



The Vienna State Opera. Meeting Modernity While Following Tradition Viyana Devlet Operası. Geleneği Takip Ederken Moderniteyle Buluşma

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ABSTRACT

The Vienna State Opera has been at the heart of classical music and opera for a long history, merging tradition with modernity in a prestigious institution. Founded in 1869, this significant opera house offers a broad artistic range, presenting not only classical repertoire but also contemporary and innovative productions. The Vienna State Opera plays a crucial role as a bridge in the art world, showcasing internationally recognized opera works alongside modern operas. In addition to its classical repertoire, the opera house's modern productions have also garnered considerable interest. This approach combines traditional and innovative elements, providing audiences with a unique experience. The Vienna State Opera integrates technological advancements into its stage arts, enhancing performances with cutting-edge lighting and sound systems. These developments make the visual and auditory experience more dynamic and compelling. With its mission to present both tradition and innovation, the Vienna State Opera continues to be one of the most prestigious representatives of both historical and modern opera worlds. This balance creates a platform that offers the best examples of both the past and the future to artists and audiences alike. The opera house's approach is recognized as a defining feature that sets it apart on the international opera stage.

ÖZ

Viyana Devlet Operası, uzun bir tarihe sahip olup, prestijli bir kurum olarak gelenek ile moderniteyi birleştiren önemli bir opera evidir. 1869 yılında kurulan bu opera evi, sadece klasik repertuvarı değil, aynı zamanda çağdaş ve yenilikçi prodüksiyonları da sunarak geniş bir sanatsal yelpaze sunmaktadır. Viyana Devlet Operası, sanat dünyasında önemli bir köprü rolü oynayarak, uluslararası alanda tanınan klasik opera eserlerinin yanı sıra modern operaları da sergilemektedir. Modern prodüksiyonlar, opera evinin klasik repertuvarıyla birlikte büyük ilgi görmekte ve geleneksel ile yenilikçi unsurları birleştirerek izleyicilere eşsiz bir deneyim sunmaktadır. Viyana Devlet Operası, sahne sanatlarında teknolojik yenilikler kullanarak, gelişmiş aydınlatma ve ses sistemleriyle performansları daha dinamik ve etkileyici hale getirmektedir. Bu yaklaşım, opera evinin geleneksel ve yenilikçi unsurları dengeli bir şekilde sunma misyonuyla, hem tarihi hem de modern opera dünyalarının en prestijli temsilcilerinden biri olmasını sağlamaktadır. Bu denge, geçmişin ve geleceğin en iyi örneklerini sanatçılara ve izleyicilere sunan bir platform yaratmaktadır. Viyana Devlet Operasının bu yaklaşımı, kendisini uluslararası opera sahnesinde farklı kılan tanımlayıcı bir özellik olarak kabul edilmektedir.

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1. Introduction

Opera is an art form that originated in Italy at the end of the 16th century, bringing dramatic stories to the stage through music (Grout and Williams, 2003: 911-1030). The first example of opera is considered to be Jacopo Peri's "Dafne" (1598), which was part of the efforts of Florentine nobles to revive classical Greek tragedies. This new art form spread to various parts of Europe in the 17th century, particularly gaining popularity in cities such as Venice, Naples, and Rome, influenced by Claudio Monteverdi (Wechsberg, 2023).

The 18th century is regarded as the golden age of opera. During this period, the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart are seen as the pinnacle of opera. Mozart's operas such as "Le nozze di Figaro" (1786), "Don Giovanni" (1787), and "Die Zauberflöte" (1791) are notable for their deep psychological character analyses and the perfect integration of music with storytelling. In the 19th century, romantic opera came to the forefront, with composers like Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner creating works that enhanced the dramatic power of opera. Verdi's "La Traviata" (1853) and Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen" (1869-1876) are examples of how opera reached broader audiences as an artistic and cultural phenomenon (Abbate and Parker, 1989).

Social changes such as the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, and modernism led to significant transformations in the art world from the late 19th century onwards. During this period, modernity exerted its influence across all areas of art, questioning traditional art forms and exploring new modes of expression. Artists had to keep pace with the rapid changes in society and reflect these transformations in their works. With modernity, opera's storytelling and musical structures became more abstract and experimental. In this context, Alban Berg's "Wozzeck" (1925) and "Lulu" (1935) are considered characteristic examples of modern opera. These works are distinguished by their complex, atonal music with psychological depth, deviating from traditional tonal and melodic structures (Abbate and Parker, 2012).

Modernity also impacted opera's role in society. Whereas opera was an elite art form until the late 19th century, by the early 20th century, it began to appeal to a broader audience. Opera houses, therefore, started to accept not only the aristocratic elite but also the middle class as spectators. This social change inevitably led to differences in the content and presentation of operas; traditional themes were now accompanied by social and political themes in opera productions (Abbate and Parker, 1989).

As one of the most important representatives of classical Central European opera, the Vienna State Opera was built between 1861 and 1869. The architects of the opera, August Sicard von Sicardsburg and Eduard van der Nüll, designed the building in a neo-Renaissance style, in line with the artistic understanding of interior and exterior architectural ornamentation of the period. Although the building received great acclaim shortly after its opening, it faced criticism during the construction process, leading to the tragic suicide of architect van der Nüll. This dramatic story left a deep mark on the artistic spirit of the building. During its early years, the Vienna State Opera hosted performances by some of the most famous composers and directors in the art world, producing many grand productions.

On the other hand, the Vienna State Opera suffered significant damage during World War II due to heavy bombings. Air raids in March 1945 largely destroyed the building, including the stage, sets, costumes, and orchestra sections. However, this tragic period also brought about a story of rebirth, driven by a deep commitment to Vienna's cultural heritage. In 1955, after an extensive renovation process, the Vienna State Opera reopened its doors (Wilhelm, 1955). The rebuilt and restored building retained its traditional neo-Renaissance aesthetic while being equipped with modern technologies. This rebirth allowed the opera to further strengthen its position in the global opera scene during the second half of the 20th century (Wiener Staatsoper, 2016).

Ludwig van Beethoven's "Fidelio" was selected for the reopening of the Vienna State Opera in 1955 (ZEIT Reisen, 2018). This opera, with its universal themes of freedom and human rights, played a symbolic role in the reconstruction of Vienna in the post-war period. The reopening was seen as a symbol of the Vienna State Opera's return to its former glory (Williams, 2006).

At this point, the Vienna State Opera, which has successfully responded to changing social and artistic expectations alongside modernity, continues to be known for preserving the traditional opera repertoire as well as for



its modern adaptations and new productions of classical works staged each year. In this context, the Vienna State Opera's wide repertoire, encompassing both classical and modern opera, ensures its continuity and innovation in the art world. In this respect, it can be said that the Vienna State Opera continues to exist as an institution that represents both traditional and modern values in the field of opera. Thus, the Vienna State Opera remains an important point of prestige and reference in this regard.

2. Preservation of Tradition and the Intersection with Modernity at the Vienna State Opera

The Vienna State Opera is renowned worldwide as an institution with a long and rich history, recognized by classical music and opera enthusiasts. Since the 19th century, it has played a significant role in the preservation and perpetuation of classical operas (*Die Eröffnung des neuen Operntheaters*, 1869). A substantial portion of the Vienna State Opera's repertoire consists of works by leading composers of the Classical and Romantic periods, such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Giuseppe Verdi, and Richard Wagner. These works are considered cornerstones of opera history and are frequently staged at the Vienna State Opera (Mittag, 2019).

In the world of art, "tradition" refers to the norms, values, and aesthetic sensibilities that a culture has developed and preserved over a long period. Tradition sustains a certain formal and thematic continuity, which forms the foundation of artistic productions and interpretations. On the other hand, "modernity" describes a period beginning in the late 19th century, marked by profound changes in social, cultural, and aesthetic values. Modernity encompasses new ways of thinking and aesthetic understandings shaped by the Industrial Revolution, scientific advancements, and social changes. Modern art represents an approach that challenges traditional norms and embraces innovative perspectives. "Contemporaneity," however, is a concept that emerged after modernity and defines today's artistic understanding. Contemporary art directly engages with the dynamics, technologies, and social issues of the present, responding to the aesthetic and cultural demands of current society. Contemporary art, built on the foundations of modernity, offers a form of artistic expression enriched by technological innovations and cultural diversity.

In this context, the preservation of the classical repertoire has always been a priority for the artistic directors and music directors of the Vienna State Opera. These works are valued not only for their musical and dramatic qualities but also as part of Europe's cultural heritage. The Vienna State Opera is committed to maintaining historical accuracy and fidelity to the composer's intent when staging these works. For example, Verdi's "La Traviata" and Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" are presented to audiences in their original versions with traditional staging and costume designs (Mittag, 2019).

This approach ensures the Vienna State Opera's artistic reputation while also facilitating the transmission of classical music and opera culture to future generations. In this regard, the Vienna State Opera offers a broad classical repertoire program each year, giving audiences the opportunity to experience these great works. For instance, Mozart's "Don Giovanni" and "Die Zauberflöte" are among the classics featured in the repertoire every season (Wiener Staatsoper, 2016). The Vienna State Opera's mission in this artistic and cultural context sets an important example of opera's role in the modern world. The preservation of the traditional opera repertoire ensures that this art form transcends time, allowing art lovers to continually reconnect with these works. The mission of the Vienna State Opera is crucial not only for maintaining the continuity of art but also for passing on cultural heritage to future generations.

2.1. The Exclusive Nature of the Audience

The audience of the Vienna State Opera has undergone significant changes from past to present. In the 19th century, opera was generally supported by the aristocracy and the elite class. In major European cities, opera was not only an art event but also a symbol of social status. At that time, the audience of the Vienna State Opera consisted of individuals with high socioeconomic status, influencing how opera was staged and which repertoire was chosen. Since the early 20th century, societal changes have led to a diversification of the opera audience. Particularly in the post-war period, the rise of the middle class and efforts to make art accessible to a broader public transformed opera into a more accessible art form. The Vienna State Opera adapted to this change by diversifying its repertoire to appeal to a wider audience. In modern times, the audience of the Vienna State Opera has a broad demographic range, from traditional opera enthusiasts to younger viewers.



This diversity is reflected in the Vienna State Opera's repertoire. While traditional classical works are consistently staged, modern works and innovative productions are also presented to attract the interest of younger audiences. Additionally, efforts continue to reach broader audiences through digital platforms and live broadcasts.

2.2. Continuity of Artistic and Cultural Value

The artistic and cultural value of the Vienna State Opera is not limited to the works it stages. This opera house also serves as an educational center for young artists and a laboratory for the future development of opera art. Great importance is placed on the education and development of young talents. Workshops, children's choirs, and various international projects organized within the Vienna State Opera bring together young artists from different cities and countries, offering them the opportunity to gain stage experience and introduce themselves on an international platform. Thus, it can be stated that the Vienna State Opera represents universal cultural heritage, not only in Vienna but also globally. These activities play a critical role in conveying the power and importance of opera to art lovers and younger generations (Latham & Mitchell, 2002: 205-217; Nisbett & Walmsley, 2016: 25-40; Haas, 2017: 319-336).

2.3. The Vienna Opera Ball

The Vienna Opera Ball is an internationally recognized event held annually on the last Thursday of the carnival season. With the participation of approximately 5,000 local and foreign guests from the world of culture, business, and politics, this ball is considered one of Austria's largest social gatherings. Along with the opera's staff and event participants, around 7,000 people are present at the State Opera on that night. The impact of the ball on tourism also makes a significant contribution to the Austrian economy.

The roots of the opera ball date back to the Congress of Vienna in 1814/1815. The first ball held at the Vienna State Opera took place in 1935, and the annual modern-era balls began on February 9, 1956, following the reopening of the opera in 1955. Since 1987, the Opera Ball has occasionally been met with protests, particularly in the 2000s, which gained significant public attention (Wiener Staatsoper, 2016).

2.4. The Vienna State Opera and Children

The Vienna State Opera began to place significant emphasis on productions aimed at children, particularly during the directorship of Ioan Holender from 1992 to 2010. As a father of three, Holender made children's operas a permanent part of the institution. Adapted versions of works such as Peter Pan, Das Traumfresserchen, Der 35. Mai, Aladdin, Bastien und Bastienne, and Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung were staged in a specially constructed tent located on the roof of the opera, above the Loggia, Cloakroom, and Schwind Foyer, until the spring of 2015. However, this tent was removed in the summer of 2015, and until 2020, the old city theater in Walfischgasse was used as the stage for children's plays.

In June 2024, the "NEST" (Neue Staatsoper) project was introduced at the Künstlerhaus. As of December 2024, NEST will serve as the Vienna State Opera's second stage, providing space for various productions and participatory projects (Wiener Staatsoper, 2024; NEST, 2024).

Another prominent event in the Vienna State Opera's children's program is the Magic Flute performance organized annually for children aged nine to ten on the day after the Opera Ball. This event takes place in February, during the conversion of the audience hall and stage into the ballroom, following the traditional Vienna Ball. Additionally, the Vienna State Opera offers an opera school for children aged eight to fourteen. This school provides a program that children can attend in the afternoons in addition to their regular education. Here, children are introduced to musical theater with a pedagogical approach and are also introduced to singing as a potential career. Students from this school are selected for child roles in opera productions. The school holds two matinées each season. The first artistic director of the opera department established in 2002 was Marco Ozbic, who held this position until 2005. Peter Rille was the administrative director, Elisabeth Lampl was the vocal coach, and Ernst Dunshirn served as the chorus master of the State Opera. Johannes Mertl is currently serving as the director of the children's choir alongside the administrator (Wiener Staatsoper 2023). During the Mozart year in 2006, Little Friedrich, a 20-minute collage of Mozart songs, was staged by Janko Kastelic and Claudia Toman.



3. INNOVATION: ADAPTING TO MODERNITY AND EVOLUTION

The Vienna State Opera plays a crucial role not only in preserving its classical repertoire but also in adapting to modernity and embracing innovative interpretations. Since the early twentieth century, the art of opera has been influenced by societal changes and has evolved in tandem with these shifts. Traditional themes have been replaced by more contemporary subjects, and there have been significant changes in musical structures and staging techniques. The Vienna State Opera has kept pace with this transformation by incorporating modern operas and new staging methods into its repertoire.

One notable example of this transformation is Richard Strauss's *Salome*. Adapted from Oscar Wilde's play of the same name, this opera caused a significant stir when it was premiered in 1905. Strauss adopted an innovative approach both musically and dramatically in *Salome*, which stands out due to its psychological depth and intense music. This work holds a prominent place in the Vienna State Opera's repertoire and continues to be staged with innovative interpretations by various directors. For instance, Boleslav Barlog's 1972 staging is a key example of how the opera can be interpreted from a modern perspective. Furthermore, the 2023 adaptation of this work represents a unique example of presenting the story with a modern interpretation while preserving its originality.

Another example is Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*. Considered one of the most important masterpieces of modern opera, *Wozzeck*, which premiered in 1925, is noted for its atonal musical structure and social critiques. The Vienna State Opera has maintained the modernity and relevance of this work by staging it through various directors and set designers. Patrice Chéreau's 2017 production was praised for its stage design and the psychological depth of the characters.

These modern works and innovative stagings enrich the Vienna State Opera's traditional repertoire and provide significant insights into the opera's place in the modern world. Additionally, through these works, the Vienna State Opera demonstrates that opera is not only a part of the past but also of the present and future. It can be said that modern opera works and interpretations contribute to diversifying the audience and forming a new generation of opera enthusiasts.

3.1. Modern Adaptations of Classical Works

With modernity, there have been profound changes in staging techniques. Technological innovations have led to significant advancements in set design and production techniques. The Vienna State Opera has embraced the digitization process, utilizing technology effectively in staging and production processes. These technological innovations offer substantial advancements in both stage design and musical performance. Notably, digital projections and modern lighting systems have made stage design more dynamic and interactive. These innovations provide audiences with a more impactful and engaging experience. The Vienna State Opera's ability to present classical works with a modern perspective through these technological innovations is crucial for both evolving the art form and meeting audience expectations. Specifically, the integration of digital technologies into opera provides a different experience for audiences through innovative approaches in stage design and visual effects.

Additionally, live broadcasts and online performances through digital platforms allow the opera to reach a broader audience. The Vienna State Opera uses these platforms to provide access to international audiences and contribute to the global recognition of opera. In this context, the Vienna State Opera has initiated digital projects such as "Live at Home," presenting performances to a global audience. This initiative has the potential to overcome geographical barriers and attract younger viewers. However, these digital opportunities also present challenges. The emotional impact and spatial experience of live performances may not be fully replicated in a digital format. Moreover, digital revenue models may be more uncertain than traditional ticket sales, potentially posing risks to financial sustainability.

Moreover, in the 2010s, the Vienna State Opera launched a project called "Oper Live am Platz." In this project, performances were broadcast live on a large screen set up in Karajan Square (adjacent to the opera house on Kärntner Straße). These broadcasts were held almost every two days during the warm months, with approximately 300 seats set up in the square and removed after each performance. This event was free for viewers, and many of the rules applied in the opera house, such as dress codes, were not enforced in the square (Wiener Staatsoper, 2021).

In this regard, the Vienna State Opera faces the necessity of taking strategic steps towards the future in the complex



and rapidly changing art environment of today, following its rich history. The institution is developing various strategies to overcome challenges related to digitization, changing audience habits, and financial sustainability while maintaining its pioneering role in the art world. In this context, digitization and technological innovations not only enable the Vienna State Opera to align with the modern world but also play a significant role in the evolution of opera. The possibilities offered by technology enhance artistic productivity and enrich the audience experience. The Vienna State Opera is adopting innovative approaches in both stage design and production elements by modernizing classical operas.

3.2. Concept, Stage Design, and Technology

Modern directorial approaches significantly reshape classical works for contemporary audiences, with stage design and technology playing crucial roles in this transformation. The Vienna State Opera's innovative productions offer notable examples of how classical operas are reimagined. For instance, in the production of *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute), traditional stage decor has been replaced by holographic technology and contemporary costume designs, presenting the opera's mystical and fantastical elements in an immersive, three-dimensional experience. Similarly, the production of *Salome* utilizes modern visual effects and stage design to underscore the psychological and dramatic depth of the opera (Ertl, 2018).

Other classical works have also been reinterpreted to align with modern aesthetics and reflect contemporary social dynamics. Productions of *La Traviata* and *La Bohème* blend the romantic ambiance of 19th-century Paris with contemporary fashion details, intensifying the emotional resonance of these operas. In *Le Nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro), the aristocratic setting is redesigned with elements of modern living spaces, reinterpreting the social status dynamics of the characters in a present-day context (Chua, 2020: 20-45).

In contrast, productions like *Tosca* and *Aida* have retained their traditional stage designs and classical aesthetics. These operas emphasize their historical settings, staying faithful to their original time periods without the integration of modern visual effects or technological enhancements. The grandeur and epic nature of *Aida*, for example, rely on its classic Egyptian themes, while *Tosca* preserves the historical and political atmosphere of ancient Rome. Such productions maintain their classical integrity, focusing on the traditional elements that define their timeless appeal (Chua, 2020: 20-45).

The integration of modern technology has revolutionized stage design in some classical operas. In *Die Zauberflöte*, holographic projections vividly capture the opera's fantastical elements, providing the audience with a magical experience. In *Salome*, large projections and LED screens intensify the internal conflict and drama. These modern technologies offer new ways to enhance the dramatic and emotional impact of classical works.

Although modern technologies have transformed many operas, *La Traviata*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Aida* demonstrate that traditional approaches can still effectively capture the audience's imagination. These productions show how original aesthetic values can be preserved, allowing classical works to retain their emotional and dramatic depth without relying on technological innovations. The balance between modern reinterpretations and classical fidelity ensures that opera remains a versatile and evolving art form (Ertl, 2018).

3.3. Costume and Fashion

Modern costume design offers a new interpretation of characters in classic works. In the production of *Salome*, the characters' costumes are designed with contemporary fashion elements rather than traditional Middle Eastern motifs. This approach has conveyed the complexity and inner struggles of the characters more effectively to today's audience. Similarly, in *Die Zauberflöte*, modern and abstract designs have been used instead of traditional costumes. The costumes of *Papageno* and *Papagena* have been reimagined with a modern and playful aesthetic.

In the production of *La Bohème*, the costumes and set designs blend the romantic and melancholic atmosphere of nineteenth-century Paris with the subtle details of contemporary fashion, enhancing the emotional intensity of the piece. In the *Aida* production, traditional Egyptian garments have been updated with modern fashion elements, which has augmented the historical theme and dramatic impact of the work (Art für Art, 2024).



4. DIRECTOR BOGDAN ROŠČIĆ'S CONTEMPORARY VISION INTEGRATING TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Under Director Bogdan Roščić's leadership, the Vienna State Opera is developing a contemporary vision that bridges tradition with modernity. Roščić's approach involves not only renewing the opera's core repertoire but also incorporating significant masterpieces previously considered missing. This vision aims to integrate both traditional and contemporary artistic perspectives.

An example of this new direction is the opening of the new children's and youth stage on December 7, which will host the premieres of four new works and 180 events. This venue is designed to be a permanent artistic home for young audiences, providing a lasting rather than temporary artistic environment (Leyrer, 2024).

Another prominent example is the production of Verdi's *Don Carlo*, scheduled for September 26, 2024. Directed by Kirill Serebrennikov and conducted by Philippe Jordan, with Asmik Grigorian debuting as Elisabeth and Elīna Garanča performing as Eboli, this production highlights Roščić's effort to reinterpret major opera works in a modern context while preserving their historical depth and musical integrity (Leyrer, 2024).

Overall, Roščić's strategy represents a significant shift towards integrating contemporary artistic perspectives with the Vienna State Opera's historical heritage. This balance between tradition and modernity will be key to maintaining the institution's position in the international opera world and its role as a cultural center (Leyrer, 2024).

4.1. Director Roščić's New Direction and Repertoire Changes at the Vienna State Opera: The Example of *Don Carlo*

Under the leadership of Bogdan Roščić, the Vienna State Opera is undergoing a significant transformation. Roščić's appointment marked a commitment to rapidly renew the opera's core repertoire, which involved removing some long-standing and beloved productions. However, a noticeable shift in this approach is now evident.

Roščić aims to incorporate "first-degree masterpieces" that were previously missing from the repertoire. This strategic shift seeks to balance preserving traditional works with introducing modern and engaging new productions. For instance, the new children's and youth stage, opening on December 7, will host the premieres of four new works and a total of 180 events. Roščić emphasizes that this venue will serve as a permanent artistic home for young audiences, offering a long-term solution rather than temporary fixes (Leyrer, 2024).

A key example of Roščić's new direction is the production of Verdi's *Don Carlo*, scheduled for September 26, 2024 (ORF TOPOS, 2024). Directed by Kirill Serebrennikov, with Philippe Jordan as the music director, this production highlights Roščić's strategy of adding significant works to the repertoire. Asmik Grigorian will make her debut as Elisabeth, and Elīna Garanča will perform as Eboli. This staging approach reflects Roščić's effort to reinterpret major opera works within a modern context, blending traditional and innovative elements (Leyrer, 2024).

Roščić's strategy exemplifies how the Vienna State Opera integrates contemporary artistic perspectives while preserving its traditional heritage. The decision to restage major works like *Don Carlo* represents a deliberate step towards restructuring the repertoire and demonstrates how the institution balances tradition with modernity. This balance will be crucial for maintaining the Vienna State Opera's position in the international opera world and its importance as a cultural center (Leyrer, 2024).

4.2. A Unique Critique on Power and the Struggle for Freedom in the Contemporary Interpretation of *Don Carlo*

Verdi'nin In this new interpretation of Verdi's *Don Carlo* at the Vienna State Opera, Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov aims to stage a historical palimpsest, centering on the themes of power and freedom. Serebrennikov approaches *Don Carlo* as a dialogue between the past and the present, believing that staging an opera is not merely a reproduction of historical events, but also an opportunity to create a contemporary layer of meaning.

The director emphasizes the burden of power through the use of heavy costumes and the reenactment of the historical context. The physical weight of the costumes particularly symbolizes the burden of power on the individual. This not only reflects the personal struggles of the characters but also represents the pressure of society and history



on them. The old costumes, redesigned by the Vienna State Opera's costume workshop based on 16th-century visuals, contribute to the historical authenticity of the production.

Serebrennikov's interest in the character of Rodrigo, as seen in Schiller's original play, further highlights the themes of freedom and oppression in this interpretation. Rodrigo seeks to free Don Carlo from the power and love struggle with his father and draws him into the struggle for freedom. However, Serebrennikov's portrayal of the fight for freedom is not limited to the interpersonal conflict between the characters but can also be read as a modern political narrative against totalitarian repression.

Verdi's *Don Carlo* is a complex work that combines historical and political layers with profound psychological analysis. The opera's central conflicts—love, power, freedom, and betrayal—represent universal human experiences, while Verdi contextualizes these themes within political and social frameworks. One of the opera's most powerful dynamics is the struggle between the individual's search for freedom and the oppressive nature of state power. Serebrennikov's interpretation reevaluates these power dynamics, especially within a contemporary context.

In Serebrennikov's production, power is portrayed not only as a political force but also as a tangible physical weight. The heavy and cumbersome costumes embody how power can be restricting and immobilizing for the individual. At the same time, these costumes symbolize the weight of the past and the legacies of history. The historical continuity of power and its oppressive influence on individuals is clearly reflected in Serebrennikov's stage design and costume choices.

The focus on Rodrigo's character deepens this concept. Rodrigo's efforts to lead Don Carlo towards freedom can be interpreted as a rebellion against the oppressive regimes of today. Serebrennikov's own political experience adds significant context to this interpretation, as he himself has faced repression under Vladimir Putin's regime in Russia, even serving time in prison. In this context, Rodrigo's fight for freedom resonates as both a metaphor for the idealism of Schiller's original play and a reflection of Serebrennikov's personal and political past (Tošić, 2024).

A key element in Serebrennikov's interpretation of *Don Carlo* is how the opera has been reinterpreted for contemporary audiences. The historical themes of the opera are presented in a way that echoes today's political and social issues. Serebrennikov masterfully blends the dramatic narrative of the past with the realities of the present, offering the audience a "historical experience" of sorts. The costumes, set designs, and overall staging create an atmosphere that allows the audience to physically feel the weight of history.

The technical aspects of the opera also play a crucial role in this contemporary interpretation. Although the set design largely presents a historical environment, the use of technological solutions draws the audience into an abstract and modern experience. The fact that the large, heavy-looking sets are actually managed with delicate technical precision illustrates how modern stage technology enhances the visual impact of the opera. Serebrennikov skillfully integrates technological innovations while preserving the monumental historical elements of the stage design. This approach brings Verdi's classic work to life in both a traditional and innovative way.

At this point, it can be argued that opera, with its powerful dramatic and aesthetic tools, emerges as an effective platform for addressing the complex issues of both history and the present day. This is evident in Serebrennikov's interpretation of *Don Carlo*. The director skillfully uses allegory and metaphor to not only depict individual and political struggles for freedom but also to highlight the inherent corruption of absolute power. Likewise, environmental issues, social justice, and peace are subtly woven into this contemporary interpretation, offering the audience a profound critical perspective. Through his stage design and the relationships between characters, Serebrennikov presents these universal themes, illustrating that opera is not only an art form but also a powerful medium for rethinking historical and current realities. In this sense, the contemporary interpretation of *Don Carlo* does more than tell a story of the past; it also offers a critique that transcends time by establishing meaningful connections with the present.

In this regard, Kyrill Serebrennikov's interpretation of *Don Carlo* at the Vienna State Opera masterfully combines both historical and contemporary elements, shedding new light on the relationship between power, freedom, and the individual. The weight of the past and the political oppressions of today are skillfully intertwined on stage, offering a meaningful message to modern audiences.



5. ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

The administrative and financial structure of the Vienna State Opera is meticulously organized to offer a sustainable operational model while maintaining high artistic standards. However, the impact of this unified model on each institution's artistic autonomy and cultural identity is occasionally criticized. Critics argue that the artistic decisions of the Vienna State Opera may be overshadowed by the needs of other cultural institutions such as Burgtheater and Volksoper. Despite these criticisms, the opera's success hinges on the balanced implementation of this model. The delicate balance between financial management and artistic goals enables the opera to maintain high quality and ensure financial sustainability (Bundesministerium Kunst, Kultur, Öffentlicher Dienst und Sport, 2024).

Behind the opera's success is the coordinated work of a large administrative and technical team behind the scenes. Administrative staff operate in critical areas such as artistic management, production management, marketing, public relations, and finance, while the technical team ensures the flawless execution of stage setups, lighting, sound systems, and other technical details. Costume designers, tailors, and decoration teams contribute to the visual aesthetics of each production, forming the foundation of the opera's impressive staging. The performance teams include soloists, orchestra members, choristers, and extras; notably, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra holds a privileged position within this ensemble (Wiener Staatsoper, 2012). Lighting designers, sound engineers, and stage directors work in close collaboration to achieve technical and artistic excellence.

At the upper management level, the General Director and the Artistic Director determine the institution's artistic vision and strategic orientation. Currently, Bogdan Roščić serves as the General Director (Wiener Staatsoper, 2020), while Philippe Jordan manages the artistic processes of productions as the Music Director (Wiener Staatsoper, 2024). Additionally, the Board of Directors, composed of individuals with cultural and artistic experience, plays a crucial role in guiding the opera's strategic decisions. As of 2023, the Board consists of 12 members working to ensure the sustainability and future of the arts. The opera's departmental structure, specializing in production, technical, marketing, public relations, and finance areas, supports high-standard artistic production and financial stability.

The financial structure of the Vienna State Opera is based on a different organizational model due to its operation under a single company with Burgtheater and Volksoper (Ertl, 2015). The financial and administrative resources of these three major cultural institutions are shared through this unified structure, alleviating financial burdens by distributing fixed costs. This approach allows each institution to invest in more artistic projects while maintaining financial sustainability. The Vienna State Opera efficiently manages subsidies from the central government and sponsorships from the private sector, distributing its resources effectively and ensuring the sustainability of its cultural programs (ZEIT Reisen, 2018).

Financial sustainability is critical given the opera's size and long-standing history. High production costs, a broad repertoire, and innovative projects necessitate careful financial management. The opera's strategy of diversifying financial sources, including sponsorships and donations, is reinforced by contributions from local and international supporters, thereby safeguarding its financial structure. However, these funding models can lead to discussions about the independence of the arts. Ticket sales remain a significant source of revenue for the opera. Keeping classical works at the center of the repertoire plays a crucial role in meeting audience demand and significantly impacts financial security (Bundesministerium Kunst, Kultur, öffentlicher Dienst und Sport, 2024).

To ensure financial sustainability and attract younger audiences, the Vienna State Opera continually updates its strategic plans. This includes developing various educational programs and projects for young audiences and collaborating with schools to promote opera. Ticket pricing strategies aimed at young audiences are also part of the opera's efforts to achieve this goal.

In this context, the Vienna State Opera's success stems from its ability to preserve its artistic heritage while adapting to the requirements of the modern world. By maintaining traditional values and developing innovative strategies to expand its audience, the opera has increased its impact both locally and internationally. The unified financial structure with Burgtheater and Volksoper supports the opera's sustainability, while its extensive human resources ensure the quality of productions. This structure contributes to maintaining the opera's artistic autonomy and financial stability for the future.



Digitalization also offers significant opportunities for the Vienna State Opera. Live broadcasts via digital platforms enable the opera to reach a broader audience and increase its global reach. This strategy helps extend the art form to more people and enhances the opera's international impact.

For future success, financial sustainability is critical. High production costs and extensive repertoire requirements necessitate careful financial management. Effective management of various revenue sources, such as sponsorship agreements, donors, and ticket sales, plays a vital role in maintaining the opera's artistic independence while ensuring financial balance.

6. CONCLUSION

Opera is a performance art that integrates multiple art forms, including music, dramatic narration, stage design, and dance. Although its roots extend back to ancient Greek and Roman theater, modern opera originated in Italy at the end of the 16th century and gradually spread throughout Europe. Opera offers audiences not only a musical experience but also a profound dramatic and aesthetic journey. This art form is typically built upon original librettos and scores, and the consistent staging of these elements preserves the integrity of the work. In this context, the Vienna State Opera has been a revered artistic sanctuary since it opened its doors with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Don Giovanni" in 1869, hosting renowned opera artists, composers, and directors from around the world. As one of Europe's and the global art scene's most prestigious cultural institutions, it holds significant historical and artistic importance. Initially established as the court opera of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it began as an art center serving the aristocracy and has gradually attracted public interest, facilitating the widespread dissemination of opera.

The Vienna State Opera plays a crucial role in maintaining the universality and continuity of opera by preserving its historical depth while embracing modern and contemporary innovations in art. By bridging the classical and traditional with modern and contemporary elements, it has become a pioneer in artistic innovation and cultural transformation. This balance has established the Vienna State Opera not only as an art center but also as a leader in artistic advancements and cultural shifts.

In conclusion, the Vienna State Opera successfully fulfills its mission of sustaining its artistic heritage in alignment with modern developments, advancing towards the goal of preserving and promoting the universality of art. This process is critical for both the preservation of Vienna's cultural identity and the enrichment of the global opera scene.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has broadly examined the "Art of Opera" as its central focus. Future research could provide a more detailed evaluation of the changes and developments in the representation of specific works over the years within this scope.

Additionally, since this study only addresses the "Art of Opera," future research might specifically investigate "Ballet Art," particularly focusing on its representation within the Vienna State Opera.

Another potential research avenue could involve a comparative, interdisciplinary study of the historical representations and transformations of both Opera and Ballet Art.

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