “I didn't have a problem as I uploaded all my exercises and models to YouTube for all sound sets without making any changes. I just narrowed the limits of the register.” (P1). “For example, staccato and agility exercises... It's impossible for me to get these online. While the interval we use in these exercises should be traveled and returned in an extremely fluid way, continuity cannot be ensured due to the insufficiency of the system. The student needs to apply the short breath technique between phrases in these exercises. There's no chance to apply this because of the lack of continuity. In this condition I feel myself lucky if I can bear the student's singing position, apoggio and breathe warming during the course. The biggest problem for us is devotion from the exercise diversity.” (P2). “Of course, the exercises have decreased in quantity. While we had 10-15 different exercises done in the face-to-face period, we tried to get the job done with three exercises online. I mainly preferred the arpeggio exercises according to the student's register. We were also able to do scale and staccato exercises. We didn't prefer the chromatic exercises because there were shifts in intonation.” (P4). “I'm on the listener side. They all know how to play chords anyway. Now I say let's do this exercise. While they're doing it, I'm listening intently.” (P3).

**Piece Interpretation:** “When it comes to interpretation and temperament, unfortunately, the student does what the recording allows. They don't always sing on very healthy records. Unfortunately, there are serious problems in the interpretation of arias such as Puccini and Verdi, which need to be redundant and have lots of ritenuto and pointdorgs.” (P2). “Because of the software we use, you cannot distinguish whether students are singing forte or piano. I especially try to keep out them from the forte and make them sing mezzo voce. I'm afraid of causing damage in their voices. Nuance is a very challenging subject. Obviously, you can't work under these circumstances.” (P1). “Nuance, musicality, of course, we are studying them in detail with the upper classes but of course, as long as the accompaniment record allows. Sometimes we turn the accompaniment recording off and study the piece sentence by sentence. We also study on technical details but sometimes ‘Zoom’ doesn't allow us to progress because of its frequency limitations.” (P5). “Frankly, we couldn't get into the details of the musicality too much. Get the intonation correct. We couldn't do much for nuance because even the slightest sound in electronic environment can sound very metallic. In online courses, real and live color differences in voice are not as obvious as in face-to-face courses. We mostly tried to care about well articulation, well intonation and legato. I mainly recommended my students to do various breathing exercises. You know, there are hundreds of exercises on this subject. I hoped to keep their reflexes alive with these exercises. In distance education, I had more successful results than the face-to-face courses with two or three of my students. That was all.” (P4).

### Measures Taken for Online Courses

In the light of the interviews, the measures taken by the voice trainers to overcome the difficulties they encountered in education during the Covid-19 period were divided into codes as in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

*Content Analysis of Educators' Views Regarding the Measures Taken for Online Courses in Opera/ Singing Education During the Pandemic Period*

Theme	Codes	Participants
Measures Taken for Online Courses	Usage of Recording Technology Analysis of Piece	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5 P2

When Table 4 is examined, it can be seen that all of the participants benefited from recording technologies to complete the missing aspects in the lessons. In addition, piece analysis stands out as another method that P2 apply. The opinions of the participants about the theme are given below.

**Usage of Recording Technology:** *“I shot sample videos to overcome the synchronization problem. Then I uploaded them in unlisted form to YouTube. I announced the link to the students. In course time the students use those recordings as accompaniment. In this way, I can hear the students’ exercises as synchronized. As the second step, the accompanist pianists recorded the pieces and mailed the recordings to the students. Thus, the students became able to sing their pieces to me in their piano singing lessons.”* (P1). *“The student mails me the recording of the piece that we study in course time. I’m making a critique of that record on the system. Then he/she prepares another recording of corrected version of piece for next week.”* (P2). *“One of my colleagues prepared recordings for her students. I didn’t, because they also know how to play the chords on piano.”* (P3). *“Our accompanist pianists played the pieces and mailed them to the students. Some of them could not play due to some special circumstances, such as discomfort or sickness. In such cases, the students found those accompaniments on the internet and sent us recordings by singing with them.”* (P4). *“Our correpetitors recorded lots of pieces and distributed them to the students. We shoot a lot of videos not only for the exam, but also for the rehearsals of the exam. In this way they have many records and they choose from among them. Upper grades record all of their performances with costumes and mise-en-scene.”* (P5).

**Analysis of Piece:** *“The best thing I’ve ever done in this period: I always said it when we were studying face to face. Take the score and read it like a book. Find out what it includes. This study opens your eyes and mind. Look at the nuance on accompaniment and singing lines. What do we do with the breath regarding the starting note, the ending note, of a big legato sentence that we talk about while exercising? Mark all of these details on score. Let that score become your scrapbook so that I can understand that you are thinking about that piece.”* (P2).

## Motivation

In the light of the data obtained, how the motivation, which is the biggest factor on the realization of the goals of opera/singing education, takes form in the pandemic period and the situations arising from the pandemic has been specified by the codes in Table 5.

**Table 5.**

*Content Analysis of Educators’ Views Regarding the Motivation in Opera/Singing Education During the Pandemic Period*

Theme	Codes	Participants
Motivation	Educator’s Motivation	P1, P3, P4, P5
	Students’ Motivation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5

When Table 5 is examined, it has been determined by the codes discussed that motivation has changed in terms of both the educator and the student. The opinions of the participants on the subject are as follows:

### Educator’s Motivation:

*“Our motivation is low. I don’t think that online courses are efficient. Because of seeing no progress, all my efforts such as instructing online live courses and dealing with uploading a lot of recording to the system makes me feel bad. This situation does not provide any benefit for both me and student.”* (P1). *For me, the day of singing courses was joy. We were having fun, laughing, joking, drinking tea or coffee. Opera / singing education is not only a technical education. While raising an artist, we try to create an identity as much as we can. Creating an artistic identity is incredibly difficult process. By chatting and sharing memories, we train not only a good musician, a good singer, but also a good artist who abides by ethical rules, knows how to behave in human relations, and how to behave in a community or when going to the opera. Face to face education is advantageous in all these aspects. Of course, we chat at the end of the online course for about 5 minutes. Most of our time is spent struggling with the systems. Students ask so many questions such as ‘What was the exercise? Did you sing with the vocal ‘o’ or ‘a’?’ trying to learn the singing technique. We have to deal all of these problems. We don’t have any chance to think about our motivation. This is our job and we have to continue to practice.”* (P5). *“My motivation is same. It has always been stayed the same. It may also be due to my passion for this profession.”* (P4). *“Especially in this period, you have to be open to innovations. Everything is changing in 21st century. The person who is open to innovations and criticism keeps going on the road.”* (P3).

**Students’ Motivation:** *“Unfortunately, students tend to lose their motivation easily. Also, it was really hard for them to get out of that home environment and get into artistic focus. Some were connected to the online course from their own room, while others were connected from the living room of the house. Someone may pass behind the student during the course. Briefly, the motivation was low because of the lack of the atmosphere or ambiance. This was much more noticeable, especially in the records of students. It was really difficult for students to shoot a video recording. They are not familiar with it. Even Metropolitan’s famous artists broadcast from their homes, but they didn’t really sing. They were all pre-made recordings. So singing from home is difficult. It is even more difficult for students.”* (P4). *“Motivation*



decreased more in students. Of course, it also depends on personality traits, varies according to family structure. These are things that change according to social factors. Some students have a very strong family and they are very organized, very disciplined until that day. That's why he/she tolerates this situation very well. There will be no change in his/her success. Some students are already having education with difficulties. Maybe his/her financial situation may be bad, internet connection is problematic, his/her house is not warm enough. Of course these are negative situations. That's why students lost motivation." (P5). "It was positive about the preparations of the students. They felt more comfortable. But there are also those who experience this as a disadvantage. For example, the junior and senior students I mean. While they were able to perform at very high level, they were blocked. They became devastated. For some students, this situation was positive. Some students felt good to be by themselves. For example, a student who is very lazy, has a coordination problem all the time, does not prepare properly, is constantly creating new works and makes me listen to them. I couldn't believe this modification." (P2). "If students have concentration and psychological problems, they can stumble here." (P3). "I have never seen any students who were positively affected in terms of motivation. Students can't interact. They cannot listen to each other's courses. I have seen severe traumatic situations because they could not socialize. I have students who had Covid-19. They are not in a good technical level. They have fears of being a Covid-19 era graduate." (P1).

### Repertoire

Voice instructors were asked about the changes they made in education in terms of repertoire during the Covid-19 period. The views of the participants on the change in repertoire are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.**

*Content Analysis of Educators' Views Regarding the Repertoire in Opera/Singing Education During the Pandemic Period*

Theme	Codes	Participants
Repertoire	Covid Repertoire	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5

When Table 6 is examined, it can be seen that all of the participants made changes in the repertoire they used in the courses. The opinions of the participants about the theme are given below.

**Covid repertoire:** "For example, in the last year of program, the student performs six pieces, with at least two grand opera arias, two Mozart arias and two lieds in each of every semester's final. We have reduced them in numbers but the quality remained the same." (P1). Even if we have cut the curriculum and agreed on the students' responsibility for fifty percent of the repertoire, I am trying to study on more number of pieces with them. Let me demonstrate our real curriculum with an example on the third year's repertoire: In the fall semester the students have to study on a lied, an opera aria, a Baroque piece and another opera aria or a concert aria (in a language except German and Italian). The reduced version for distance education is: a Baroque piece and an opera aria or a concert aria (in a language except German and Italian). Since there is no periodic limitation in the aria, it has become almost completely free." (P2). "As you can see in the spring semester of the junior year and both semesters of the senior year we reduced the numbers of the pieces into three in the repertoires consist of at least four pieces." (P3). "We cut the curriculum in half. We could only get results in that way, which is also limited with the legato, articulation and intonation." (P4). We implemented the pandemic curriculum. As an example we removed the complete opera role from the repertoire. Because it was impossible to find partners, sing a duet, or quartet alone, we removed the complete operas from the curriculum and switched to a simplified pandemic curriculum. Frankly, we cut them all. For the midterms we asked for one piece from every student, but the student will memorize and sing it with an accompaniment heard in background. For the final exams we asked at least two pieces from the first two year students, and maximum four pieces from the last two year students." (P5).

### Accompaniment

The sine qua non of opera/singing education is correpetition courses and harmony with accompaniment. In the light of the data received, what kind of change happened in accompaniment during the pandemic period has been processed with the codes in Table 7.

**Table 7.**

*Content Analysis of Educators' Views Regarding the Accompaniment in Opera/Singing Education During the Pandemic Period*

Theme	Codes	Participants
Accompaniment	Pre-prepared Accompaniment Recordings	P1, P2, P4, P5
	Recordings prepared by Accompanist Pianists	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5

When Table 7 is examined, the opinions about accompaniment in the online course process are discussed in two codes. The opinions of the participants on the subject are as follows:

**Pre-prepared Accompaniment Recordings:** "This changes all reflexes, as the piano accompaniment is not live. It's not healthy to say over a ready-made accompaniment. It's what we call karaoke. Because making music



together is something different. It is necessary to breathe, to feel the entrance and exit and the nuances at the same time with the accompanist. It doesn't mean anything without these aspects whether our accompanist pianists record the pieces. The students find accompaniment recordings of the arias and lieds on YouTube. They have to adapt to how it was performed there. Even the student memorizes it after a while. This is not right at all. The best example is the recitatives: Students know there's a space for the recitative and they try to fit the words into it. However, it must be done through their feelings." (P5). "Online piano accompanied singing courses are not available. It becomes impossible to intervene instantly when singing live on recording. The student lost him/herself in the piece and sings the piece to the end. You do everything to stop him/her but it's useless. Since you couldn't intervene on the spot, he/she sings it with all her mistakes. How can this kind of study be helpful to a student? I am also exhausted from not being able to intervene." (P2). "Our accompanying instructors recorded the pieces and sent them to the students. Some of them could not play due to some special circumstances such as illness. In such cases, the students found the accompaniments of the songs on the internet and sent us the recordings by singing on them. Obviously, accompaniment courses could not be done online." (P4). "At normal times, when you say stop, both the accompanist and the student know where they are. But it is impossible in online courses. You can control neither the accompaniment nor student. These factors transform the course into torture." (P1).

**Recordings Prepared by Accompanist Pianists:** "Our pianists are phenomenal. They play every score they see. They immediately recorded lots of pieces and sent to the students to enable them to study on. However, there must be a flow with the instructor. Sometimes there occurs a gap and the student can't control it. For example, student sang before the entrance of the chord. These details are so difficult to study online. Especially some arias such as "cabaletta arias" need immediate tempo changes. You have to adapt yourself in a time like an eye blink. The students follow the recording, wait for to hear the chord and after the chord is heard they try to catch the exact entrance beat. This is so hard to do and is not right. Student can't improve the singer's reflexes with such studies." (P5). "Of course, we couldn't do singing lessons with piano accompaniment. It could not be an environment where I, the accompanist and the student were together. However, we made suggestions to our accompanists about how the pieces should be performed. They tried to perform as we suggested in the recording sessions. There's no acoustic standards that we looked for which sustains the sound approximately one and a half seconds at home. Because of this environmental deficiency the color of the voice becomes different than the usual. The students are struggling with it. That's why we reduced our expectations from the singing courses." (P4). "There's no accompaniment course instructed in this period. From the very beginning, the administrative board made a decision on this subject. They decided for the accompanists not to instruct courses." (P2). "For the last two years, we have been deprived of singing lessons with piano accompaniment due to university policies. The student only takes accompaniment courses for two hours a week. In online education the accompanist recorded and sent the pieces to the student. Students use those recordings in accompanied singing courses and I listen them in this way." (P1). "In our singing lessons with piano accompaniment, both the singing instructor and the accompanist are connected to the system at the same time. But when the student joins us, some problems emerge in the system. For example, sometimes both instructors want to intervene at the same time. For example, while the accompanist is warning the student about the rhythm singing instructor is trying to draw his/her attention to sing with an open mouth position." (P3).

### Assessment & Evaluation

Voice instructors were asked about the changes they made in terms of assessment and evaluation in determining student success in education during the Covid-19 period. The views of the participants on the assessment-evaluation change are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8.**

*Content Analysis of Educators' Views Regarding the Assessment & Evaluation in Opera/Singing Education During the Pandemic Period*

Theme	Codes	Participants
Assessment & Evaluation	In-Course Assessment Criteria	P1, P2, P4, P5
	Assessment Criteria for Exams	P2, P3, P4, P5

When Table 8 is examined, it has been determined that P2, P4 and P5 have made changes in the evaluation criteria that they apply both in the course and in the exams, while P1 maintains its standards in the evaluation criteria for exams, and P3 maintains its standards in the face-to-face education period. The opinions of the participants about the theme are given below.

**In-course Assessment Criteria:** "Of course, I have criteria for the exam. My in-course criteria are the same as in face-to-face education. Intonation is my basic criteria. Timbre is another one. I have criteria for the singing position,

*but as I said before, it is not clear how well I can hear and apply these criteria in the course. I can't apply too many criteria. Frankly, we are not very close in those criteria.” (P1). “The criteria in my mind are always certain such as ‘his/her stage in first grade should be this, in second grade he/she should be at this point, in third grade he/she should be at that level. I think that I couldn't stay fixed on this exactly in this period. Because as I said; the deficiency is always related to the development of breathing and vocal condition. Now I can't interfere with breathing. I can't see it as it is face to face. Maybe he/she finds a very easy method. For example, if we are dealing with the voice position in a soprano, we must first find la natural clean in the upper sol register so that we can find do over that la position. I can't push it too hard. Because while listening to the footage, I can't be sure that la is really full temperament. Therefore, I have to reduce my criteria when evaluating. I realized that I had to file down my expectations.” (P2). “We cut the curriculum in half. We could only get results in that way, which is also limited. We only looked for singing in legato, well articulation and perfect singing in pitch.” (P4). “In assessment and evaluation, all trainers were a little more tolerant and tolerant, since we also saw the effort of the children. They have already attended courses. There was no such thing as absenteeism. That's why we didn't pay much attention to absenteeism.” (P5).*

**Assessment Criteria for Exams:** *“I did not make any reductions in terms of difficulty level. Whatever level it should be, we prepared our repertoire accordingly. This curriculum is just a formality.” (P2). “We will do our exams as if we are in an accompanied singing course. There will be no jury. Only the student's singing instructor and the accompanist will listen because it's impossible to do it with the whole jury in this period.” (P3). “I have evaluated the full implementation of the three rules I mentioned before. There was something I learned while I was in Germany. They were calling legato as ‘the secret of singing’. I never forgot this concept. Of course, there are also intonation etc. but singing is not possible without legato. Frankly, I gave full grade to those who did it well.” (P4). “We tried to be tolerant while grading because they did their best in this situation. I always say that we have achieved only half of the progress compared to face to face.” (P5).*

## Discussion

In general, the data collected for Opera / Singing training in Turkey during the Covid-19 period handled in the "Modification" category. Details of the modification are examined by decomposing them into themes and sub-themes.

### Usage of Technological Resources & Time

The prerequisite of applied music education that has been moved to online platforms is to use the technological resources. For this, as stated by Kruse et al. (2013: 54-55), it is necessary to use technological resources effectively. The interviewees discussed the reasons of ineffective use of the technological resources, which have become one of the most important elements in voice training with the outbreak of the pandemic in detail. Considering the participant density, the coded data were detailed as four subtitles.

#### University Systems

There are distant educational platforms decided and purchased to be used as the basic education platform by the administrative boards of universities during the Covid-19 pandemic process. However, it is known that these platforms are insufficient to compensate the needs of units such as conservatories whose education are based on the ideal of sound and timbre. Another insufficient element is infrastructure. As it is known, although universities establish internet connection over ULAKBIM, which seems to have an infrastructure independent of internet providers in our country, the situation of ULAKBIM's inadequacy in terms of infrastructure has emerged due to the increase in the number of universities in recent years. In order to eliminate this deficiency, ULAKBIM had to utilize the infrastructure of Turkish Telekom, which is the main internet provider of the country. Since the Telekom infrastructure cannot provide an adequate solution to this problem, problems arose in terms of not ensuring both connectivity and connection continuity. Even under these conditions, most university administrations oblige educators to continue online courses through their distant educational platforms of universities'. In order to prevent infrastructural deficiencies; applications and discretion like limiting the course duration from 15 minutes to 30 minutes and opening a forum in the place of the missing parts of the total course time, etc. have been presented as if they are the real solutions. Both the connection failure and the interruptions experienced cause considerable disruptions in terms of the integrity of the course and lead to a further shortening of the already limited course periods.

#### Synchronization

Synchronization, which we encounter as a significant problem in theme, is one of the most important problems that participants constantly encounter in university systems and independent online platforms such as Zoom, Whatsapp, Facetime, Skype, Teams. Regardless of the name of the platform, due to the fact that the internet

infrastructure used in online lessons remains same and the speed of data transfer remains low, the delay (ping) experienced during exercising or performing a piece makes it impossible for the educator and the student to perform simultaneously. Therefore, neither a vocal exercise nor the piece accompanied by the piano can be performed functionally.

### **Continuity**

**Continuity of Course:** All of the participants complained of disconnection as one of the biggest factors in the interruption of online lessons. Participants stated that the students with better financial means attend the course via fiber or cable internet connection by using computers, whereas the students who do not have the good financial means attend the course via mobile internet connection, usually by using mobile phones. Disconnections due to lack of infrastructure and efforts to reconnect to the course negatively affects the time and leaves both educators and students face with the reality of a shorter course period which is already restricted by the university administrations.

**Continuity of Education:** Regarding the continuity of the course, educators have to make changes on the details that are determined in advance in the curriculum, considering the speed of the student's learning and application of what he/she learned. This situation means constant updates on the curriculum. Acting on the principle of being student-oriented, educators try to protect their students as much as they can from the negativities caused of the pandemic period we are in. In addition to the curriculum, they also took action to make the end-term goals more reachable. Updating both the programs and the goals are very important for the continuity of education for the student. In addition, such changes are also functional in terms of keeping the student stayed focus.

### **Efficiency**

In the interviews, all of the participants revealed the inadequacy of distance education compared to face-to-face education. While referring to the reasons for this inadequacy, participants state that the restrictions made by the universities on the course durations, disconnections, synchronization and other infrastructural deficiencies prevent both educators and students from using their time effectively. Participant 5, in particular, emphasizes another remarkable aspect of efficiency. She states that we are faced with the fact that the students who can benefit from all the opportunities of the conservatories where they get education during the face-to-face period are now deprived of these opportunities, whether they live in the province where the institution is located or in the farthest parts of Anatolia. When we say school opportunities, we mean not only physical facilities but also social opportunities. Considering that Opera / Singing education is an acculturation process as much as a course, the student should be in a constant acculturation process on many issues related to art and being an artist, like the manner of watching a concert, recital or an opera. Due to the pandemic, the education process is completely incomplete in this respect. In addition, the characteristics of each opera / singing student's family are not ideal. While some student families are familiar with art, see art as a part of life, and have a culturally nurtured structure, others families have no contact with any kinds of art. This is a huge factor in the student's preparation of a studio environment at home. The financial situation of the family is another factor. The area where the inequality of opportunity among the students can be seen barely is the situation of "income". Families with financial power have the ability to turn the student's home environment into a studio by acquiring technical equipment that can support, thus the student can acquire the best possible form of distance education, whereas the student who has a family with insufficient financial means may have to be extremely cautious even when using the mobile internet package on his parents' mobile phone. All these factors we have mentioned above directly affect efficiency.

### **Method Applied in Online Courses**

With the outbreak of the pandemic, all university administrations directed their faculties and other units to continue their education by making use of distance education systems. The faculties with theoretical curriculum have managed to adapt without experiencing too many problems. In the adaptation process, these faculties took the distance learning method, which has almost 40 years of history in the country, as a model. Faculties that provide applied education, such as the conservatory, have faced major problems in adapting. For these faculties, the situation fits 'emergency remote teaching' as [Calderòn-Garrido and Gustems-Carnicer \(2021: 140\)](#) call it, rather than 'distance education'. The differences in course design, teacher-student interaction, and pedagogical

preferences between face-to-face and online education put forward by Johnson (2017: 442-443) can be cited as reasons for this situation. It is necessary to address the opinions and practices of the participants on the subject under four subtitles.

### **Preliminary Preparation**

As it is known, preparation is a period of study that both the student and the educator must do before the lesson. All of the educators interviewed to discuss the pre-preparation processes of the students to compare their current situation with their pre-pandemic situation. In these comparisons, four participants indicated that the students have become aimless and reluctant than they were in the past. They also mentioned that the students have become unable to allocate time for this preparation due to the increase in their workload with the homework and research projects of the theoretical courses that they had. Only Participant 2 said that the students have been prepared and join the course in a much more serious way, as the duration of the lessons become limited due to the system and it is almost impossible to compensate for any problems caused by insufficient preparation. Regarding the pre-preparation processes of the educators, all participants are constantly researching, examining, analyzing, etc., whether they teach or not, in a manner of how they can be more helpful for the students. These educators also endeavor to ensure continuity of knowledge flow by using any method that they think will support the course. They also state that they work 24/7 during the pandemic process, as they have paved the way for students to reach them whenever they need.

### **In-course Time Segmentation**

Establishing whether there are exercise and work time periods that educators have determined or standardized while conducting online courses with students is a very important data on the method applied. In the interviews, only Participant 1 states that he practices on exercises with the student for a maximum of 15 minutes period in only one of his lessons, and prefers to evaluate the rest of the time by studying on the piece. He bases the reason for this type of segmentation on the inconvenience of the system for opera/singing education and idea of preserving the voice of the student in such an environment should be a priority. Other participants state that they do not make an exact subdivision, and the in-course segmentation has been developed regarding the needs of the student in the course. In addition, Participant 5 indicates that she mainly focuses on exercises rather than the pieces in the online courses with the freshmen grade students because of their incapability of exercising on their own yet, and because of this reason she says that they should study the pieces sentence by sentence and measure by measure.

### **Exercise Diversity**

Participant 1, who preferred to spare a very short period of course to vocal exercises due to the synchronization problem, which we aware that was caused by the internet infrastructure and the systems used in online live courses, stated that the exercises he applied in online live courses did not differ in terms of quantity from the previous face-to-face courses. He specifies the reason of this stability with the vocal exercise records which he formerly did by playing on the piano and e-mailed to his students. Although he states that he does not waive the variety of exercise in terms of quantity, it would not be wrong to say that Participant 1 limits the diversity because of his restriction of the time he allocates to exercise. Participant 2 and Participant 4, state that they had to make a reduction in terms of quantity. Participant 2 stated that she had to limit the vocal exercise diversity with the position hearing, position gathering and breath warming exercises in online courses, while Participant 4 stated that he stopped practicing especially step exercises which goes on the chromatic and full pitch intervals due to the deterioration in intonation. Participant 5, on the other hand, stated that she concentrates on exercises continuously with lower-grade and especially beginner students, and she cannot pass without mentioning that these practices are quite tiring because she has to sample the exercise herself, primarily to all her students during the application.

### **Piece Interpretation**

Piece interpretation, which is the last sub-theme of the theme, emerges as the most troublesome issue for all participants. Regardless of the online system that is used, because of all the softwares that they utilize were coded entirely for the speech frequency range, all participants report that the student voice is directly subjected to filtering in the opera/singing lesson, and for this reason, they have hard times understanding even at what loudness level they vocalize the piece. Participant 1, who stated that his primary goal was to preserve the voice of the student, stated that he did not do any practice on musicality and tempo changes, and that he encouraged all of

his students to sing in mezzo-voce, while Participant 4 stated that he pays attention on intonation, legato vocalization and good articulation while practicing with his students. Participant 5 stated that they try to get into the musical details as much as the accompaniment record in their hands allows. At the times that when it's necessary they stop the playback of the accompaniment record, and study the piece in sentences and measures. Participant 2 indicates that there is not much trouble of this point in the lower grades, but the issue has become a complete problem especially for junior and senior grade students. In particular, she states that it is almost impossible to interpret the pieces such as Verdi and Puccini arias which contain a lot of redundancy, sostenuto, ritenuto or puandorg at the online courses, and she added the accompaniment recordings which have a great effect on this. She expressed the seriousness of the situation as follows:

*“The young student is trying to perform the piece on the record of the accompaniment which is prepared for the 40-year-old soprano voice that can produce big breathed ritardandos and the puandorges at the expense of inflating or mutilating herself. Furthermore and unfortunately, she thinks that she sings as it's supposed to be.”*

This means that the student internalizes an interpretation that does not fit his/her own physical structure, condition and experience. As we all know very well, correcting a misplaced technique or style in opera / singing education is much more difficult than teaching it from scratch.

### **Measures Taken for Online Courses**

At the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, when the courses had to be conducted on an online application basis, all instructors preferred to use some practices and methods in order to conduct their lessons more efficiently, based on the experience they gained in the previous semester. According to the data obtained from the participants in our study, it would be appropriate to discuss the measures taken by opera / singing educators in two sub-titles in order to understand how this transformation to be effective.

#### **Usage of Recording Technology**

All of the participants stated that the courses they tried to do online were insufficient due to both the infrastructural deficiencies and the digital audio processing and frequency limitations of the online platforms they used. As a method of dealing with this inadequacy, they found it appropriate to ask the students to mail them an audio or audiovisual record, on which they applied the details of the singing technique or piece they had studied in the course. In addition, Participant 1 had the piano records of the vocal exercises he used in the courses and mailed them to the students, in order to overcome the synchronization problem in online courses. Although these are not ideal methods, they can partially eliminate the inefficiency in vocal education courses. As Kruse et al. (2013:54-55) stated, it can be accepted as a more effective use of technological resources, but it is still far from being a complete solution since it is not 'alive' and does not provide instantaneous intervention.

#### **Analysis of Piece**

By the distance education process, some of the participants who put into practice this studying method, which some students could not pay attention to due to organizational problems during the face-to-face education period, stated that the feedback they received from the students was quite positive. Participant 2, using the analysis of the piece as a method which is composed of a study based on analysis on details such as sound-breath connection, appoggio, passaggio, harmonic accents, periodic and composers' specific style features, dramaturgical qualities of the character and meaning in the work, expresses that she clearly saw the augmentation in students' ingenuity on interpretation. Even though Hines (1997:122) emphasizes that in-depth theoretical knowledge and analyzes can sometimes make no contribution to an applied and pragmatic education, it can be said that this practice is functional in terms of eliminating cultural deficiencies in 'emergency remote teaching', due to the multidimensional structure of opera/singing education.

#### **Motivation**

Motivation emerges as one of the biggest factors in achieving the goals of the instructors and students in opera /singing education. How the pandemic period we live in and the situations derived from this pandemic affect both instructors and students in terms of motivation which should be questioned as a problem. The data obtained from the participants regarding the theme clearly reveal the exact situation.

#### **Educator's Motivation**

Regarding the trainers at one end of the spear belonging to the motivation theme, Participant 4, one of the educators, who participated in our research stated that the necessity of distance education had neither positive nor



negative effects on himself. The other four participants stated that they have been negatively affected by the process. They also state that they resisted this negative impact and tried to be beneficial to students with all the effort they can. Another factor that is effective in this effort is the management's expectations of harmony and sustainable professionalism for trainers, as stated by [Schiavio, Biasutti and Philippe \(2021:2\)](#). All of the participants stated that methods such as evaluating and directing the student through the online live lecture and performance records have been insufficient and added that the students have been also aware of these inadequacies. They intensely feel the negativity brought about by the difference that develops with the process in the interaction between the instructor and the student, which [Johnson](#) refers to ([2017:442-443](#)). In order to keep the morale of the students' and keep their motivation high, they preferred not to reflect these negativities to the students, even if they live or feel negativity. A situation that can be an example of the need for pre-structured harmony between the teacher and the student, which [Kruse et al. \(2013: 54-55\)](#) discussed among the prerequisites of successful online music education, is encountered during the interviews. Participant 5 made great efforts for instilling confidence, transferring her positive energy and motivates her students to the course. She shares an anecdote with a student who has just started her opera/singing education.

*"...I started the first lesson with the little ones. My new student, a bright 18-year-old, music high school graduate, soprano, is like a box doll. An extraordinary voice and she is very nice. During the first course that we met online, I stretched out my hands to the screen. Then we both laughed. I wanted to hold her hands, I wanted to reach her."*

Opera / singing education is not only to train the voice on professional singing, but also to cultivate the student in terms of discipline, culture, attitude, behavior, adaptation to ensure the acculturation that transforms the student into a complete artist. For this reason, the attitude of Participant 5th attitude was very normal and sincere in a professional manner. In this education, the trust and belief in educator comes first. The trust felt in the educator is also a great factor in the success of the student and keeping his/her motivation high.

### ***Student's Motivation***

We mentioned that the students were aware of the inadequacy of the opera / singing education they were receiving online. Participants 1, 3 and 4 stated that their students' interest in the lessons decreased due to this awareness. They added that the number of students who joined the online course in a fully prepared and timing manner decreased, and notified that during the live lesson, the students preferred not to perform some of the vocal exercises and pieces that were requested by the instructor. Participant 2, stated that there were some students who lost their motivation partially, but added that especially some of the students who had low motivation for various reasons during the face-to-face education period, 'found themselves' after they switched to distance education and they became fully complied with the systemic requirements, and they began to search for the better. She also states that the success level of the students who turned positive in terms of motivation also increased. Participant 5 stated that some of her students tried to keep their motivation high by filling the gaps that they felt lacking due to distance education, such as learning a foreign language, improving themselves by reading from aspects such as history and theory, but hence the opera / singing is a lifestyle, they still felt the decrease in their motivation. She states that especially the students who have to live with their families in distant provinces are become more unmotivated than the others due to the deficiencies they experience in acculturation. Besides, in order to keep the motivation high, some upper class students opened their own YouTube channel with a pianist schoolmate and arranged a scene by using some decor, costumes and accessories during the audiovisual recording process for the final vocal exams. Even if it is beneficial in terms of maintaining the motivation for students to participate in classes with such initiatives by using their creativity and all the opportunities of technology, it is understood from the findings that it is not enough for to reach the level provided by face-to-face education.

### **Repertoire**

#### ***Covid Repertoire***

As a product of the tough process of education due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the code of creating a Covid repertoire emerges under the theme of repertoire. In the face of the differences in course design and pedagogical preferences that developed along with the process that [Johnson](#) refers to ([2017:442-443](#)), instructors have preferred to modify the previously determined repertoire as a temporary solution. It has been determined that the repertoires in all institutions are reduced by up to 50% in terms of quantity during the composing of a Covid repertoire which have been decided by the relevant boards of all of institutions. In addition, the difference between the institutions of the two participants draws attention in terms of quality. According to the data obtained

from Participant 2, the piece requested during the face-to-face education from junior level students as "Free Baroque Piece" was an aria from an opera, oratorio etc. belongs to the composers of the Baroque Era. She states that the quality of this piece reduced to the level of Arie-Antiche in practice by other trainers with the beginning of distance education. Participant 3 stated that they preferred to replace the application of the recitativo parts at the beginning of the arias with some homework and other studies. Participant 5 stated that they reduced their exam repertoire by half by holding a meeting at the beginning of the semester, and that they had to completely remove the ensemble parts from the complete operas that were included in the final exams of the junior and senior grade levels.

### **Accompaniment**

One of the fields most interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic is the piano accompaniment. As it is known, singing with accompaniment is an integral part of vocational opera / vocal education. Students are required to sing the pieces they have studied on with the educators in singing lessons with the piano. It is a fact that these studies, which should be done live, have become problematic due to online systemic inadequacies. In order to cope with this problematic, educators have to rely on various non-ideal methods. In the contrary of trying to prevent students from it during the face to face education period, they had to permit the students to sing on pre-recorded accompaniments during the Covid-19 and distance education process which can be harmful and is very difficult to compensate, especially in terms of interpretation. Their interruption on this method can easily be understood by their usage of the phrase "Karaoke" while they mention the method.

### ***Pre-prepared Accompaniment Recordings***

On YouTube, one of the most widely used platforms on the internet; there are piano accompaniment recordings of opera and singing pieces made by professional accompanist pianists, students or amateurs from all over the world. Singing educators do not encourage their students to study with such recordings in order not to be deprived of singing with accompaniment, but they also do not prevent them from using it. Referring to the risks heard by pre-prepared accompaniments, Participant 2 stated that the biggest danger is the recordings which taken in compliance with the singing style and interpretation of professional singers, and added that singing by imitating this style and interpretation can break the sound-breath connection of the students who are at the beginning level of singing yet. She also draws attention to the fact that the unconscious change in the singing technique due to imitation may cause illness in the vocal cords of the student. On the other hand, participant 5, who opposed to singing on pre-prepared accompaniment, stated that it was not possible for the students to learn the dynamics of ensemble and that they were deprived of this acculturation. Although this seems to fit the effective use of technology, which Kruse et al. (2013: 54-55) referred to as a prerequisite for successful online music education, it certainly does not meet the ideal educational requirement for vocalization practice.

### ***Recordings Prepared by Accompanist Pianists***

All of the interviewees stated that accompanying pianists working in their institutions made recordings for the use of opera / singing students while performing a piece. Some of the participants wanted the students' entire repertoire to be studied in the courses be recorded by the accompanying pianists, while others only wanted the recordings of the pieces that can't be found on YouTube. At this point, the participant 2 points out an important problem that arises. While there is not much problem with the accompaniment of Arie-Antiche and simple lieds singed at the lower class levels, the important technical details as inter-agile breaths, sostenutos, etc. in Belcanto style arias and Verdi and Puccini opera arias that should be performed at the upper class levels cannot be processed by the singing instructor during the accompanied singing. She states that it is not possible to process these details in place and on time due to the inability to interfere with the student who tries to perform online voiceover upon recording, on the other hand, she draws attention to the inadequacy of the recordings prepared by the accompanying pianists.

### **Assessment & Evaluation**

Measurement and evaluation, which has an important role in determining the success of education, emerges as another element that has changed with the pandemic period. The pedagogical preference difference between online and face-to-face education, mentioned by Johnson (2017, 442-443), seems to be directly related to this theme. In order to make the changing expectations more understandable, it would be appropriate to discuss the theme in two sub-titles.

### ***In-Course Assessment Criteria***



In order to determine to which criteria they evaluate students during online lessons, the participants have been asked to compare the criteria in the face-to-face education process with the criteria in the pandemic process. Four of the five participants stated that they lowered their expectations and therefore the evaluation criteria have been lowered too. Although Participant 1 stated that there was no change in the evaluation criteria, it has been determined that there were some changes in the criteria from the answers he had given to the other questions in the semi-structured interview form.

### **Assessment Criteria for Exams**

Considering the evaluation criteria for the midterm and final exams, it has been decided to ignore some of the criteria in the exam evaluation forms applied in the midterm and final exams with the decisions taken at the meetings of the relevant boards at the beginning of the academic year at the institutions and to focus on the criteria that can be measured within the framework of the possibilities available.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings obtained in the research are very important in terms of revealing the inadequacy of internet infrastructure and distance education platforms, especially used by universities, for opera / singing education during the Covid-19 pandemic process in Turkey. We also know that it will not be possible to fix the deficiencies experienced during the process like the unrealized simultaneous music performance practices caused by the lack of infrastructure of the internet providers operating in the country and a natural and healthy vocal hearing due to the limitations of the software used in distance education in terms of sound and timbre processing in the near future. As [Canyakan \(2018\)](#) discussed in his paper, there are research projects that have been conducted by various universities around the world for online music performance like "Ninjam", "Geant", "Musigy" and "EJamming", all of these projects stipulate a recording studio and stable data transfer speed in common. However, today, it is almost impossible for both opera / singing educators and students to procure such hardware and software financially and to use them due to the lack of educational backgrounds.

The findings we have obtained regarding the internal segmentation of education clearly reveal that it is not possible to make any standardization because of the nature of opera / singing education is formed according to the needs of the student. With an evaluation from comparative perspective, another important point can be mentioned as the measures taken by the institutions and educators and the methods applied in the process of eliminating the missing aspects in the pandemic process are not fully functional. In all conservatories, the repertoire and exam contents have been reduced to reasonable levels by the boards with a student-oriented and rational approach. In addition, with great devotion, educators prefer to be available 24/7 to their students for providing the maximum support to them by using all the means they have. This causes the personal time and areas off the course time to be continuously filled with research, preparation and analysis. At the end, while the Covid-19 process becomes extremely exhausting for educators, all these efforts are still not sufficient in terms of eliminating the deficiencies in education and it can easily be seen that the loss of efficiency increased up to 50%.

Another point that may be important is the educational opportunities provided to the student by his/her family. It is known that some student families provide great opportunities to the students both materially and culturally. In order to transform the environment caused by the pandemic into a positive environment for the student, some parents develop some methods such as creating a musical studio in the home by using some decor, costumes and accessories, directing him/her to supportive trainings as online foreign language courses, and etc. Students who do not have such opportunities that mentioned above, make an effort to continue their education as much as they can without any means they benefit from in the school environment. This situation indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic causes a complete inequality of opportunity in education for students.

One of the most important aspects of opera / singing education, which is directly affected by the Covid-19 process, is motivation. Despite all the negativities brought about by the process, educators have to ensure that students keep their motivation high as well as maintaining their own motivation. Opera / singing is not only a physical education but also an education based on communication, contact, imagination and culture. Guiding the student to use his/her voice is just the foundation of the building that you build as an educator. Definitely, the foundation is compulsory for the building, but it should not be forgotten that the foundation does not present the beauty of the building. There is quite a lot of professional knowledge that the student should acquire other than using his/her voice. This acquisition can only be achieved by contacting the instructor face to face, imagining

together, by socializing with other candidates and artists in such environments as conservatory, State Opera and Ballet, and State Theater, briefly by acculturating.

Nermin Uygur, one of the leading social science theorists of Turkey, mentions that acculturation is the main source of the cultural change process (2007:p.86). As the student gets into the conservatory for opera / singing education for the first time, he/she begins to be acculturated. This acculturation process that he/she will be exposed to until the graduation is very important in terms of being the basis of his/her cultural identity in future as an "Opera Artist". Although identity has an alterable structure due to its complexity and fluidity as Giddens and Sutton stated (2020:p.266), the cultural identity that the student will carry throughout his / her career will not disappear, but will develop. The Covid-19 pandemic process affects the education of students very negatively in this respect. Although students try to fulfill their needs through methods such as watching the representations they can find on the internet, developing various projects by sharing with their schoolmates, educators and artists, it is not possible for them to experience a full acculturation due to the lack of existing in educational and artistic environments. Therefore, their cultural identities are also structured insufficiently.

Although the continuous and rapid development of music technologies makes us think of the possibility of eliminating technical problems in distance education in the future, it does not seem possible to find a way to eliminate the deficiency in the processes of acculturation and cultural identity formation due to the fact that opera / singing is based on tradition. At the point we have reached by the evaluation of the elements we have dealt with, saying that the education in the opera / singing departments cannot be carried out remotely would definitely not be wrong.

Finally; although it is not ideal, it would be appropriate to make suggestions about the steps to be taken in order to continue the Opera/Singing education, which seems suitable for Calderón-Garrido and Gustems-Carnicer (2021) to be defined as 'emergency remote teaching', in the future as 'distance education'. This research is very important to be considered as a pilot study, and is further deepened with other studies to be carried out. In the light of the data obtained from the researches, it is recommended to develop methods that will be standardized for distance education of opera/singing nationwide by organizing workshops. As another important step to be taken, it is recommended to create projects and start R&D studies as soon as possible in order to develop an accessible education platform that will respond to the deficiencies felt in education by getting support from music technologists and software engineers. It should not be forgotten that it took a long time for distance education to reach today's standards. Considering the length of the road ahead, it is recommended to start working without wasting time.

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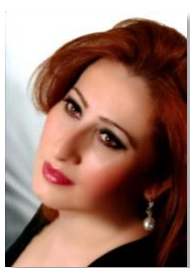
### Biodata of the Authors



**Lec. Umut Güngör** started his music education in Dokuz Eylül University State Conservatory Opera Department in 1995. During his education, he studied singing with Constantin Pavlavic Lisovski, Prof. Sevda Aydan, Prof. Müfit Bayraşa and opera acting with opera director Necdet Aydın. He graduated from the Department and the Conservatory in June 2002 as the top student, and started to work as a lecturer at Mersin University State Conservatory in September of the same year. On the one hand, Güngör carried out theoretical and applied stage lessons in the conservatory, and on the other hand, continued his singing studies with Pedagogue Emil Iurascu. In September 2003, he was accepted to the Master's program affiliated to Mersin University Social Sciences Institute Music Department.

After graduation, he took the stage in various works as a contract graduate artist at Izmir State Theater in 2006 and 2007, and started to work as a lecturer at Aydın Adnan Menderes University State Conservatory in September 2008. Güngör, who was appointed as an Instructor to the same institution in January 2010, gives lectures on Music History, Contemporary Music and Accompaniment Practice, Music Culture and Music Theory, as well as serving as the Head of the Conservatory Music and Performing Arts High School and the Opera Department. In addition to his education, he wrote the Turkish libretto for G. Donizetti's Rita opera and J. Strauss's Gypsy Baron Operetta, which is staged by Mersin State Opera and Ballet, in order to contribute to the art of opera in our country. He continues to be an active artist with works such as Arşın Mal Alan, Keşanlı Ali Epic, A Tale of Ephesus, Hürmüz with Seven Husbands, Mother-in-law's Liver, Father and Psychic in which he worked as the

assistant director, as well as recitals he gave. At the same time, he continues to the Afyon Kocatepe University Social Sciences Institute Proficiency in Music and Art program. **Affiliation:** Aydin Adnan Menderes University State Conservatory, Music Department, Turkey **E-mail:** umut.gungor@adu.edu.tr **ORCID:** 0000-0002-4917-3581.



**Birgül ARIÇ** was born in Izmir. After graduating from Dokuz Eylül University Izmir State Conservatory as a student of Sabahat Tekebaş in 1993, she went to Italy and took the exams of the "Accademia D'arte Lirica e Corale" Singing Academy and won the right to study with a full scholarship. While the artist was in Italy; she studied singing, style, stage and repertoire with A. Tonini, who also taught the world's most famous artists such as S. Segalini, V. Bertinetti, M. Melani, A. Zedda, N. Giusti and Pavarotti, Domingo and Callas. She graduated from the academy in 1995. In the same year, she participated in the "21<sup>th</sup> Vale D'Itria Festival" as a soloist. She received the third prize as the only Turkish artist to be ranked in the first "International Leyla Gencer Voice Competition", which was held in Istanbul in

September 1995. Birgül Su Ariç, who started to work as a soloist at Izmir State Opera and Ballet in the same year, has some of the works in which she plays the leading role: Carmen, La Boheme, Don Giovanni, Die Zauberflöte, Viva La Mama, L'Elisir D'Amore, Rigoletto, Falstaff, Le Nozze di Figaro, La Traviata, Idomeneo, Entführung aus dem Serail, Countess Mariza, Romeo and Juliette, Adriana Lecouvreur, Othello, Turandot, La Sonnambula, Madama Butterfly... The artist performed concerts accompanied by the Istanbul, Ankara Bilkent, Izmir, Adana and Presidential Symphony orchestras and also took part in the International Izmir Festival, the International Istanbul Classical Music Festival and the Aspendos International Opera and Ballet Festival many times. Birgül Su Ariç, who received very successful reviews in the written and visual media, has performed solo concerts in various countries, especially in Macedonia, Germany, Romania, Italy, Slovakia, Austria, Greece and Cyprus, since 1995 and participated in opera festivals. In 2001, with the special scholarship of the Ministry of Culture, she studied in Vienna for a year to increase her professional knowledge and equipment. Here she had the opportunity to study with the famous singing pedagogue Toma Popescu. She received the most successful female opera singer award of 2010 within the scope of the 1. Lions Opera Awards. The artist, who sang the Yunus Emre Oratorio in Bremen, Germany in October 2011, was invited to Germany again in November to make a CD recording of the same piece. She giggled with the world-famous tenor and conductor JOSE CURA at the gala concert of the 2013 Aspendos Opera Festival, and was awarded the most successful female opera singer of the year within the scope of the 2012-2013 art season Semiha Berksoy Opera Awards. Birgül Su Ariç is still working as a soloist at Izmir State Opera and Ballet. **Affiliation:** Izmir State Opera Ballet, Turkey. **E-mail:** sesimsu@gmail.com **ORCID:** 0000-0002-9475-2531.



**Assoc. Prof. Berna ÖZKUT** started her music career by winning the Dokuz Eylül University Buca Education Faculty Music Teaching Department. After studying at this school for two years, she got his associate degree. In the same year, she won the Bilkent University Faculty of Music and Performing Arts Opera Department with full scholarship. Between 1994 & 1998, she worked with Mustafa Yurdakul and Gölge Gül Şekeramber here. Then, in 1998, she transferred to Dokuz Eylül University State Conservatory Opera-Singing Department and joined Birgül Su Arıç's class. Continuing her singing lessons with Birgül Su Arıç, Özkut graduated from Dokuz Eylül University State Conservatory Opera-

Singing Department in 2000. In the same year, she received a masterclass certificate by working with Verona opera trainers Mietta Zighela and Veriano Luchetti as part of the "Musica Riva" festival in Italy. In 2001, she passed the exam held by İzmir State Opera and Ballet and started to work as a Contracted Choir Artist in İZDOB. Özkut, who took part in many operas and concerts here, also started her graduate education at Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Educational Sciences by passing the postgraduate exam with thesis. She graduated from Dokuz Eylül University, Institute of Educational Sciences in 2003. During her time at İzmir State Opera and Ballet, she performed many operas and concerts such as "Norma, L'Elisir D'Amore, Nabucco, Verdi Night, Gala Concerts, Spring Concerts, Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony", Alhambra, Aspendos Antique Theatre, Greece Athina and Ephesus Antique Theater. She graduated from Ege University Social Sciences Institute, Pedagogy Non-Thesis Master's Program in 2005. In the same year, she started to work as a lecturer at Afyon Kocatepe University State Conservatory. In this institution, she graduated from the Proficiency in Art Program at Afyon Kocatepe University, Social Sciences Institute in 2015. In 2016, she was deemed worthy of the Academic Achievement and Performance Award for her performance at the Lifelong Education and Leadership Conference "Gala Concert" organized in cooperation with Sakarya University, Liepaja University and Liepaja Municipality. Özkut, who became an Associate Professor in 2019, attended the Marco Vinco Belcanto masterclass and concert held by Opera Italiana Academy under the chairmanship of artistic director Cüneyt Ünsal and received a certificate. Özkut still continues her domestic and international studies as the Head of the Opera Department and Associate Professor at Afyon Kocatepe University State Conservatory, Department of Performing Arts. **Affiliation:** Afyon Kocatepe University State Conservatory, Performing Arts, Opera Department, Turkey. **E-mail:** brn.kut@gmail.com **ORCID:** 0000-0001-9476-6506

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