

**Investigating the current challenges and discovering workable solutions
for the future of opera companies in South Africa**

by

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YNDSAK001

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Declaration

I, Sakhiseni Joseph Yende hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has never been submitted to any other institution of higher learning before. I declare that this thesis does not contain any form of plagiarism as I have followed the university's policy concerning plagiarism. I further declare that all citations, quotations, references and borrowed ideas in this study were correctly acknowledged. Lastly, I am fully aware that using other scholars' work without appropriate acknowledgement is against the university policy and that it is unlawful.

Signed by candidate

Sakhiseni Joseph Yende

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my precious Lord and Saviour, who gave me strength and ability to champion this study. I also dedicate this thesis to my beloved wife who never wavered in her support and care. I could not have written this thesis without her love and genuine support. This work is also dedicated to my mother and siblings for their love and support, as well as their personal sacrifices. It is my hope and trust that this thesis will be of great benefit to solve the challenges faced by the South African opera industry.

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Abstract

The aim of this research study was to investigate the current challenges facing and discovering workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. The decline in government funding emerges as a critical factor adversely affecting the operations of these companies, leading to closures and a diminished cultural landscape. Social constructivism theory is employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings, acknowledging the complex interplay of social factors in shaping the fate of the opera industry. Qualitative in nature, the study draws on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 14 participants from both operational and closed opera companies across the two significant provinces, namely Gauteng and the Western Cape. While the importance of state funding is evident, the research highlights the consistent decline in financial support as a catalyst for the demise of opera companies. The study identifies and documents various challenges faced by the opera industry, presenting envisioned state funding recommendations and recognising initiatives already undertaken by surviving companies, such as Cape Town Opera. These visions and recommendations form a comprehensive roadmap for South African opera companies striving for financial stability, offering strategic guidance to navigate the complexities of funding challenges. Moreover, the research emphasises the need for a more comprehensive funding model, specifically tailored to the performing arts industry, with a focus on opera. This call to action underscores the necessity for a holistic approach in addressing financial constraints, acknowledging the unique requirements of opera companies within the broader cultural context. In conclusion, this study not only uncovers challenges, but it also provides actionable recommendations and acknowledges the successful implementation by surviving opera companies. The continuous pursuit of improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances is encouraged, fostering a resilient opera sector that not only overcomes financial hurdles, but that actively contributes to a vibrant and thriving cultural landscape in South Africa. The call for a more comprehensive funding model further underlines the urgency for recognition and support of the performing arts, particularly opera, as an integral component of the nation's cultural identity and enrichment.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

ACE	Arts Council England
ACT	Arts and Culture Trust
CAPAB	Cape Performing Arts Board
CTO	Cape Town Opera
GO	Gauteng Opera
NAC	National Arts Council
NAPAC	Natal Performing Arts Council
NOASA	National Opera Association of South Africa
NOS	National Opera Society
PACs	Performing Arts Councils
PACOFS	Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State
PACT	Performing Arts Council Transvaal
OA	Opera Africa
OSA	Opera South Africa
OVSA	Opera Vereniging van Suid-Afrika

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Chapter 1: Introduction and study overview

1.1 Background and rationale of the study

1.1.1 Background

The relevance of this study arises from the vibrant history of South African theatre, as shown in various fields such as drama, music, dance, classical opera, orchestra, and ballet. For this study, I will focus on the South African opera industry.¹ In South Africa, the exposure of local cultures to opera came through settlers and European visitors who performed opera on a small scale in the country (Nomcweya, 2018; Roos, 2010). As the love and passion for opera shared by these visiting European opera companies grew, opera companies were established, and a genuine need then arose to fund these opera companies to produce opera.

In 1948, South Africa witnessed a significant shift in the arts landscape as the newly elected government established the National Theatre Organisation (NTO) as the first government-funded arts entity, with the mandate of nationwide arts support (Hauptfleisch, 2007; Roos, 2010). However, due to the immense geographical expanse of the country, the NTO struggled to allocate resources effectively, particularly for orchestral music, opera, and ballet, rendering it ineffective (Gobbato, 2018). This inadequacy led to the emergence of pivotal organisations in the 1950s, including the National Opera Company, the National Opera Society, the National Opera Association

¹ In this study, I deliberately chose to use the terms “opera industry” and “opera companies” based on the South African context, where “opera” is commonly referred to as an industry. The term “opera industry” describes the broader network of activities, institutions, and individuals involved in opera production and performance in South Africa. In South Africa, this term encompasses the collective efforts that sustain opera, including both existing and former companies, artists, and supporting organisations. The use of “opera companies” is also justified in this study, as it reflects the historical transition in South Africa. Before 1994, opera organisations were fully subsidised by the government and were known as organisations. However, with the advent of the democratic government, this landscape changed, and most existing and defunct opera entities now refer to themselves as companies.

of South Africa (NOASA), and the Opera Vereniging van Suid-Afrika (OVSA) [Opera Association of South Africa]. These entities played a critical role in funding and fostering the success of opera in South Africa (Gobbato, 2018; Roos, 2010).

Remarkably, these organisations operated primarily as amateur arts bodies, with NOASA and OVSA functioning as private entities, underlining the diverse landscape of arts support during this period (Gobbato, 2018; Roos, 2010). It is also clear from the commitment of the Apartheid government to funding the performing arts for their success, that opera strategically leveraged these amateur entities to advance cultural, social, and political agendas (Nomcweya, 2018).

Angelo Gobbato's comprehensive work, *A Passion for Opera* (2018), provides a detailed historical account of the roles of the National Opera Company, National Opera Society, National Opera Association of South Africa, and OVSA prior to the establishment of provincial performing arts councils (PACs). Gobbato's research serves as a cornerstone for understanding this critical historical context. After the dissolution of the previously mentioned organisations, a series of provincial PACs emerged, including the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB), the Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC), the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (PACOFs), and the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT). A pivotal moment unfolded in 1963 when the South African government allocated funding to these provincial councils, covering the Transvaal, Cape, Orange Free State, and Natal provinces (Gobbato, 2018; Olivier, 2014). This marked a transformative period when opera companies received substantial financial backing from these entities, enabling them to provide consistent employment opportunities to local professional artists (Gobbato, 2018). The establishment of secure funding channels through these organisations fostered the growth of opera companies, resulting in increased access to opera for the white minority population in South Africa. This era stands as a watershed moment in the evolution and accessibility of opera within the country (Gobbato, 2018).

The transition from Apartheid to democracy in 1994 marked a significant shift in the funding landscape for the performing arts in South Africa. Organisations like the National Opera Company and the National Opera Society had played a short but

important role in educating society about opera and supporting opera companies. However, after the fall of Apartheid, the new national government withdrew its primary funding responsibility from the performing arts councils, citing a perceived bias towards 'white' cultural activities, including opera (Nomcweya, 2018; Roos, 2010). While state funding during the existence of these councils facilitated the construction of new theatres and the adoption of essential technology, the onset of democracy in 1994 brought unforeseen challenges for the opera industry.

Contrary to expectations, the post-Apartheid era proved to be a difficult period for opera in South Africa. Opera companies, including those that had previously received subsidies, struggled as full support from the new government did not materialise (Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010). The discontinuation of subsidies from previous funding entities further exacerbated the financial strain on opera companies (Nomcweya, 2018; Roos, 2010). This shift in funding dynamics compelled opera companies to seek alternative sources of support to maintain their operations amidst declining and inconsistent state funding (Spies, 2015; Van der Hoven, 2023; Yende, 2017).

The post-Apartheid government's mission was to uplift marginalised communities and promote their arts and their cultures. This commitment led to a policy agenda focused on redressing past imbalances, with 'indigenous knowledge' becoming a central theme across government departments (Nomcweya, 2018). In 1996, all operating performing arts councils were replaced by the National Arts Council (NAC); the Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture (DSAC) and the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF), leading to a reduction in state funding for performing arts, including opera (Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010; Spies, 2015). Although Cape Town Opera remains the sole surviving opera company in South Africa, state funding proves inadequate to cover operational costs, prompting the heavy reliance on private donations (Spies, 2015).

On the provincial level, it is essential to mention that each of South Africa's nine provinces has its own Department of Arts and Culture, which allocates funds to regional arts initiatives, focusing on supporting local artists and organisations (South African Cultural Observatory, 2020; Van Graan & Ballantyne, 2002). The South African Cultural Observatory (2019) reported that local municipalities may also provide funding for cultural activities, though this is often limited. Additionally, the

private sector, including corporations and foundations, contributes through sponsorships and partnerships.

The amended Government White Paper Policy (1996) aimed to realign funding policies with changing societal dynamics and an appeal to local audiences. Provincially-based funding offers benefits, such as promoting diverse artistic expressions, addressing local challenges, and fostering grassroots arts development. It enables equitable resource distribution, preventing concentration in metropolitan areas (South African Cultural Observatory, 2019).

However, several studies have highlighted that provincially-based funding also presents drawbacks. For instance, scholars (such as Gobbato, 2018; Mugovhani, 2017; Nomcweya, 2018; Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015) agree that significant disparities in the availability and amount of funding between provinces has led to unequal opportunities for artists and organisations depending on their location. It is evident that the variability in the criteria and processes for funding across provinces can result in inconsistencies in the quality and impact of supported projects. Additionally, some provinces have limited budgets for the arts compared to wealthier provinces, restricting their ability to support the local arts scene effectively (Lochner, 2010). The existence of multiple funding bodies and processes have created administrative challenges for artists and organisations seeking support, complicating the application and reporting procedures (Gobbato, 2018; Roos, 2010; Spies, 2015). This has led to the closure of many opera companies and the subsequent unemployment of opera singers (Spies, 2015). Thus, a balance between national oversight and provincial autonomy is essential to ensure equitable and effective support for the performing arts across South Africa.

The decline in funding for opera is a global phenomenon, with opera houses worldwide facing financial difficulties (Florea, 2014; Shilvock, 2002). While European countries have managed to maintain opera productions to flourish, South Africa faces unique challenges. Financial instability has further been exacerbated by the 2017 financial crisis and the coronavirus disease 2019 (hereafter, COVID-19) pandemic in 2020, which caused venue closures and financial insecurity across the industry (Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017).

Despite a rich body of literature addressing the challenges faced by the performing arts sector globally, a gap exists in understanding the specific challenges confronting South African opera companies (Burdukova, 2010; Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017). Extensive research is needed with a specific focus on funding to support and enhance the sustainability of opera in South Africa. Drawing upon lessons from funding models in opera theatres in the Global North, where successful models have been established, should provide valuable insights (Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017).

Personal observations and experiences have brought me to the conclusion that solutions must be sought outside of government departments and policies. In the context of South Africa, while it is commendable that opera companies are striving for inclusivity (Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017), there might be a need for additional funds to address specific challenges faced by black singers from disadvantaged backgrounds. The historical disparities and systemic issues in South Africa may require targeted financial support to ensure the sustained success and growth of these initiatives. Addressing the legacy of Apartheid's cultural divisions is imperative, as many black South Africans still perceive opera as a predominantly white art form. The government's role in altering these perceptions and increasing funding for opera is crucial (Mugovhani, 2017; Nomcweya, 2018).

The legacy of Apartheid impacted profoundly on the arts in South Africa, particularly opera, between 1948 and 1994. The Apartheid government enforced cultural segregation, favouring white minority performers and audiences (Nomcweya, 2018; Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010). This segregation led to the perception among black South Africans that opera, ballet, and orchestras were exclusively intended for white audiences, which resulted in diminished support and, subsequently, reduced state funding for opera companies (Mugovhani, 2017; Nomcweya, 2018). This has also contributed to persistent misconceptions about opera, viewing it as an elitist and Western-centric art form that does not resonate with local audiences or adequately represent South African cultural identities (Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010).

Additionally, there is a notable lack of awareness and understanding among policymakers, sponsors, and the general public regarding the profound social and economic role of the performing arts, including opera. This misconception has led to

an undervaluation of the contribution of opera to education, tourism, job creation, cultural diplomacy, and community development, which has influenced the allocation of funding and support for opera productions significantly (Mugovhani & Nawa, 2019; Spies, 2015; Van der Hoven, 2023; Yende, 2017). The centralisation of previous funding councils into a single government body, combined with diminishing subsidies for the performing arts, has exacerbated this situation.

With the advent of democracy in South Africa, significant changes occurred in the funding mechanisms for performing arts councils. In 1996, the government relinquished its primary responsibility for funding these councils and their activities, resulting in the dissolution of all pre-1994 funding channels (Gobbato, 2018; Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010; Spies, 2015). This dismantling of established funding sources left opera companies with limited options for financial support, contributing to the decline in funding.

1.1.2 Rationale: Developing the idea for a doctoral dissertation

Since I started my career as a professional opera singer nine years ago, I have noticed serious changes in the opera industry in South Africa. Most of the opera companies that I had the privilege to work with are no longer in operation: Opera South Africa (OSA), Opera Africa (OA) and The Black-Tie Ensemble (BTE) later known as Gauteng Opera (GO). Before and since 2010, opera companies in South Africa have been battling to continue operations due to the lack of financial stability. Although the state does provide funding for opera companies via the National Arts Council, the funding is not enough to sustain and stage opera. This observation and experience prompted me to undertake my doctoral studies to seek some workable solutions to the financial challenges in the industry.

The research I undertook for my master's thesis (2017) titled *Employment opportunities and challenges experienced by Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) Vocal Art graduates: A case study*, has equipped me with a strong background regarding the challenges experienced by opera singers and opera companies in South Africa. My work with the opera companies mentioned earlier provided me with direct insight and experience of the industry internally, rather than viewing it externally. These companies were all located in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

This study, investigating the current challenges and finding workable solutions for maintaining opera companies in South Africa, is of paramount significance for several reasons. First, South Africa boasts a rich cultural heritage, with opera playing a vital role in its artistic culture. Understanding the challenges faced by opera companies in this context is crucial for preserving and fostering this cultural legacy. Second, the opera industry in South Africa faces a unique set of obstacles that require specialised attention. Factors such as financial constraints, audience engagement, and infrastructure limitations have a profound impact on the sustainability of opera companies in the region. Through in-depth investigation this research will identify and analyse these challenges comprehensively.

The findings offer valuable insights not only to opera companies, but also to other performing arts organisations facing similar challenges worldwide. The methodologies and strategies developed to address the specific issues in South Africa serve as a blueprint for global opera communities striving for sustainability and relevance. The study also seeks to bridge the gap between academia and the arts industry. By engaging with opera company managers and government funding agencies, I aim to establish a collaborative dialogue in this research project to bring insights to the ongoing challenges experienced by the opera industry. This collaborative approach can lead to the co-creation of practical, implementable solutions that are rooted in academic rigour with relevant, industry-related applicability.

Ultimately, the goal of this research is to contribute to the sustainability and growth of opera companies in South Africa. By proposing workable solutions informed by empirical evidence and industry expertise, this study aims to empower these organisations to navigate the current challenges and to build a vibrant and enduring future for opera in the region. The potential impact of this research extends beyond the confines of the opera stage, resonating with the broader cultural landscape of South Africa and enriching its cultural heritage for generations to come.

1.2 Problem statement of the study

Since 1994, the post-Apartheid South African Government has vigorously advocated to redress the past imbalances in the arts and culture of the people of South Africa (Mugovhani, 2017). The emphasis on redressing these past imbalances is rooted in the

historical injustices and inequalities that occurred during the Apartheid era. Apartheid, which lasted from 1948 to the early 1990s, was a system of institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination that disproportionately affected non-white South Africans, including Black, Coloured, and Indian communities (Mugovhani, 2017; Nomcweya, 2018).

During Apartheid, cultural and artistic expression for non-white communities was often suppressed and marginalised (Roos, 2010). Institutions and resources were predominantly allocated to the white population, leading to a significant disparity in access to opportunities and resources within the arts and culture sector. This historical injustice created a need for deliberate efforts to rectify the imbalances and to empower previously marginalised communities (Mugovhani, 2017; Nomcweya, 2018). The Government White Paper on Arts, Culture, and Heritage (1996) can be seen as a proactive response to these historical inequalities. By establishing funding policies and initiatives, the South African government aimed to provide support for artists, cultural practitioners, and institutions from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. This approach is rooted in the broader commitment to building a more inclusive and equitable society, recognising the importance of cultural expression and representation in shaping the identity of the nation.

Several studies confirm that opera, as a cultural form of expression, holds significant historical and artistic importance within the diverse culture of South African heritage (Nomcweya, 2018; Roos, 2010). However, in recent years, the opera industry in South Africa has encountered a myriad of challenges that threaten its sustainability and growth. These challenges encompass financial constraints, declining audience engagement, and inadequate infrastructure (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017).

The convergence of these factors presents a critical juncture for opera companies in the region, necessitating a comprehensive investigation to identify the underlying causes and to develop viable, context-specific solutions. Without targeted interventions, the continued viability of opera companies, as well as the preservation of this invaluable cultural heritage, hangs in the balance. This study seeks to dissect and address these challenges, striving to forge a path towards a vibrant and sustainable future for opera companies in South Africa.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

1.3.1 Purpose and research question of the study

This study investigates the current challenges to discover workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. From this primary purpose, the research question seeks answers that would clarify the ongoing crisis:

What are the current challenges and how can these be solved to safeguard the future of opera companies in SA?

1.3.2 Sub-questions of the study

In order to successfully investigate the gaps acknowledged in the literature on the current challenges of opera companies and the decline in funding for opera companies, the following sub-aims were established:

- a) What are the significant current challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa?
- b) What is the level of funding for opera companies in South Africa?
- c) What are the factors that affect funding for opera companies in South Africa?
- d) What are some workable solutions that could be adopted from European opera houses?
- e) What approaches could be applied in opera companies to curb the financial challenges in the future?

The study targets South African opera companies to obtain opinions about challenges and changes. The following research sub-aims were formulated to guide the study:

- a) To explore the significant changes contributing to the closure of opera companies in South Africa
- b) To describe the level of funding of opera companies in South Africa
- c) To review the factors that affect funding for opera companies in South Africa
- d) To explore some workable solutions that could be adopted from European opera houses

- e) To investigate approaches that could be applied in opera companies to curb financial challenges in the future.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This study employs the social constructivism theory as its foundational framework to explore the challenges and potential solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. Through the lens of social constructivism, three key concepts are adopted: financial autonomy, community engagement, and collaboration.

- a) **Financial Autonomy:** This concept pertains to the control and decision-making authority that opera companies and artists have over their financial resources. It allows them to shape their programming, direction, and artistic vision independently, fostering a sense of ownership and creative integrity. This autonomy is crucial for enhancing the financial stability of opera companies globally (Florea, 2014; Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017).
- b) **Community Engagement:** This concept emphasises the importance of building relationships with various stakeholders and audiences within the opera industry. It refers to actively involving the community in opera productions through outreach campaigns, educational workshops, participatory performances, and partnerships with local organisations. Community engagement helps opera companies to reflect the values and aspirations of their communities, leading to greater resonance and sustainability (Borwick, 2012; Gobbato, 2018; Spies, 2015).
- c) **Collaboration Theory:** Social constructivism highlights the value of collaborative approaches in knowledge creation and understanding. In the context of opera, creative collaboration involves interdisciplinary teamwork among composers, librettists, directors, performers, and technicians. Collaboration in opera extends beyond individual artistic teams to include cooperation between companies or regions, especially when faced with limited resources. Recognising the constraints of funding and other resources, opera organisations can benefit from pooling their strengths and expertise. This collaborative model promotes sustainability, efficiency, and a broader reach for opera productions. This fosters an environment of respect, open communication, and shared decision-making, leading to more

nuanced artistic expression and a more inclusive opera industry (John-Steiner, 2000; Steele, 2016).

I believe that by applying social constructivism based on collaboration, cultural responsiveness, and shared meaning-making, opera companies in South Africa can work towards a more dynamic, inclusive, and socially relevant industry. This will empower artists, promote long-term sustainability, and establish meaningful connections with audiences. This approach aims to cultivate a robust and adaptable opera industry that reflects the cultural richness and creative potential of South Africa. Overall, the adoption of social constructivism as the theoretical framework provides a solid foundation for this study, offering valuable insights into the challenges and potential solutions for opera companies in South Africa.

1.5 Research design and methodology

The research design and methodology for investigating the current challenges and discovering workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa used a qualitative research methodology. This entailed interviews with selected key stakeholders in the opera industry, including opera company managers and selected government agencies. The interviews provided valuable insights regarding their perspectives on the current challenges, potential solutions, and strategies for the future of opera companies in South Africa. This section is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this study. Using a qualitative research methodology with interviews provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa and aided the proposition of workable solutions for their future sustainability and growth. This approach facilitated a rich and nuanced understanding of the issues at hand.

1.5.1 Target population

The target population were South African opera company managers, and governmental funding entities such as National Arts Council (NAC), Arts and Culture Trust (ACT), Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO), and National Lotteries. These operational participants are located in two provinces in South Africa, namely Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria), and Western Cape (Cape Town). It is

also important to acknowledge that even though South Africa has only one official and active opera company based in Cape Town (Cape Town Opera), the Isango Ensemble, which performs opera seasonally, is also based in Cape Town. In Gauteng, there are seasonal opera companies, which include Sempre, and Jozi Opera.

1.5.2 Sampling frame

The sample frame comprised of opera company managers, and government funding entities. This sample frame was chosen to gather insights from key stakeholders who play crucial roles in the South African opera industry and have relevant perspectives on the challenges and potential solutions. The inclusion of opera company managers was justified due to their insight into the financial constraints and strategic decision-making processes faced by opera companies, while the insights of government funding entities were important due to the significant role they play in supporting and funding opera companies. Their perspectives shed light on the funding landscape, policies, and decision-making processes that influence the sustainability and growth of opera companies and provided a well-rounded understanding of the various aspects that influence the opera industry in the country.

1.5.3 Sampling procedure and sampling size

For this study, snowball and purposive techniques were selected. These methods were deemed suitable in order to consciously target participants who are knowledgeable about the challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa. The sample size consisted of 10 opera company managers and practitioners, and 4 governmental funding entities. Statistically, the sample size of 14 carefully selected individuals was deemed large enough to fulfil the purpose of this project.

1.5.4 Data collection methods

Primary and secondary sources were employed to collect the data for the research. The primary sources comprised of in-depth semi-structured interviews with 10 opera company managers (from existing and closed companies), and 4 selected governmental funding entities. Due to the research being conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the interviews were conducted via Zoom while others took place at the homes of the participants. The interviews were recorded and

transcribed. The interviews with the opera companies and funding entities provided significant information on how funding for opera companies in South Africa is distributed and used.

Secondary sources were employed to complement the primary sources. These sources included academic material such as books, journals, articles, government documents, and online material newspapers. The secondary sources provided valuable information about the past difficulties encountered by opera companies in South Africa.

Since the challenges encountered by opera companies have become an area of great concern worldwide, secondary data assisted this research in obtaining valuable data of the past events that have been written or printed. It is prudent to highlight that official documents such as government and organisational policies, dissertations, theses, and work papers were used. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), document analysis is a record of any historical event(s) that are archived for future references. In this study, document analysis was deemed to be a vital tool for collecting data.

1.5.5 COVID-19 researcher's protocol form

Data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic which had a significant impact on traditional data collection methods involving face-to-face interactions. It necessitated me to replace most of the face-to-face interviews that had already been scheduled with virtual interviews through video conferencing tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Skype.

In addition, I provided a form for the participants to sign regarding COVID-19 protocols and compliance (see Appendix 3).

1.5.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Data was gathered in the form of in-depth interviews with the selected participants. Interviews were recorded and analysed through a thematic analysis technique. The data analysis procedure included generating fundamental themes that materialised from the data. After transcribing the interviews, the NVivo software was applied to consolidate raw data in a meaningful technique and through NVivo software,

applicable nodes were also generated, and the coding process was commenced accordingly.

1.6 Orientation and location of the study

The choice of research location is a critical decision in any study, as it significantly influences the depth and relevance of the findings. For this investigation into the challenges facing opera companies in South Africa, two provinces were selected: Gauteng (specifically Pretoria) and Western Cape (specifically Cape Town). This selection was made based on a careful consideration of several factors, including the historical prominence of these two provinces in opera production, the current presence of active opera companies, and the expectation of obtaining first-hand insights from industry experts and practitioners. This view is shared by Roos (2010) who affirmed that the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces have succeeded since 1994 until the present date in staging opera productions. Engaging with opera companies in Gauteng and the Western Cape provides the research with a unique advantage: the ability to gather first-hand information from practitioners and stakeholders directly involved in the opera industry. These individuals possess invaluable knowledge and experience, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the industry's dynamics, challenges, and potential solutions.

1.7 Definitions of terms

The following terms are relevant to clarify the nature of the study:

- a) **Audience:** In general, the audience is known as the group of spectators who attend any event with the intent to sit cooperatively in a hall, theatre or open-air venue to watch and listen to specific performing arts, such as ballet, drama, music, or opera.
- b) **Opera:** Traditionally, opera is known as a theatre play that is set to music, sung by singers wearing costumes and make-up and who are accompanied by an orchestra. Opera can also be described as a theatre genre that combines a diversity of other art forms such as music, orchestra, visual arts, dance, costumes, sets, and make-up set on stage. It is a genre that emerged in Europe in the late 16th century and has since become one of the major forms of theatrical expression. Most operatic narratives and stories derive from various

sources, including literature, mythology, history, fairy tales, drama, and folk stories (Hoying, 2014:2).

- c) **Performing arts:** Broadly viewed, performing arts is an umbrella term that includes music, theatre, and dance, which individually and collectively performs to entertain an audience.
- d) **State funding:** State funding is also known as government funding and is defined as financial assistance or subsidy received by non-governmental organisations in the form of grants and loans from the government.

1.8 Ethical considerations

Before proceeding to collect the data, I obtained a letter of consent from the University of Cape Town granting me permission to conduct the research. Written consent also included an agreement between the researcher and the participants, allowing me to conduct the interviews. A signed informed-consent form was obtained from each participant in the study. In this study, ethical principles were followed with an intention to maintain the rights of the participants in the research.

The issues of ethical consideration will be discussed in Chapter 4 as follows:

- Voluntary participation
- No harm to the participants
- Anonymity and confidentiality
- Not deceiving subjects
- Protection from harm
- Informed consent
- Right to privacy
- Honesty with professional colleagues.

This section is only a brief description of the quality of the study. All aspects are discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

1.9 Motivation and justification for the study

1.9.1 Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa, a topic that has not received adequate scholarly attention. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in various significant ways. First, the research firmly establishes the critical role of government funding for the opera companies in South Africa. This is pivotal as it highlights the symbiotic relationship between the government's financial support and the sustainability of the opera industry. Without consistent and substantial funding, opera companies face significant challenges in their operations, which ultimately affects the accessibility of this art form to the broader public. Second, the study gives a historical context for the financial environment of the opera industry by meticulously examining the changes in governmental funding systems over time. The report presents a detailed viewpoint on how political and economic changes have significantly impacted the financial options open to opera companies.

Third, the research underlines the necessity of collaboration within the opera industry for its survival. This emphasises the fact that the success of opera companies is not solely contingent on government funding, but that it also requires the concerted efforts of various stakeholders. By bringing together artists, institutions, patrons, and policymakers, the industry can collectively work towards sustaining and promoting opera in South Africa. Lastly, this study employs a comprehensive approach to understanding and mitigating the challenges faced by opera companies. It delves into the historical context of Apartheid, dispels misperceptions about opera, and emphasises the economic underpinning of the arts. This multi-dimensional perspective ensures that the research not only identifies problems, but also offers holistic solutions.

In summary, this study offers a significant contribution to the understanding and advancement of the opera industry in South Africa. Through its comprehensive exploration of historical legacies, financial dynamics, collaborative potentials, and policy impacts, the research offers a roadmap for sustaining and enhancing opera in the country. It stands as a testament to the enduring power of the arts, even in the face

of financial challenges, and provides actionable insights to ensure the continued vibrancy of the opera industry in South Africa.

1.9.2 Underlying assumptions of the study

In undertaking this research regarding the challenges facing opera companies in South Africa, several assumptions were made to guide the investigation:

- a) The study assumed that all targeted participants, including opera company representatives and governmental funding entities, are primarily located in the selected provinces of Gauteng (with a specific focus on Pretoria) and Western Cape (with a specific focus on Cape Town). This assumption acknowledges the significance of these provinces in the opera landscape of South Africa.
- b) It was assumed that all participants provide honest and candid responses during interviews. This assumption was grounded in the assurance of anonymity, which fosters an environment conducive to open and truthful discussions about the challenges faced by opera companies.
- c) The study assumed that all selected opera companies demonstrated a sincere interest in participating in the research. This interest was predicated on the understanding that the findings of this study would have the potential to contribute meaningfully to the opera industry and address critical issues faced by these companies.
- d) It was assumed that opera is regarded as a valuable and culturally significant endeavour worthy of financial investment. This assumption is crucial as it underpins the relevance and urgency of addressing the challenges faced by opera companies, recognising their role in cultural enrichment and artistic expression.

These underlying assumptions provided a foundational framework for the study. They guided the selection of participants, shaped the methodology, and informed the interpretation of findings. While these assumptions were fundamental to the research process, they were also subject to validation through the empirical data collected and the subsequent analysis.

1.9.3 Scope and limitations of the study

This research study sheds light on the challenges facing opera companies in South Africa, focusing primarily on the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces. However, it is imperative to acknowledge certain delimitations and limitations that shape the scope and applicability of this study. South Africa boasts a limited number of active opera companies, with notable examples being Cape Town Opera, the Ubuntu Opera Company (established in 2019), and the Johannesburg Opera Company (also established in 2019). Given this restricted landscape, the study's findings may not capture the challenges facing the broader spectrum of opera companies in the country in its entirety. The research is primarily centred on two provinces: Gauteng (with a specific emphasis on Pretoria) and Western Cape (with a specific emphasis on Cape Town). While these two provinces are recognised for their historical and contemporary contributions to opera in South Africa, other regions may possess unique dynamics and challenges that are not explored in this study.

The study concentrates on South African opera companies exclusively. International opera companies or collaborations involving foreign entities, while potentially influential in the South African opera landscape, are not within the scope of this research. This might limit a comprehensive understanding of the broader influences on the local opera industry. The defined temporal and financial parameters within which the research project operated might have imposed restrictions on the extent of data collection, the number of participants engaged, and the depth of the analysis. Consequently, certain nuances or complexities in the opera industry might be covered less extensively. The study engaged with a specific set of participants, primarily opera company managers, practitioners, and representatives from government funding entities like the National Arts Council. This selective engagement may inadvertently introduce a participant selection bias, potentially excluding perspectives from other stakeholders such as audience members, critics, or artists from different artistic disciplines.

In conclusion, while this study strives for rigor and comprehensiveness, it is essential to acknowledge its inherent delimitations and limitations. These factors provide crucial context for interpreting the findings, ensuring that conclusions drawn are well-

grounded within the scope of the research. It is inevitable that recognising these boundaries also underscores the necessity for future research to delve deeper and expand upon the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa. Such continued investigation is vital for developing a more thorough understanding and for proposing more effective strategies to support and enhance the operatic landscape in the country.

1.9.4 Addressing gaps in the body of knowledge

The study of the challenges and prospects of opera companies in South Africa holds significant value in enriching the body of knowledge in several key areas while addressing critical gaps in understanding. Opera, as a form of classical musical theatre, holds a distinctive place in the cultural heritage of South Africa. Over the years, opera companies in the region have faced a myriad of challenges that have hindered their growth and sustainability. This study delved into the current challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa and proposes workable solutions to ensure their thriving future. First, it offers a focused examination of the opera industry in South Africa, providing a detailed analysis of the unique challenges faced by opera companies in this specific context. While global research on opera industries exists, there is a discernible gap in comprehending the distinctive dynamics, limitations, and potential within the South African opera landscape. The study aims to bridge this gap by furnishing insights into the specific challenges confronting opera companies in South Africa.

Second, the research addresses the pressing imperative to ensure the sustainability and progression of opera companies in the nation. Opera companies worldwide grapple with a multitude of challenges, making it vital to scrutinise the specific obstacles faced by South African counterparts to devise context-specific remedies. Through the investigation of these challenges and the proposition of viable solutions, this study can offer invaluable guidance and contribute to the preservation and advancement of opera as an art form in South Africa.

The research holds practical implications for opera companies, policymakers, and stakeholders within the South African arts and culture sector. The findings and recommendations are anticipated to shape strategies for bolstering the financial viability of opera companies, broadening audience engagement and outreach, nurturing and retaining talent, encouraging collaborations and partnerships,

developing educational initiatives, and fostering artistic innovation. As such, this study can serve as a cornerstone for decision-makers in formulating policies and initiatives that bolster the opera industry in South Africa.

In terms of its scholarly contribution, the study advances the body of knowledge on performing arts sustainability, cultural policy, and arts administration. It fills a research gap regarding the tribulations faced by opera companies in South Africa and lays the groundwork for further exploration and academic discourse in the realm of opera studies. The global research on opera company challenges underscores a stark incongruity with the limited efforts aimed at addressing the issues unique to South African opera companies. This disjunction is disconcerting, given the gravity of the problem, signalling an urgent call for comprehensive support (Spies, 2015). The outlook for the survival of opera companies in South Africa remains grim, and this is primarily attributed to insufficient government funding and support (Olivier, 2014; Spies 2015).

It is clear that relying on government intervention exclusively will be inadequate – opera companies must adopt additional, effective financial management strategies. Unfortunately, there is a lack of established, definitive approaches to initiate financial transformation within South African opera companies (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). These organisations have to contend with a variety of challenges encompassing insufficient funding by the government (Yende, 2017). Beyond insufficient state funding, South African opera companies face additional financial hurdles, such as the high cost of productions, the maintenance of performance venues, and competitive compensation for talented performers and staff. These challenges are exacerbated by economic uncertainties and fluctuations (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017). Therefore, recognising and collectively addressing these challenges is imperative for the resilience of opera companies. However, there has been a conspicuous lack of concerted efforts to confront the grave challenges contributing to the decline of these companies in South Africa. Essentially, the absence of concrete financial management strategies has left many opera companies vulnerable, resulting in the cessation of operations due to dwindling funds. Addressing these identified gaps could significantly alleviate the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa.

Opera companies in South Africa are confronted with a pressing need for innovative strategies to secure support for the industry. This study seeks to offer viable and alternative solutions to address these challenges and ensure the future viability of opera companies. With dwindling financial resources, it is critical to spotlight specific strategies that can ameliorate the financial health of opera companies. The study contends that reliance solely on government funding is inadequate for sustaining opera companies in South Africa. To this end, it advocates for the formulation of alternative financial management approaches. Through the development of such models, opera companies can attain a degree of self-sufficiency, reducing their dependence on external funding sources. By exploring these issues in depth, and proposing practical solutions, it is anticipated that this research will contribute significantly to the sustainability and growth of the South African opera industry, ensuring its vibrant future for generations to come.

In order to acquire material and information about the topic, relevant literature such as government publications, published articles, textbooks, the internet, and published reports, as well as unpublished academic writings like theses and articles, were extensively reviewed to obtain an in-depth understanding concerning the funding for opera companies in South Africa.

1.10 Outline of the thesis

This section explains the format of the thesis and how the thesis is structured. The thesis is divided into nine chapters and a brief outline of each chapter is provided below.

Chapter 2: Literature review – This chapter provides the extant information concerning the challenges experienced by performing arts theatres. The chapter also discusses the extent of concerns, such as how stagnancy in the global and national economy has contributed to the challenges experienced. The role of the government and private sectors are also discussed.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework – This chapter formulates the theory that was useful to the study to explain, predict, and understand phenomena. In many cases, theories challenge the existing knowledge within the limits of critically bounding

assumptions. In this chapter, the current challenges are investigated and workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa are explored. This chapter is important in gauging the extent of these challenges.

Chapter 4: Research methodology – This chapter outlines the methodology approach used for the data collection. It justifies using the qualitative research method that was employed in the research. It explains the population sampling, the data collection tools used, as well as the methodology that was used to interpret the data.

Chapter 5: Brief overview of funding models for opera houses abroad – This section provides a brief overview of the funding models for opera houses abroad. This is done through existing scholarly literature to give insight on the funding models from the selected countries.

Chapters 6 & 7: Data analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the findings – These chapters present the data analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the information gathered through interviews. The findings are categorised and organised by the sub-aims of the study. The challenges experienced by opera companies are discussed, as well as the findings of the study. The research question is answered, and the investigative questions validate the problem statement. These sections also use the existing literature to compare the funding models from abroad to suggest a workable alternative model for the South African opera industry. Therefore, these chapters contribute to the conclusions of the research project and shaping the theoretical framework of this study.

Chapter 8: Literature and new data presentations to answer the sub-questions – This chapter provides the findings of this study by using empirical data analysis and interpretation together with the existing scholarly writings and social constructivism theory. This chapter is essential to ensure that all the sub-questions developed in this study are answered.

Chapter 9: Discussions of the findings, recommendations, and conclusions – This chapter ties together the elements of the study. It provides recommendations based on the new data that has been presented, interpreted and guided by the theoretical framework, to provide a conclusion for the study. The chapter

also presents recommendations for opera companies and the government funding agencies, which can be fruitfully implemented in the future.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that opera was introduced to the South African theatres by the touring opera companies who came from Europe, performing opera on a small scale in the country. As the love and passion for opera shared by these visiting European opera companies grew, opera companies were established. These European visitors were self-sustaining companies which did not rely on any government funding.

The chapter presented that, in the advent of the Apartheid government in 1948 the first government-funded organisation, the National Theatre Organisation (NTO), was established to support the arts. During this era, opera flourished due to the four performing arts councils: Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB), the Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC), the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (PACOFs) and the Performing Arts Council of Transvaal (PACT) (Gobbato, 2018). The literature demonstrated that state funding was accessible for opera. However, during the Apartheid era, the government used opera and the arts to promote their cultural, social, and political agenda.

The termination of the Apartheid regime in 1994 marked a transformative period for arts and culture in South Africa. This historic event ushered in significant changes that had a profound impact on the creative landscape of the country. According to the literature, the establishment of the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology in 1994 in the Government of National Unity, with Dr Ben Ngubane as a minister, contributed to the changes of theatres. However, as the new policies were developed in the interests of general South African arts and culture, this resulted in a decline of funding for opera companies, and this contributed to the closure of opera companies in South Africa.

It is against this background that this chapter presents the importance for this research project to be conducted. The decline of the opera companies in South Africa and its implications has been pointed out. Although a White Paper was developed and revised to alleviate the performing arts industry, this has not been a remedy for these

challenges associated with opera companies, and the challenging situation has been escalating. Thus, carrying out a research project of this calibre focused on opera is significant to highlight issues that negatively affect the opera companies in South Africa.

This chapter presented the comprehensive background of the research problem under scrutiny. Thereafter, the main aim and sub-aims of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the definition of the key concepts, such as audience, opera, theatres, and performing arts were presented. This chapter provided the justification of the research, the gaps in the existing literature and suggested how to address the gaps in the research.

The next chapter presents a review of extant literature that was consulted on the topic of current challenges and workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews, investigates, and explores the available scholarly writings, such as articles, theses, books, and documented data on the sources of funding for South African opera companies. The study employs a meta-synthesis approach to obtain a significant understanding of the issues raised in the study. The precise positioning of the literature in this context will be established rather than an attempt to generalise the literature.

What the literature reveals is that, for many decades, funding for South African opera companies and those abroad has been an important topic and area of research. Since the advent of democracy, many academics have studied the performing arts theatres in South Africa, and especially the opera industry, as the fall of Apartheid had been such an important event in South Africa's theatre history (Roos, 2010; Nomcweya, 2018; Muller, 2018). However, few have studied the history of funding for South African opera companies. In post-1994, the decline in funding for opera companies has become a significant concern in the South African arts sector, and especially so in the opera industry. While the year 1994 marked a critical turning point in South Africa's history, it also brought about a range of challenges and changes that had a negative impact on arts funding, including funding for opera companies.

2.2 Literature reviewed

2.2.1 Academic dissertations and theses

There is very little literature available that deals with the funding focus of the research. However, some academic dissertations and theses contain important information that is relevant to the present study (Leite, Padilha, & Cecatti, 2019), especially the perspectives of the broader history of funding for opera worldwide which could be narrowed to South Africa. Some sources also provide relevant information about the transformation of state funding for opera theatres in South Africa before and after 1994 (Nomcweya, 2018; Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010; Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017).

2.2.2 Published journal articles

The contributions of published journal articles on the funding history of South Africa opera companies have been useful as a second source of primary data. The articles selected for this literature study paint a detailed scenario of the funding for South African opera companies, for instance, the articles by Van der Hoven (2023), Yende and Mugovhani (2021), among others.

2.2.3 Other relevant sources

The South African White Paper of 1996 and other appropriate reports such as those of the NAC, ACT, SAMRO and the National Lotteries discuss funding for the performing arts, especially opera. These are vital and valuable sources to understand the core issues under scrutiny. All these sources are readily available in the public domain and are easily accessible online.

2.3 Brief historical background of funding for South African opera companies

This section provides a brief historical background of the South African opera company landscape that has been shaped against a complex historical backdrop, intricately interwoven with political and social forces, to contextualise the present state of funding for opera companies. Before the transformative year of 1994, South Africa was entrenched in the grips of a racially segregated regime known as Apartheid. This period marked a dark chapter in the nation's history, with deep-rooted systemic discrimination against most of its population. However, even in this oppressive environment, opera managed to flourish. Opera was predominantly enjoyed by South Africa's white population. The unequal social structure of the time most likely played a role in shaping the cultural landscape, with opera becoming a symbol of privilege within a racially divided society. This underscores the intricate relationship between the arts, culture, and historical contexts, highlighting the complexities of South Africa's social dynamics during that period.

Scholarly discourse on South Africa's performing arts during this time is extensive, with a plethora of writings dissecting the impact of colonialism and Apartheid on the industry. Notable works (Hauptfleisch, 2007; Nomcweya, 2018; Olivier, 2014; Roos,

2010; Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017) have been produced, meticulously chronicling and analysing the intricate web of influences that permeated the performing arts sector, especially in the development of the opera industry in South Africa. For example, Hauptfleisch (2007) and Roos (2010) shed light on the historical development of opera in South Africa before the Apartheid regime, while Nomcweya (2018) explored the issues of indigenous opera in South Africa. Olivier (2014) and Spies (2015) examined the general financial issues faced by the performing arts industry and Yende (2017) dealt with the challenges faced by opera graduates in South Africa due to the closure of opera companies. It is important to note that even though these studies have been conducted in different contexts, they still provide an insightful background and context against which the current challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa can be understood.

Based on the literature, it is evident that the funding landscape of South Africa's opera companies is deeply intertwined with the broader narrative of the performing arts in the nation. The organisations created by the pre-1994 government were not merely ephemeral entities; they were the bedrock upon which the opera companies stood, defying the odds, and forging a path forward. When navigating the present terrain of opera funding in South Africa, it is imperative to consider this historical understanding to ensure a solid background about the funding of opera companies. The echoes of the past resonate through the halls of contemporary opera companies, underscoring the profound impact that funding structures have had on the survival and flourishing of this art form.

2.3.1 The establishment of funding organisations in South African Opera

During the mid-20th century, a pivotal shift occurred in the funding landscape of South African opera companies. Before and during the 1940s, a wave of funding organisations emerged with the intent of providing sustainable financial support to opera companies across the country. However, despite their noble intentions, these organisations grappled with the immense geographical expanse they were tasked to cover. The result was a shortfall in funding, a reality extensively documented in the works of Meredith (2006), Blanckenberg (2009), Roos (2010), Olivier (2014), Gobbato (2018) and Muller (2018).

The early 1960s witnessed a transformative moment with the establishment of four significant performing arts councils in the Republic of South Africa. These councils assumed the role of providing crucial financial support to local opera companies. This period marked a watershed moment for South African opera, as it experienced a phase of stabilisation as aptly noted by Roos (2010:51):

From 1963 until the demise of the arts councils in 1998, opera production experienced a period of stabilisation during which the gradual development of local talent and the expansion of opera repertoire took place.

This era not only witnessed a surge in productions, but it also witnessed the nurturing and flourishing of local talent, alongside an expansion of the opera repertoire itself. The performing arts councils became the cornerstone upon which South African opera companies thrived. The profound impact of these funding organisations cannot be overstated. Roos (2010) and Gobbato (2018) both underscore the instrumental role played by each entity in the success of South African opera companies. These organisations were not only financial benefactors; they were the architects of a flourishing opera scene, providing the necessary resources for artists to refine their craft and broaden their artistic horizons.

Looking at the various funding organisations that operated before 1994, Hilda Roos's thesis titled "Opera Production in the Western Cape: Strategies in Search of Indigenisation" (2010), provides a comprehensive and detailed history of the development of funding for opera production in the Western Cape. Roos meticulously traces the evolution of financial support from various sources, including government bodies, private donors, and cultural organisations. She examines the socio-political context and the impact of different funding policies on the opera industry. Roos also explores the challenges and opportunities that arose from the pursuit of indigenisation, highlighting how funding strategies were adapted to support local talent and promote South African cultural identity within opera productions. Her work offers valuable insights into the complexities of sustaining and evolving opera as an art form in the region. Therefore, the following sub-sections provide an in-depth exploration of the various funding organisations that operated before the pivotal year of 1994. Each of these entities left an indelible mark on the trajectory of South African

opera, and a legacy that continues to resonate through the contemporary landscape of the art form in the nation.

2.3.1.1 National Opera Society

The establishment of the National Opera Society became vital during the 1940s for opera companies to continue producing operas. Roos (2010:48) highlights the situation as follows:

From 1940 onwards, a genuine need was developing for a national infrastructure in the interest of opera. A variety of interest groups initiated national organisations during the 1940s and -50s with the aim to sustain opera production in the country. In 1940, Allesandro Rota in Cape Town launched the 'National Opera Company', an organisation that floundered due to his internment when Italy joined the Second World War. In the north of the country, John Connell set up a 'National Opera Society' in Johannesburg in 1946, another venture that could not establish itself in a durable fashion.

In the 1940s, the passion for opera became clear and from this period, funding was in demand for maintaining the development of the local opera and the expansion of the opera repertoire (Roos, 2010). Certainly, the most noteworthy event during this period was the remarkable establishment of a funding organisation to support opera companies financially. Unfortunately, the Second World War constrained the successful operations of opera.

2.3.1.2 National Theatre Organisation

In a pivotal move in 1948, the National Party, which held sway over the South African government throughout the Apartheid era, laid the foundation for state-funded arts support by establishing the National Theatre Organisation (NTO), as noted by Roos (2010). This marked a significant milestone in the history of South African opera. The NTO, headquartered in Pretoria, took on the responsibility of overseeing all artistic endeavours across the nation. However, despite its lofty ambitions, the NTO faced formidable challenges stemming primarily from inadequate funding due to the vast expanse it had been tasked with covering.

Roos (2010:47) observes that “most funding seemed to be invested in theatre productions with small amounts channelled to orchestral music, opera and ballet”. This skewed allocation of resources highlighted a certain imbalance within the NTO, where theatre took precedence over other performing arts forms. While the establishment of the NTO had undoubtedly been a critical step forward in supporting the arts, particularly opera, it grappled with operational difficulties and funding constraints that hindered its effectiveness.

In retrospect, the NTO’s establishment represented a crucial juncture in the history of South African opera. It laid the groundwork for state involvement in the arts and set a precedent for future funding organisations. However, it also served as a poignant reminder of the complexities inherent in administering arts funding on a national scale, particularly in a country as large and diverse as South Africa. The challenges faced by the NTO paved the way for subsequent developments in arts funding, underscoring the ongoing evolution of the opera landscape in the nation.

2.3.1.3 National Opera Association of South Africa and the Opera Vereniging van Suid-Afrika

In the 1950s, the orchestral, opera, and ballet scenes in South Africa faced visible challenges and changes, prompting the establishment of two new private organisations: the National Opera Association of South Africa (NOASA) and the Opera Vereniging van Suid-Afrika (OVSA) (Blanckenberg, 2009; Gobbato, 2018; Roos, 2010). These organisations were founded with the aim of addressing the needs of the struggling arts community and providing more robust support for local talent and productions. According to Roos (2010), NOASA and OVSA were more successful in supporting the arts compared to previous efforts. They offered critical financial backing, created platforms for artists to perform, and worked to keep local talent within the country. Their initiatives included organising performances, commissioning new works, and fostering collaborations between artists and cultural institutions. These organisations played a crucial role in revitalising the arts in South Africa during a period of significant social and political change, laying the groundwork for future developments in the cultural sector.

In 1955, the NOASA was established to fund local opera and ballet and to encourage white South African artists to remain in the country (Blanckenberg, 2009; Roos, 2010). Roos (2010) highlights that Rota, who was freed after the conclusion of the Second World War, became a driving force behind the success of NOASA. It is evident that Rota's vision and leadership were instrumental in shaping the organisation's goals and strategies, which included securing financial support and promoting local talent. Under Rota's guidance, NOASA played a pivotal role in nurturing the opera and ballet scene in South Africa, helping to establish a robust cultural infrastructure that supported the growth and development of these art forms.

In 1956, its counterpart for Afrikaans speakers, OPSA, was launched in Johannesburg with a mandate to encourage opera in all its dimensions to inspire the performance of operas in Afrikaans in order to make opera more understandable to the Afrikaans-speaking community and to promote the development of local operatic art in South Africa (Muller, 2018; Roos, 2010). The creation of these two organisations led to the success of South African opera companies.

2.3.1.4 Afrikaanse Kultuurraad and Opera-organisasie van Suid-Afrika

In 1957, a new funding organisation emerged on the South African arts scene: the *Afrikaanse Kultuurraad van Pretoria* [Afrikaans Cultural Council of Pretoria] and the *Opera-organisasie van Suid-Afrika* [Opera Organisation of South Africa] (OPEROSA). These entities played a pivotal role in bolstering the financial sustainability of opera companies across the country. Many of these funding organisations operated with distinct mandates, each contributing in their own way to the flourishing of the arts. The OPEROSA, for instance, harboured ambitions of growing into a national organisation and advocated for state funding, as evidenced in research by Meredith (2006), Blanckenberg (2009), Roos (2010), Muller (2018), and Gobbato (2018).

The year 1960 marked a significant turning point for South African opera companies. The government undertook a monumental step by centralising funding bodies, a move aimed at managing and ensuring support for the arts on a national scale (Roos, 2010). This transition heralded a golden age for South African opera, where profound changes and positive outcomes began to manifest. The centralisation of funding acted as a

powerful catalyst, propelling the growth and evolution of opera in South Africa, yielding a range of transformative effects, as expounded upon first by Roos (2010) and later Gobbato (2018). With centralised funding mechanisms in place, opera companies were bestowed the financial stability necessary to meticulously plan and execute their productions. This newfound stability not only allowed for the realisation of artistic visions, but also facilitated the exploration of ambitious projects, pushing the boundaries of creativity and innovation within the South African opera landscape.

In essence, the years following 1960 represented a period of unprecedented opportunity and growth for South African opera companies. The amalgamation of funding bodies and the strategic allocation of resources paved the way for a flourishing cultural scene, leaving an indelible mark on the nation's artistic legacy. This era stands as a testament to the power of strategic funding in propelling the arts forward and serves as a source of inspiration for the continued evolution of opera in South Africa.

2.3.1.5 South African Opera Federation

In 1958, NOASA and OPSA merged and became the South African Opera Federation. This merging occurred after several successful collaborated productions. Furthermore, the NOASA and OPSA societies had been denied subsidies by the Department of Education, Arts and Science, as the department would only subsidise one organisation (Blanckenberg, 2009; Roos, 2010). Thus, establishing the South African Opera Federation was necessary to provide financial stability for opera societies (Blanckenberg, 2009; Gobbato, 2018; Muller, 2018; Roos, 2010). Roos (2010:47) argues:

However, it was evident that the merger took place on the basis of financial convenience rather than principled conviction. After the merger, the original societies did not, in fact, disband and both continued producing opera with much friction between them as each pursued their initial interests.

In turn, this collaborative effort between NOASA and OPSA as the South African Opera Federation led to one of the most significant periods of financial sustainability for South African opera societies. At the same time, there was a growing search for funding

for further development of opera in South Africa (Blanckenberg, 2009; Meredith, 2006). Roos (2010:47–48) corroborates this further by stating:

The South African soprano, Cecilia Wessels, and her husband Ernest Beecroft invested money in one of Rota's failed attempts to create a national body for opera. Wessels's comment on the situation was indicative of the deep divisions that existed between individual role players at the time: 'But through lack of co-operation it was a failure, like so many other opera companies that have been started in South Africa, and I lost all my money'.

It was evident that collaborating and merging these two societies was a brilliant concept; however, the separate aims of each society, as each pursued their initial interests, had a negative impact on this collaboration (Blanckenberg, 2009; Meredith, 2006; Nomcweya, 2018; Roos, 2010). This scenario describes the complexity and challenges of collaborative efforts and mergers, even when the concept seems promising. The presence of separate aims and individual interests among different opera societies can pose significant barriers that hinder successful collaboration and ultimately leads to a negative outcome. The negative impact observed in this case underscores the importance of careful planning, clear communication, compromise, and a shared commitment to a common purpose. Overcoming these barriers often requires a willingness to revisit and realign individual interests for the greater benefit of the entire opera community.

It is evident that the Afrikaans Kultuurraad van Pretoria and OPEROSA were established primarily by philanthropists and cultural advocates rather than by local opera companies or artists. These organisations were founded by influential figures within the Afrikaans-speaking community who were dedicated to promoting and supporting Afrikaans culture and arts, including opera. The Afrikaans Kultuurraad van Pretoria was initiated by cultural leaders committed to advancing Afrikaans artistic activities, while OPEROSA was founded with the support of patrons and advocates who sought to create a national platform for opera. Both organisations reflect the efforts of cultural patrons and activists to enhance the support and infrastructure for the arts in South Africa.

While, the government of the time managed the two opera companies to each perpetuate their own agenda. Both societies and their finances were government-managed and flourished because of the Apartheid regime's agenda of creating cultural isolation (Nomcweya, 2018; Roos, 2010).

2.3.1.6 Performing arts councils

In 1960, a meeting led to the formation of the four decentralised arts councils funded by the national and provincial governments (Roos, 2010). The four provincial performing arts councils were the Natal Provincial Arts Council (NAPAC), the Performing Arts Council of Transvaal (PACT), the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (PACOFs), and the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB). Each of these four performing arts councils was governed by a general administrative and directorial section responsible for and reporting to its board (Gobbato, 2018:34). Each arts council was responsible for planning and organising performances for their four departments, namely drama, ballet, music, and opera. These arts councils were also responsible for administration such as marketing, set construction, transport, salaries, costume-making, make-up and general accounts (Gobbato, 2018). While these subsidies contributed to the administration of cultural activities, they were also tied to the regime's broader agenda of maintaining social and political control. The funding provided by the Apartheid government came with strings attached, which could compromise the artistic freedom and integrity of cultural institutions, including opera companies (Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010).

Nomcweya (2018) highlights the fact that, during the Apartheid regime, a percentage of public funds was invested into the four performing arts councils registered in terms of section 21 of the Companies Act of 1973. This changed after 1994, when the country became a democracy. Nomcweya (2018:13) affirms:

The four performing arts councils were primary recipients of national public funding for the performing arts, receiving 46% from the Department of Arts and Culture. However, according to the White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, all of this came to a stop in the new dispensation as provinces increased from four to a total of nine provinces, leading in the first place to the same resources having to be distributed more widely.

By 1998, the former state-funded performing arts councils had been disbanded by the new government and replaced by the National Arts Council. This replacement meant that all four performing arts councils that had been established by the pre-1994 Apartheid government, ceased to function (Nomcweya, 2018; Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010). As Roos (2010:215) points out:

This decision came at no small cost to the Ministry of Arts and Culture of the new government. Addressing the issue of the (re)distribution of state funds via the performing arts councils, whose legacy was the practice of (almost) exclusively European art forms, is articulated in the White Paper of 1996 as follows: ‘The activities of these institutions, their continued access to State monies, and their putative transformation, has created more controversy than any other issue facing the ministry.’ However, the practical implications resulting from the new policy regarding State funding as stipulated in the White Paper meant that an application for financial assistance by an opera company would be regarded on the same level as any other cultural group who wished to apply for funds.

Perhaps it is important to acknowledge that the end of Apartheid marked a profound shift in South Africa’s cultural landscape, including the performing arts and opera. It brought about a renewed sense of cultural identity to all, a commitment to inclusivity, and a focus on addressing historical inequalities, especially in the arts sector. In the context of opera, a reflection on society’s values and aspirations evolved to incorporate themes of unity, diversity, and social change, aligning with the nation’s post-Apartheid trajectory (Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010).

While the end of Apartheid created opportunities for positive change, it also posed structural challenges and disparities that continue to affect the arts, including opera (Olivier, 2014). The closure of the performing arts councils in 1998 certainly meant that opportunities for gainful employment and financial stability for opera companies were considerably reduced (Nomcweya, 2018; Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010). The ongoing struggle within the arts sector highlights persistent issues related to funding and support, even after the progress made in the post-Apartheid era. The closure of the performing arts councils in 1998 created a significant financial void, reducing

employment opportunities and stability for arts organisations. This has led to a reliance on inadequate funding mechanisms, exacerbating disparities and making it challenging for smaller or emerging groups to secure resources and visibility. Despite various initiatives aimed at addressing these challenges, the sector continues to face substantial obstacles in achieving consistent funding and long-term sustainability, underscoring the need for ongoing advocacy and reform to foster a more resilient and inclusive cultural landscape

It is evident from the above historical background that orchestras, opera, and ballet faced several visible challenges and changes that significantly impacted their operations. Some of the key challenges included financial constraints, declining audience numbers, and operational difficulties but these challenges were also mitigated in various strategies. For instance, performing arts organisations struggled with inadequate funding, which limited their ability to maintain high-quality productions and support their artists. To mitigate this issue, many turned to diverse funding sources, including private sponsorships, philanthropic donations, and government grants (Roos, 2010; Spies, 2015). Establishing partnerships with corporate sponsors and conducting targeted fundraising campaigns also helped to supplement their budgets.

It was also noted that there was a shift in cultural interests and demographics led to a reduction in traditional audiences for these art forms. In response, organisations adopted innovative strategies to engage new audiences (Nomcweya, 2018; Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010). This included introducing fresh programming, launching community outreach and educational initiatives, and leveraging digital platforms for streaming performances. These efforts aimed to attract a broader and more diverse audience and revitalise interest in orchestral music, opera, and ballet. Economic instability further complicated the financial sustainability of performing arts organisations. In response, many implemented cost-saving measures and adjusted their budgets to navigate economic challenges. Diversifying revenue streams and developing more resilient financial strategies were crucial in managing economic pressures.

2.3.2 Funding for South African opera companies after 1994

After 1994, the disbandment of the four performing arts councils (CAPAB, PACT, PACOFS, and NAPAC) led to extremely uncertain times for opera companies, negatively affecting their functioning (Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010; Spies, 2015; Yende & Mugovhani, 2021). Roos (2010) points out that the restructuring of cultural funding was one of the major difficulties that came with the new regime. Many theatres and orchestras that were on the verge of going out of business or already closing, were forced to consolidate or to start operating on an as-needed basis. Local opera production companies were compelled to change their business methods due to the high cost of opera production and heavy reliance on institutional subsidies. A study by Olivier (2014) highlights the fact that the suspension of consistent state funding for opera companies, following the termination of the four arts councils, led to the closure of many opera companies. This view was supported by Burdukova (2010) who pointed out that the disbandment of the four arts councils led to severe challenges in the opera industry. Burdukova (2010:25) stated:

All four Arts Councils – CAPAB, PACT, PACOFS, and NAPAC – were transformed into Playhouse Companies and fell under Section 21, becoming answerable to the National Arts Council. The new institutions are now functioning independently. The tasks that fall under their jurisdiction are encouraging the establishment of separate performing and production companies; approval and sponsorship of various independent productions; and educational projects.

The post-1994 democratic government changed the funding policies and set new criteria for funding arts production, and as a result the opera industry went into decline (Mugovhani, 2011; Roos, 2010). Governance in the country changed radically (Roos, 2010). The Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology was established by the Government of National Unity, with Dr Ben Ngubane as the responsible minister. During this period, new policies were established in accordance with the White Paper, the provincial arts councils had their budgets cut over the next three years, and new disbursements of grants were made to new organisations (Buhlungu et al., 2009; Mugovhani, 2011).

The revision of the funding policies was important to redress the past imbalances in the arts and culture of the South African people, which caused conflict and tension in indigenous culture and funding systems (Mugovhani, 2011). Mugovhani (2011:12) states:

Since the end of the Apartheid regime, South Africans have eventually been afforded opportunities to level the playing fields in arts and culture. The new opportunities present a chance for indigenous South African music to be resuscitated, reaffirmed, promoted, and projected for the other countries in the world to recognise.

This funding policy revision was important for creating a unified nation and bringing about new South African performing arts opportunities (Mugovhani, 2011; Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010). New policies were also critical to simplify funding for all South African artists and art forms (Burdukova, 2010; Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010). Roos (2010:62) affirms:

One of the significant challenges following the new dispensation was the restructuring of arts funding. Several theatres and orchestras were on the threshold of bankruptcy or closure. Many orchestras had to merge or start performing on an ad hoc basis. As opera is an expensive form of art, heavily dependent on institutional subsidies, local opera production companies were forced into transforming their financial strategies.

Owing to the fundamental policy changes, most of the opera companies faced declining financial stability and some ceased to function. Olivier (2014:40) explains:

According to the White Paper, companies were supposed to adhere to the alignment of projects that were required to comply with government-approved objectives through development, employment opportunities and skills transfer to receive any public funding at all by the National Arts Council.

Various organisations were established to distribute public funds to artists, cultural institutions, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations, including the National Arts Council (NAC), the National Lotteries Distribution Fund, the Arts and Culture Trust, and Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) (Olivier, 2014).

The National Lotteries Distribution Fund provided large amounts of funding, but without consistent funding support for the arts, especially opera, orchestra, and ballet (Burdukova, 2010; Olivier, 2014). The Arts and Culture Trust had limited funding to offer to any performing arts organisation (Burdukova, 2010; Olivier, 2014). It is evident that BASA therefore played a crucial role in bridging the gap between the business sector and the arts, offering a platform for businesses to support cultural endeavours and gain visibility through their sponsorship.

However, the challenges faced by opera companies in securing government funding highlights the complexities in funding policies and their impact on the viability of these organisations (Olivier, 2014). BASA's involvement in supporting the arts through partnerships with businesses has been instrumental in providing alternative avenues of funding for cultural initiatives, including opera (Burdukova, 2010; Olivier, 2014). These partnerships not only provide financial support, but they also foster a sense of corporate social responsibility and cultural engagement within the business community. However, despite the efforts of organisations like BASA, the challenges experienced with government funding policies for the arts, particularly opera companies, have remained. Owing to the poor understanding of opera in the business sector, many companies have been unwilling to cooperate and support it, with approval for funding mostly in the form of a once-off payment with no suggestion of longer-term, structured support.

The current poor social and economic conditions in South Africa have posed additional and significant challenges for opera companies seeking funding, especially from businesses, government agencies, and philanthropic foundations, given that government had to prioritise a range of social, economic, and infrastructural needs to address the imbalances of the past (Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010). The decline in funding for opera companies led to considerable uncertainty regarding their future sustainability. This financial instability severely impacted their ability to offer stable, full-time positions to professional local opera artists. With reduced resources, companies have often been forced to limit their staffing and to rely on short-term contracts or freelance arrangements, undermining job security and hindering the ability to build a consistent and dedicated workforce. Consequently, the lack of financial support has not only affected the operational stability of these companies but

it has also diminished the opportunities available for local artists to pursue long-term careers within the industry. This ongoing challenge highlights the need for more robust funding solutions to ensure that opera companies can maintain their professional teams and continue to contribute to the cultural landscape. For opera companies to function, a combination of public and private funding is essential to cover expenditure such as administration (Olivier, 2014).

2.4 Improving the opera industry with long-term partnerships

The history of the evolution of funding structures for South African opera companies provides context crucial in appreciating the challenges faced by present-day opera companies in securing sustainable financial support. During Apartheid, funding was disproportionately allocated, reinforcing racial inequalities. Post-Apartheid, the Government White Paper on Arts, Culture, and Heritage (1996) aimed to redress these imbalances by supporting marginalised communities, which affected the funding previously allocated to arts like opera. Understanding this historical trajectory provides essential context in terms of equitable and sustainable funding for South African opera (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015).

Historically, opera companies have always relied on more than one source of income, which tended to include government funding and funding by generous individuals and businesses (Preece, 2010; Spies, 2015). Without the commitment of government and the generosity of these individuals and businesses, it would have been impossible for audiences to see many opera companies' initiatives (Spies, 2015). However, funding that relies on the generosity of individuals is usually a short-term strategy (Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Hence, there is a need for a long-term funding method for opera companies.

Several studies mention that establishing long-term partnerships is a strategic approach to enhance the opera industry (Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). By fostering enduring collaborations, the industry can experience various benefits, including financial stability, artistic innovation, and community engagement. Long-term partnerships with sponsors, philanthropic organisations, and educational institutions can provide consistent funding, enabling opera companies to do future planning and undertake ambitious projects (Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015).

Collaborations with educational institutions can nurture talent and expand the opera audience by integrating opera into academic curricula. Additionally, partnerships with other arts organisations or cultural entities can facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations, fostering creativity and attracting diverse audiences (Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002). Ultimately, cultivating lasting relationships within and beyond the arts sector can contribute to the sustained growth and vibrancy of the opera industry in the long run.

Shilvock (2002) and Spies (2015) categorise long-term partnerships for opera companies into two essential types: collaborations with potential stakeholders, and partnerships with other opera companies. The evolving landscape of the opera industry, particularly in South Africa, necessitates a strategic shift towards prioritising and cultivating long-term collaborations with potential stakeholders.

In the face of the financial challenges that opera companies are grappling with, the focus on partnerships with potential stakeholders becomes paramount. These stakeholders may include government bodies, private corporations, foundations, and individual donors who share an interest in supporting and sustaining the arts. State and private donors, as highlighted by scholars like Preece (2010), Shilvock (2002), and Spies (2015), play pivotal roles in ensuring the development and longevity of the opera industry. By engaging with potential stakeholders, opera companies can tap into additional funding sources, garnering crucial support to address the financial constraints that threaten the industry's future. Practical strategies must be explored to establish and nurture these collaborations effectively. This involves developing clear communication channels with potential stakeholders, showcasing the societal and cultural impact of opera, and demonstrating the value that their support would bring to the community. Collaborative initiatives, such as outreach programs, educational partnerships, and community engagement projects, can further solidify the bonds between opera companies and their stakeholders.

A partnership method has proven successful for opera companies worldwide (Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Locally and internationally, long-term partnerships have proven to be a reliable and valuable strategy for the financial survival of opera companies (Olivier, 2014; Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015).

The main advantage of long-term partnerships for opera companies is the potential of reducing operating expenses and costs (Shilvock, 2002). Long-term partnerships also have the potential to expand the opera industry worldwide. For instance, recent trends in the USA and Europe have highlighted collaborative efforts among opera houses and festivals where, often, two to four institutions would join forces to produce specific operas, staging them across all the collaborating partners' venues. This collaborative model aims to maintain high artistic standards, diversify perspectives, and extend the life span of productions. This approach facilitates the sharing of resources, including artistic talent, creative teams, and production costs, addressing financial challenges while contributing to the creation of productions with a broader impact and wider audience reach. Examples of such collaborations include co-commissions, joint productions, and artistic partnerships (Olivier, 2014; Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015).

2.4.1 Long-term partnership with potential stakeholders

Globally, many opera companies do not have long-term funding plans with external parties and South Africa is no exception (Olivier, 2014; Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Most South African opera companies rely mainly on government funding, which requires yearly reapplication and can therefore not be relied upon as a long-term partnership in its present state (Spies, 2015). Long-term partnerships with potential stakeholders could include government, foundations, and individuals (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). While private donors, including private companies, do indeed provide opera companies with funding, it comes with a level of uncertainty due to the nature of private funding sources. Private donors have the discretion to provide funding on their own terms, and they can choose to discontinue funding at any time (Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015).

Hence, developing long-term partnerships with potential stakeholders would be key for opera companies to operate long-term in the industry (Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Long-term partnerships with potential stakeholders would benefit opera companies, as there would be a reliable long-term funding commitment, according to Scheff and Kolter (Shilvock, 2002:14):

The long-term is distinct from short-term, project-oriented sponsorships, strategic collaborations are intensive durable commitments created for mutual gain; they require significant investments by all parties of time, energy, and emotion. In a strategic collaboration, joint authority and structure are created to carry out a common mission. The parties engage in comprehensive planning and operate well-defined communication channels. They pool resources jointly and share the resulting benefits. Finally, each partner contributes its own resources and reputation – a risky but necessary component of collaboration. When well designed and executed, strategic collaborations can help expand the customer base, develop new sources of funding, and cut costs without compromising any organisation’s mission or quality.

It is clear that cultivating long-term partnerships with stakeholders is a crucial and practical strategy for ensuring the sustained operations of opera companies. Beyond providing essential financial stability, these enduring collaborations would facilitate collaborative planning, resource pooling, and the sharing of benefits among involved parties. Such strategic alliances would contribute significantly to the long-term viability and growth of opera organisations, fostering a foundation of shared commitment, mutual understanding, and joint investment in the artistic and operational aspects of the art form. Through these partnerships, opera companies could navigate the uncertainties of funding sources, strengthen their resilience, and focus on realising their artistic visions, ultimately contributing to the flourishing and longevity of the opera industry.

2.4.2 Long-term partnership with other opera companies

The discussion on the opera industry and long-term partnerships is crucial to address the financial challenges faced by the South African opera companies. The aim of exploring potential collaborations with stakeholders and other opera companies is to propose practical strategies that can ensure the industry’s viability and sustainability. Examining long-term partnerships with potential stakeholders allows opera companies to tap into additional resources and support, which is vital for funding productions and operational expenses. Moreover, forming partnerships with other opera companies fosters a collective approach, enabling shared resources, expertise,

and cost-sharing, ultimately strengthening the entire opera ecosystem. This systematic perspective aims to offer actionable recommendations for opera companies seeking sustainable funding models. It provides a forward-looking approach to ensure the continued growth and success of the South African opera industry in the face of financial constraints.

The opera industry, like many other artistic domains, faces various challenges, with financial sustainability often at the forefront. In addressing these challenges, the establishment of partnerships between opera companies has emerged as a strategic move, demonstrating mutual benefits and contributing to the long-term viability of the art form (Olivier, 2014; Muller, 2018; Preece, 2010).

These partnerships, whether local or international, have tangible outcomes that extend beyond speculative assertions. Collaboration has led to resource sharing, joint productions, and an expanded audience reach, demonstrating the practical impact of such endeavours (Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002). For example, the collaboration between the Metropolitan Opera in New York and the Royal Opera House in London resulted in successful joint productions like their acclaimed staging of Puccini's *Turandot*. This trend is not limited to artistic collaborations alone. Partnerships have facilitated cost-saving measures and the exchange of knowledge among companies, providing a foundation for long-term sustainability (Shilvock, 2002). Noteworthy instances include shared productions between the Glyndebourne Festival Opera and the Santa Fe Opera houses, showcasing the tangible benefits of such collaborative efforts (McKelvey, 2004; Will, 2011).

The advantages of long-term partnerships in the opera industry are further underscored by their potential to reduce operating expenses and costs (Shilvock, 2002). This financial efficiency is critical for opera companies, especially in an era where financial constraints threaten the industry's future. Partnerships offer opportunities for opera companies to pool their resources, both financial and artistic, ensuring a more streamlined and efficient operational model. This approach not only supports the sustainability of individual opera companies but also benefits the opera industry as a whole. By fostering collaboration and resource-sharing, long-term partnerships enhance the overall resilience and stability of the sector. When

companies work together, they can collectively address common challenges, such as financial instability and limited access to resources, creating a more robust and unified industry. This collaborative model helps to mitigate risks, streamline operations, and improve the quality of productions. Furthermore, it can lead to innovative artistic ventures and expand audiences by pooling expertise and networks. As a result, the industry becomes better equipped to weather economic fluctuations and evolving market demands, ultimately contributing to a more dynamic and thriving cultural sector.

Beyond immediate financial gains, collaborations also ensure the long-term sustainability of opera companies. Spies (2015) points out that collaborative efforts in the arts effectively reduce financial risk and improve long-term planning within opera companies. This perspective is supported by examining the specific instances where partnerships have yielded successful outcomes, thus substantiating the argument that such collaborations are not only feasible but also advantageous for the opera industry. Moreover, these partnerships have the potential to expand the opera industry worldwide. By joining forces, opera companies can transcend geographical boundaries and reach diverse audiences. The globalisation of the opera industry is evident in collaborations that involve companies from different regions, promoting cultural exchange and enriching the artistic landscape on a global scale.

While these examples showcase the successful outcomes of collaborations, it is essential to acknowledge that challenges exist in establishing and maintaining partnerships. Issues such as artistic differences, logistical complexities, and financial negotiations can pose hurdles. However, the potential benefits, including financial stability, artistic innovation, and expanded audience engagement, outweigh these challenges. This view is supported by Spies (2015) who mentions that partnerships between opera companies are not speculative endeavours, but strategic moves grounded in real-world examples and tangible outcomes. As the opera world continues to evolve, fostering and strengthening these partnerships will be crucial for its continued vibrancy and relevance in the cultural landscape. Shilvock (2002:16) explains:

The principal advantage of collaborating with other opera companies is the potential for reducing overheads and costs, eliminating the overlaps and redundancies that result from two companies doing the same thing when the work could be shared.

Partnerships in the opera industry are essential to its success for several reasons. They play a crucial role in enhancing financial stability by allowing companies to share resources, reduce costs, and access funding opportunities that might be otherwise unavailable. Spies (2015:66) further states:

Some of the strategies that opera companies could implement are cooperative productions and cross-subsidising. Collaborative productions divide financial responsibility between numbers of groups. This strategy diminishes financial risk while still accruing the same expected income. Cross-subsidising is a form of funding more aligned to the entrepreneurial character. It ensures the funding of less financially viable productions with funds raised by a more economically successful production.

Cost reductions are an advantage of collaborative involvement and are valuable for the survival of opera companies (Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Opera companies can benefit from the potential cost savings and efficiencies that come with pooled resources and joint projects by actively seeking out collaborative possibilities and partnerships. However, it is crucial to establish a balance and to ensure that any collaborations respect the creative integrity and vision of the participating opera companies. Successful collaborative endeavours depend on clear roles and duties, effective communication, and mutual respect. For instance, first, clearly defining roles and responsibilities from the outset helps prevent misunderstandings and ensures that each company's contributions are recognised and valued. Establishing comprehensive agreements that outline the objectives and expectations for the collaboration is crucial for aligning goals and maintaining focus (Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Also, open and transparent communication is another fundamental aspect, as it facilitates ongoing dialogue and allows for the addressing of any concerns or adjustments needed throughout the collaboration. This helps in maintaining a collaborative atmosphere where all voices are heard and respected. Additionally,

preserving each company's artistic autonomy is important, as it allows each party to contribute its unique creative strengths while remaining true to its artistic vision. In the South African context, examples of opera companies that are collaborating are Cape Town Opera and Salon Music. I chose to highlight Cape Town Opera and Salon Music because the study is based in Gauteng and the Western Cape, where these companies operate. Additionally, there are no existing opera companies or activities taking place in other provinces, making these two companies the primary focus for examining the operatic landscape in South Africa. However, it is important to note that these companies do not collaborate with each other. Various factors contribute to this lack of collaboration, including concerns over one company potentially dominating the other and fears of losing their artistic integrity and identity (Mishan & Prangle, 2014; Spies, 2015). This apprehension is reflective of a broader issue within the South African arts sector, which has historically struggled with collaboration.

Addressing these concerns and fostering collaboration requires strong mutual respect and clear communication between companies. One way to mitigate the threat of domination is to establish joint projects with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, ensuring that each company's unique artistic voice is preserved. Additionally, creating formal agreements that safeguard each company's autonomy can help maintain their integrity while allowing for creative partnerships. It is evident that by fostering an environment of trust and equality, opera companies can collaborate effectively without compromising their artistic identities. Cape Town Opera has established itself as a prominent institution, producing a wide range of operatic works, while Salon Music, known for its innovative approach to classical music, operates in the realm of music production and entertainment.

While they may not currently collaborate, the existence of partnerships within the industry demonstrates the potential for varied collaborations that contribute to the overall richness and diversity of South Africa's operatic landscape. Each collaboration, whether between Cape Town Opera and Salon Music or other entities, brings unique strengths to the fore, fostering a dynamic and vibrant cultural exchange within the South African opera scene. Both entities have made an effort to find an innovative approach for the sustainability of their companies. These companies developed solid relationships with private and public funders (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). As noted by

Olivier (2014) and Spies (2015), it is highlighted that Salon Music has relied very little, if at all, on state funding, while Cape Town Opera receives some level of funding from the state. This financial distinction underscores the diverse funding models within the South African opera landscape, with Salon Music potentially relying more on private sources or alternative funding streams. Cape Town Opera's receipt of state funding aligns with the prevalent practice of some opera companies in the region, illustrating the varied financial strategies employed by organisations to sustain their operations. This diversity in funding sources reflects the complex and dynamic nature of the South African opera ecosystem, where companies navigate a range of financial avenues to ensure their continued presence and artistic contributions to the cultural landscape.

It is interesting that the Cape Town Opera is one of the opera companies in the country that has survived long term by partnering with other European opera companies (Muller, 2018; Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010). Evidently, collaborating with other artistic companies, including opera companies, can be a fruitful initiative in South Africa. Such partnerships can lead to the creation of innovative and interdisciplinary productions that combine the strengths and talents of various artistic disciplines. For example, a collaboration between an opera company and a dance troupe could result in a visually stunning performance. These collaborations also offer opportunities for artists to expand their skill sets and explore new creative horizons (Preece, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Additionally, they can attract diverse audiences who may have different artistic interests, potentially broadening the reach and impact of the productions. However, successful collaborations require effective communication, mutual respect for each other's artistic visions, and clear agreements regarding roles, responsibilities, and financial arrangements. When executed well, these partnerships have the potential to enhance the artistic quality of performances and enrich the cultural landscape (Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015).

2.5 Financial management plan

This section focuses on understanding the necessity of managing resources for the future and having a long-term plan in place for funding structures for opera. It is essential, therefore, to consider some workable solutions that opera companies could adopt to secure their financial stability for the future. Since there have been, and

continue to be, many changes in state funding, it would be naïve to ignore the necessity of South African opera companies managing their own resources in the future. The opera industry worldwide is faced with problems connected to financial stability that have contributed to the closure of many opera companies (Florea, 2014; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Shilvock (2002:8) stated:

The income that opera companies earn falls far short of the costs required to stage productions, and it appears that this earnings gap is slowly growing over time. Second, inflexible production costs, coupled with the growth of the industry and the resulting competition for funding, combine to form heightened uncertainty over resource generation.

In the context of South Africa, many opera companies depend on donations and grants from private funders, the generosity of wealthy individuals (locally and internationally), as well as on government funding to cover their operating costs (Gobbato, 2018; Roos, 2010; Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017). According to Spies (2015), this dependence has been present since the introduction of opera in South Africa. In South Africa, opera companies such as Opera South Africa, Opera Africa, and The Black Tie Ensemble had to close due to the decline in funding from the state.

Owing to the global financial crisis, many South African opera companies have experienced financial constraints (Florea, 2014; Spies, 2015). Hence, Spies (2015) highlights the necessity of opera companies to have a solid financial management strategy for the future. It is necessary to acknowledge that the 2008 global financial crisis had far-reaching effects on economies and industries worldwide, including the opera industry in South Africa. The financial crisis was triggered by the collapse of major financial institutions and had ripple effects across various sectors (Florea, 2014; Spies, 2015). Economic uncertainty and financial constraints following the crisis led to reduced government funding for the arts, including opera companies as funding allocated to cultural initiatives were redirected to address more immediate economic challenges (Roos, 2010; Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017). The crisis also impacted on individuals and businesses, affecting their capacity to donate to cultural organisations, including opera companies. Private sponsorships and donations decreased or ceased altogether.

Despite these challenges, there were concrete examples of how the redirection of funding benefited the arts in certain ways. For instance, some arts organisations adapted by leveraging new forms of funding and partnerships. The National Arts Council of South Africa redirected available resources to support community-based arts projects, fostering grassroots initiatives that engaged local talent and audiences. Similarly, several opera companies collaborated with educational institutions to develop outreach programs that increased their visibility and built new audience bases. These adaptations not only helped sustain the opera industry through a period of financial strain but also spurred innovation and strengthened community connections. By redirecting resources and exploring alternative funding models, the arts sector was able to navigate the crisis more effectively and continue contributing to the cultural landscape.

Many opera companies who did not have a firm financial management strategy in place have closed due to the decline of funds from the state (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). A study by Spies (2015) reveals that opera companies must have a comprehensive financial management strategy in place to ensure a certain future. A financial management strategy will aid the opera industry to develop long-term planning for financial stability and operation (Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017). Shilvock (2002) emphasises that a financial management strategy provides a robust response to issues that affect opera companies, such as finances, uncertainty regarding the future, and the decline in funding. Opera companies could adopt a financial management strategy without shunning the government funds and the generosity of prominent donors (Florea, 2014; Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). It may help opera companies cope in times when funds become unavailable. One example of a South African opera company that has successfully implemented a prudent financial management strategy and demonstrated evidence of long-term planning is Cape Town Opera. Cape Town Opera has been recognised for its effective financial management and long-term planning strategies. They have established diversified funding streams, including partnerships with government bodies, corporate sponsors, private donors, and international grants (CTO, 2021).

This diversified funding approach helps to mitigate the risks associated with relying on a single source of funding. Furthermore, Cape Town Opera has demonstrated a

commitment to long-term sustainability by investing in initiatives that aim to develop local talent, increase accessibility to opera, and engage with the community. These efforts not only contribute to the growth of the company, but also ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for opera in South Africa. Additionally, Cape Town Opera's ability to maintain a consistent and high standard of production over the years is a testament to their effective financial management and long-term planning. This includes producing a wide range of operatic works, from classics to contemporary pieces, which helps to attract diverse audiences, and which secures continued support.

It's worth noting that the closure of opera companies is often brought about not by a lack of funding, but by poor financial management (Auvinen, 2001; Florea, 2014; Olivier, 2014; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Financial management strategies have led to considerable debate among international scholars (Auvinen, 2001; Florea, 2014; Shilvock, 2002; Walmsley, 2016). However, in South Africa, few scholars have addressed this topic (Spies, 2015).

2.6 Funding for opera theatres worldwide

While the repercussions for opera companies due to the 2008 financial crash, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, are well-documented, much of the supporting literature and quotations pertain to the pre-COVID-19 era. To provide a more current perspective, it is useful to incorporate examples that reflect the ongoing impact of these crises.

The global financial crisis, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, has significantly strained opera companies' ability to secure sufficient funding for both theatres and performers (Yende, 2021; Yow, 2020). This dual crisis has exacerbated the financial difficulties faced by opera companies worldwide (Burdukova, 2010; Florea, 2014; Yende, 2017). The lack of adequate funding continues to challenge the operational stability of these institutions, with many struggling to maintain their activities in a stagnant or declining economic landscape (Burdukova, 2010; Florea, 2014).

For instance, Romanian opera companies have been particularly affected, as they grapple with sustaining their operations predominantly through public funding. The

financial pressures have intensified, highlighting the broader issues faced by opera companies globally. Florea (2014:787) states that in the world of opera:

Financial issues have existed for a long time now worldwide. Typically, the costs of running opera houses have always been greater than their earned revenues, and in recent recessive economic times, the situation has worsened visibly. For many of them, their last year's financial statements indicate their net worth down substantially, with sizeable debts looming in coming years. One single performance of an opera requires an orchestra (which rarely consists of fewer than 60 members), solo singers and a chorus of at least 30 members. In addition to the remunerations of all these performers, the house must cover the costs for stage technicians, hairdressers, make-up artists, props, managers, costumes, sets, and so forth, as well as for the maintenance and/or acquisition of essential technological resources (mechanical transport carts, principally, state-of-the-art engines controlled by computer equipment).

Even though opera companies worldwide have experienced severe financial difficulties, existing literature demonstrates that there are some that have sought to overcome these difficulties (Frigotto, Young, & Pinheiro, 2022; Van der Hoven, 2023). Frigotto, Young and Pinheiro (2022) point out that several prominent opera houses have demonstrated resilience and innovation in the face of financial challenges. The Metropolitan Opera House in New York, for example, has pursued a range of strategies to secure its financial stability. These include diversifying its programming to appeal to a broader audience, implementing cost-saving measures, and actively seeking philanthropic support from individuals, corporations, and foundations (Frigotto, Young, & Pinheiro, 2022; Spies, 2021; Van der Hoven, 2023).

The Cirque du Soleil, a global leader in circus arts and entertainment, faced similar financial difficulties in the past. However, it has successfully navigated these challenges through a combination of creative productions, international tours, and strategic partnerships. Additionally, Cirque du Soleil has leveraged its brand and reputation to attract sponsorship deals and collaborations with other entertainment industry leaders (Ghazzawi, Martinelli-Lee, & Palladini, 2014; Li, 2020).

The Royal Opera House in London has also implemented various strategies to ensure its financial stability. This includes an emphasis on audience development, educational outreach programmes, and innovative digital initiatives. By engaging with diverse audiences and leveraging digital platforms, the Royal Opera House has managed to expand its reach and generate additional revenue streams (Royal Opera House, 2022). These examples demonstrate that with proactive, innovative and adaptable approaches, opera companies can overcome financial difficulties and secure their long-term sustainability. It is evident that opera companies worldwide have adopted a multifaceted approach to address financial difficulties. Diversifying funding sources, forming collaborations, embracing digital platforms, engaging in education and outreach, implementing cost-saving measures, and remaining adaptable are all key strategies employed to ensure the sustainability of these cultural institutions.

In the context of South Africa, opera faces a challenge as it receives only a modest subsidy from the democratic government. This limited financial support, as noted by Burdukova (2010) and Florea (2014), places a strain on most opera companies, making it challenging for them to be self-sustaining organisations. Despite these financial constraints, some opera companies, exemplified by Cape Town Opera, have strategically diversified their funding sources. By exploring alternative avenues of financial support, such as private donations, philanthropic partnerships, or collaborations with non-governmental entities, these companies have adopted a proactive approach to mitigate the impact of insufficient government subsidies in order to ensure the successful continuation of their operations and artistic endeavours in the South African cultural landscape.

Despite a difficult financial backdrop and decreasing government budgets, many opera companies around the world have demonstrated incredible tenacity and innovation in surviving. They have used a variety of initiatives, including expanding financing sources, developing alliances, using digital platforms, and applying cost-cutting measures. These organisations continue to provide high-quality operatic experiences for audiences by adjusting to changing situations and creating novel solutions. This demonstrates the lasting value of opera as an art form, as well as the dedication of those involved in its production to preserve its survival and vitality.

2.7 Diversifying streams of revenue

The high cost of opera productions has made it difficult for opera companies to generate sufficient revenues (Olivier, 2014; Roos, 2010; Shilvock, 2002; Spies, 2015). Opera is a highly complex and costly art form to produce, merging distinct components such as set design, lighting orchestration, and costume creation (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). The fusion of these specific elements, along with the inclusion of skilled singers, orchestras, and choruses, contributes to the intricate nature of operatic performances. The production of opera demands a harmonious collaboration of these diverse components, and each aspect plays a vital role in shaping the overall spectacle and artistic quality (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). Given the elaborate sets, sophisticated lighting designs, and intricate costumes associated with opera, it becomes a resource-intensive art form, necessitating substantial financial investment. Unlike some other artistic endeavors, opera requires funding on a per-performance basis, highlighting the financial challenges faced by opera companies in maintaining the high standards and artistic excellence integral to the operatic tradition. Shilvock (2002:2) states that “opera has one of the lowest levels of earned income as a percentage of total revenue in any of the high arts”.

A study by Florea (2014) highlights that the current challenges concerning the revenues generated by opera companies are not new; that financing issues have been prevalent in opera houses worldwide for a significant period of time. Traditionally, opera has relied on a mix of earned revenues (ticket sales) and external funding sources (government subsidies, donations, sponsorships) to cover its costs. However, changes in funding sources, the levels of allocation of funding, as well as economic challenges in recent years have made it more difficult for opera houses to sustain their financial stability. Decline in government support, changes in audience demographics, and shifts in entertainment preferences, compounded by the competing pressures of a stay-at-home culture dominated by online shows and take-out food deliveries, have all contributed to the intricate financial challenges faced by opera houses (Albinsson, 2023; Florea, 2014; Khokhlova, 2019). While it is not necessarily true that audiences no longer want to see opera, the diversification of entertainment options and the convenience of at-home experiences present alternative choices for consumers. This, coupled with the elaborate and multifaceted nature of opera productions, places

financial strain on opera houses in the modern economic landscape. The need to navigate these challenges and adapt to changing audience behaviours underscores the importance of exploring innovative funding models and strategies to ensure the continued vitality of the opera tradition (Albinsson, 2023; Florea, 2014).

Various studies indicate that, due to the diminishing support from ticket sales, donations, and government funding, opera houses globally are implementing a spectrum of strategies to counteract these challenges (Albinsson, 2023; Brehm, 2017; Spies, 2015). A case in point is the Metropolitan Opera in New York, USA, which, in response to dwindling ticket sales, diversified its programming. By introducing a Live in HD series that broadcasts performances in cinemas worldwide, the Metropolitan Opera significantly broadened its audience base and generated additional revenue (Khokhlova, 2019; Wigtil, 2020). This adaptation underscores the need for opera houses to explore innovative approaches to engage audiences and generate financial support in the face of declining traditional revenue streams. The Royal Opera House (London, UK) also established a digital platform to broadcast live performances to cinemas worldwide. This initiative not only increased accessibility, but it also created a new revenue stream through ticket sales for the cinema broadcasts (Khokhlova, 2019).

In the South African context, Cape Town Opera has demonstrated commendable efforts to diversify its revenue streams, strategically moving beyond traditional funding avenues. This comprehensive approach encompasses partnerships with various stakeholders, including government bodies, corporate sponsors, private donors, and international grants (CTO, 2021). Rather than relying solely on one source of income, Cape Town Opera has adopted a multifaceted strategy, better equipping itself to navigate fluctuations in funding and financial challenges. This proactive and adaptive approach has not only allowed Cape Town Opera to survive but has enabled the company to thrive in the face of financial uncertainties. By expanding its revenue streams, the opera company has created a more resilient financial foundation, ensuring a sustainable future. This diversification goes beyond addressing funding issues alone; it extends to generating income through ticket sales, merchandise, and other revenue-generating activities.

Cape Town Opera's success in diversifying revenue streams has enabled it to continue producing high-quality operatic performances. The financial stability achieved through these efforts has provided the company with the necessary resources to invest in artistic excellence, ensuring that their productions maintain a standard of quality that resonates with audiences. Furthermore, this diversified revenue approach has allowed Cape Town Opera to actively engage with its community. By leveraging various income streams, the opera company can invest in community outreach programs, educational initiatives, and accessible performances. This engagement not only enriches the cultural landscape but also fosters a sense of inclusivity, making opera more accessible and relevant to diverse audiences. Cape Town Opera's commitment to diversifying revenue streams marks a proactive and forward-thinking approach to financial sustainability. Beyond merely addressing funding challenges, this strategy ensures a robust income base, allowing the opera company not only to weather financial fluctuations but also to thrive artistically and engage meaningfully with its community.

Initiatives like subscription packages and the hosting of special events have become pivotal strategies. By expanding their offerings, opera companies aspire to attract a broader audience base, engaging both loyal patrons and new attendees. This not only enriches the cultural experience but also serves as a means to generate additional income. Through these innovative approaches, opera companies are actively navigating the evolving landscape of financial support, ensuring their continued presence and impact in the performing arts sector.

Many opera companies actively engage in fundraising campaigns, targeting a range of potential supporters from individuals to corporations and foundations. These campaigns often involve innovative approaches, such as crowdfunding initiatives, special events, and online donation platforms. This concerted effort to mobilise financial support helps to offset the decline in traditional funding sources. In summary, the strategies employed by successful opera companies worldwide are marked by creativity, adaptability, and a keen understanding of the evolving financial landscape. These opera companies continue to manage financial issues in a pro-active manner by diversifying revenue streams, forging strategic partnerships, harnessing

digital platforms, interacting with communities, and embracing innovation to ensure the lasting vibrancy of opera as a beloved cultural heritage.

2.8 Decline of funding for opera companies during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated profound disruptions across the performing arts sector, including opera companies, which faced unprecedented challenges. In response to severe restrictions on live gatherings and public performances, many opera institutions had to pivot quickly to digital platforms and social media to maintain engagement with their audiences (Tsioulakis & FitzGibbon, 2020). This shift was not merely a stopgap measure but marked a significant transformation in how opera companies operate, leading to a deeper investigation into the integration of technology with the performing arts. The subsequent sections of this literature review will explore how digital platforms became indispensable in supporting opera companies during the pandemic. This examination will include an analysis of innovative strategies such as live-streaming performances and utilising social media to foster audience interaction. The review will also consider the broader implications of this digital transition on the future of the opera industry. Key areas of focus will include the impact on accessibility, the equity of digital versus in-person experiences, and how the allure of live performances is being reshaped in an increasingly virtual environment.

While the literature has begun to address the decline in funding for opera companies amid the pandemic (South African Cultural Observatory, 2020), most existing studies have concentrated on the overall effects of COVID-19 on the performing arts sector (Tsioulakis & FitzGibbon, 2020). The pandemic's disruption led to the cancellation and suspension of live performances, festivals, and tours globally, severely affecting the economic viability of arts organisations (Primov-Fever, Roziner, & Amir, 2020; Tsioulakis & FitzGibbon, 2020). In Europe, many venues had to cancel their annual events, and numerous theatre artists faced job losses with limited contractual protection against cancellations (Tsioulakis & FitzGibbon, 2020). Tsioulakis and FitzGibbon (2020:2) discuss the pervasive effects of social distancing measures:

The introduction of social distancing measures shut down large, then small gatherings, public venues, then small-scale bars, cafés, and restaurants. As a result, the multiple income streams on which performing artists rely have all disappeared. This includes performance occasions (concerts, theatre productions, advertising voiceovers and soundtracks, private bookings such as weddings and parties, film, and television work, and so forth) and parallel work (waitressing, casual admin).

The pandemic also significantly impacted funding organizations. Many chose to delay the opening of their funding calls due to the heightened economic uncertainty (Primov-Fever, Roziner & Amir, 2020; Tsioulakis & FitzGibbon, 2020). This strategic postponement was aimed at managing resources more effectively in unstable conditions and ensuring that funding could be allocated more predictably once the situation improved.

In South Africa, the national lockdown, which commenced on March 27, 2020, led to the suspension or complete halt of performing arts activities, further straining the sector (Primov-Fever, Roziner, & Amir, 2020). Tsioulakis and FitzGibbon (2020:2) highlight the severe impact on freelance performing artists:

In the performing arts industry, the sudden and radical effect of COVID-19 on the lives of freelance performing artists is compounding dangerous levels of precarity in these occupations, leading to swifter, deeper, and more serious consequences to policy inaction in the coming months and years.

In response to the crisis, several countries, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Greece, implemented measures to support their opera companies and theatres. These measures included emergency funding, relief programs, and adjustments to support the continuity of artistic operations. In contrast, South Africa experienced exacerbated financial challenges as the pandemic intensified existing funding shortages for the opera sector (South African Cultural Observatory, 2020). The combined impact of these crises highlighted the urgent need for innovative solutions and support mechanisms to ensure the survival and resilience of the performing arts industry in the face of ongoing and future challenges.

2.9 The role of digital platforms and social media in the opera industry

2.9.1 The surge and value of digital platforms due to the COVID-19 pandemic

It is essential to preface this section by recognising the pivotal role of the pre-existing presence of social media and digital technologies. This acknowledgement underlines the significance of these technological foundations in the context of the challenges faced by funding organisations during the pandemic. While organisations with established digital footprints may have had a head start in adapting to online methods, the broader point is to emphasise the fundamental importance of digital tools as a resource for communication, collaboration, and adaptability for various organisations during times of uncertainty. However, the advent of COVID-19 propelled the opera industry into a new era of reliance on these platforms. The pandemic accelerated the adoption and utilisation of social media and digital technologies in the opera world. While these tools were already in place, their significance skyrocketed in the face of lockdowns, restrictions, and the imperative for social distancing. Opera companies, faced with the challenge of cancelled live performances, turned to digital platforms as a means of connection and artistic expression. The following section illuminates the transformative impact of these technologies on the industry.

Digital technology has transformed the financial and business side of the opera industry (Walmsley, 2016). Digital technology continues to evolve and shape the opera industry, offering new possibilities for financial management, arts marketing, and audience engagement. Embracing digital arts administration enables opera companies to adapt to changing audience behaviours, improve financial sustainability, and enhance their overall operational efficiency in an increasingly digital landscape. Walmsley (2016:4–5) suggests that a rapid increase in new business models due to the increased use of technology is a challenge for the opera industry, resulting in the slow progress of the sector:

One should not overlook that the sector of performing arts is currently experiencing severe, different challenges that have defied the operation of the industry. One of the significant underpinning and debatable challenges is that the products of the performing arts sector cannot be digitised without losing its

fundamental characteristic and essence that the live experience offers to the audience. Therefore, the performing arts, especially the opera sector, has not been obliged to transform its business model in the way the music industry has, although the slow transformation has left the performing arts sector behind, while the music industry has been flexible and mobile to emigrate online.

The opera industry has witnessed a transformative shift with certain companies such as the Metropolitan Opera House in New York and the Royal Opera House in London actively adapting to the evolving preferences of contemporary audiences. Recognising the need for modernisation, these opera theatres have embraced digital strategies to make their performances accessible to a broader, global audience. Through the digitisation of their productions, they not only cater to the changing dynamics of audience consumption but also leverage technology to transcend geographical boundaries. This forward-thinking approach aligns with a broader trend in the performing arts where institutions are harnessing digital platforms to enhance visibility, engage diverse audiences, and ensure the continued relevance and vitality of opera in the modern era (Khokhlova, 2019).

Khokhlova (2019:29) argues that opera houses are ‘early adopters’. Therefore, while progress may have been slower due to the global financial crisis, the opera industry continues to recognise the importance of adapting to changing circumstances and embracing innovation. According to Khokhlova the industry’s early adoption mindset positions it to explore new strategies, technologies, and partnerships to navigate financial challenges and ensure the long-term viability of opera houses. The gradual changes taking place reflect a commitment to addressing the evolving needs and expectations of audiences in a financially responsible manner.

Embracing digital platforms has become paramount, particularly considering the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Companies swiftly adapted to the virtual landscape, offering live streams, digital subscriptions, and on-demand performances (Khokhlova, 2019; Wigtil, 2020). This not only widened their audience reach, but it also provided an additional source of revenue through online ticket sales and subscriptions. For instance, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, USA launched its “Met Stars Live in Concert” series, which featured live-streamed performances by renowned opera

artists. They also provided access to a vast catalogue of past performances through their Met Opera on Demand platform. The Met's robust social media presence includes regular updates, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive features to engage with their audience (Khokhlova, 2019; Wigtil, 2020).

The Royal Opera House in London, UK offered a selection of free broadcasts of ballet and opera productions on YouTube and Facebook. They also organised online events, including live Q&A sessions with artists and educational content for audiences of all ages (Khokhlova, 2019).

Opera Australia in Sydney, Australia launched "OA | TV", an online platform offering a variety of operatic content, including full-length productions, interviews, and behind-the-scenes footage. They also used social media channels to promote their digital offerings and engage with their audience (Opera Australia, 2020).

The Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Germany created a dedicated digital platform called "Staatsoper.TV" to offer livestreams and on-demand performances. They also used social media to promote their digital offerings and connect with their audiences during the lockdown period (Khokhlova, 2019).

In South Africa, Cape Town Opera embraced digital platforms to maintain a connection with their audience during the pandemic. They shared video content, including performances and interviews, on social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook. Additionally, they utilised live streaming to broadcast special events and engaged with their community through virtual initiatives (Cape Town Opera, 2021).

Evidently, these examples illustrate how opera companies around the world, including those in South Africa, leveraged social media and digital technologies to continue providing operatic experiences to their audiences during the pandemic. Through live streams, on-demand content, educational initiatives, and interactive features, these companies successfully adapted to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis.

2.9.2 YouTube opera channels

The emergence of YouTube has empowered opera companies to share brief highlights, interviews, and rehearsal snippets from their productions. This includes esteemed

institutions like the Royal Opera House in London, the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Duisburg, Opera La Fenice in Venice, and Opera di Roma in Rome, which now leverage online platforms to showcase glimpses of their opera performances. Khokhlova (2019) highlights that these channels have led to an increase in online opera audience numbers. According to Khokhlova (2019), the Royal Opera House (London) has uploaded 517 videos, and the Deutsche Oper am Rhein (Duisburg) channel 185.

Some opera houses have decided to keep their traditional languages on their channels. The content of the channels of Deutsche Oper am Rhein (Duisburg), and Wiener Staatsoper (Vienna) is in German (including video captures); Opera di Roma (Rome) and Opera la Fenice (Venice) are in Italian; Théâtre des Champs Élysées (Paris) and Opéra de Lyon (Lyon) are in French; and Permskiy Akademicheskii Teatr Opery (Perm Krai) is in Russian. By contrast, the Bayerische Staatsoper (Munich) and Opéra National de Paris' (Paris) have their subtitles typically translated into English, while other channels are led by audience numbers (Khokhlova, 2019).

2.9.3 Social media and the opera industry

Social media has recently evolved into a crucial component of modern digital life all over the world. Some conventional performing arts organisations and groups have been compelled to reconsider their performance practices due to the emergence of social media as the new medium for existence, intelligence gathering, collaboration, self-representation, and entertainment. According to Khokhlova (2019:25),

... for opera house managers it is important to consider that their existing and prospective audiences also inhabit social networking sites (SNS). Exploring the virtual Society 2.0 can help to reach them and create connection (or a community).

Even though this study is not advocating for a total shift to digital performance, there are, however, significant advantages to embracing digital elements and expanding an online presence. Integrating digital platforms can enhance accessibility, global reach, and audience engagement, making opera more inclusive and adaptable to changing societal trends. A balanced approach that combines traditional live performances with

strategic digital initiatives can help opera companies thrive in the evolving landscape of the arts and cater to diverse audience preferences.

In European countries, social media has become a significant platform for opera houses. Khokhlova (2019: 102) states:

Social media provide opera houses with all the tools necessary for approaching not only their existing fanbase, but also prospective global audiences. The virtual reality of social media eliminates physical distance and brings together more diverse and geographically distant groups of people and institutions. Brand visibility and audience engagement can be performed digitally with the resources provided on SNS. All virtual activity and audiences' response and approval can be measured and successfully tracked. With established metrics regularly monitored, opera houses can steer their performance to success and reach out to and connect with bigger audiences.

Social media platforms have become key to posting relevant information and attracting audiences to planned productions (Khokhlova, 2019). Among the array of popular platforms, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok stand out as particularly influential channels for connecting with diverse audiences and promoting engagement within the dynamic landscape of the arts. Khokhlova (2019:87) reports examples of providing audiences with relevant information by discussing the social media strategy of the Royal Opera House (London):

“Have you seen it [Verdi’s Simon Boccanegra] yet? Share your thoughts using the hashtag #ROHboccanegra”, “Have you come in to see what it’s all about? Let us know what you think with the hashtag #royaloperahouse”, “If you’re joining us this evening, let us know what you think using the hashtag #ROHsoldiermixed.” The most substantial call happened in anticipation of the World Ballet Day: “we want to see your pirouettes, so make sure you’re sharing a video on your social channels using the hashtag #WorldBalletDay”. The videos were indeed provided, and a selection was streamed at the live broadcast devoted to ROH celebration of the World Ballet Day.

2.9.4 Cinema and opera broadcasts

In addition to leveraging digital platforms, opera companies have increasingly embraced the strategy of broadcasting live productions worldwide in cinemas. This approach not only extends the reach of their performances beyond physical theatre spaces but also caters to an international audience. Live broadcasts in cinemas enable opera enthusiasts from diverse geographical locations to experience the magic of a performance in real-time, fostering a sense of global community among opera lovers. This expansion into cinema broadcasts not only enhances accessibility for those unable to attend live shows but also contributes to the overall promotion of the art form on a broader, global scale. It represents a dynamic fusion of traditional and digital mediums, providing a unique and immersive experience for audiences worldwide (Khokhlova, 2019). While this may fall under the umbrella of digital platforms, it is distinct from social media, as it involves the use of cinemas to transmit live performances.

Digital platforms are used by the Royal Opera House (London) to market productions and increase audience engagement (Khokhlova, 2019). The opera house effectively uses these platforms to challenge, attract, and engage their audience to speak about their productions. Quotes and short video clips are used to engage audiences (Khokhlova, 2019). There is clear evidence that, for opera companies to attract new audiences and maintaining existing fan bases, they must adopt the use of social media platforms.

It is important to acknowledge that while live broadcasts in cinemas have proven to be a successful strategy for reaching international audiences, the landscape may differ in South Africa. Various factors such as technological infrastructure, audience preferences, and economic considerations could influence the reception of this approach in the South African context. Considering the unique dynamics of the local opera scene, opera companies may need to tailor their strategies to align with the specific cultural and logistical considerations of the South African audience. This could involve exploring alternative distribution methods or incorporating digital initiatives that are better suited to the particular characteristics and preferences of the South African opera community.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a succinct overview some of the factors that affect South African opera companies as gleaned from the existing literature. The funding of opera companies worldwide plays a vital role in the industry's sustainability. The Apartheid era had a considerable influence on the success of opera in South Africa as opera received full funding from the government of that time. During the Apartheid era, four provincial arts councils provided financial support for the opera industry until the late-1990s. However, currently, the democratic government provides opera companies with hardly any financial support as it changed its funding policy and restricted the funding allowance to the arts. Thus, there are many financial challenges faced by opera companies, particularly in South Africa.

This chapter highlighted the necessity for these companies to develop effective financial management strategies to secure their future. The chapter emphasised the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis on opera companies, leading to reduced government funding and private sponsorships. The closure of several opera companies due to inadequate financial planning was also noted. Cape Town Opera was cited as a successful example of implementing diversified funding streams and long-term planning, showcasing their commitment to sustainability through talent development and community engagement.

This chapter underscored the vital role of financial management in ensuring the viability and longevity of opera companies and discussed how opera companies worldwide have navigated financial challenges, particularly in the face of declining ticket sales, reduced donations, and diminished government funding. It emphasised the importance of adopting diverse strategies to ensure sustainability. Opera companies have diversified revenue streams, seeking alternative funding sources beyond ticket sales. They engage in targeted fundraising campaigns, forming strategic partnerships and collaborations with other arts organisations. The adoption of digital platforms, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, has enabled companies to reach wider audiences through live streaming and on-demand content. Education and community engagement programs play a crucial role in revenue generation and audience cultivation. These initiatives include educational workshops, outreach

activities, and special events. Additionally, opera companies have focused on efficient resource management and explored innovative productions to capture the interest of diverse audiences.

This chapter highlighted the significant impact of social media and digital technologies on opera companies worldwide. It emphasised the shift towards virtual platforms as crucial components of modern digital life. Opera companies have increasingly turned to platforms like YouTube to upload productions, leading to a growing online opera audience, for instance, the Metropolitan Opera's Live in HD series, the Royal Opera House in London, the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Duisburg and Cape Town Opera's digital initiatives. The chapter also explored the importance of social media platforms beyond YouTube. These platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, have become essential for opera houses to share information about productions, engage with audiences, and promote events. Examples from the Royal Opera House's social media strategy illustrated how effective use of hashtags and interactive content can foster audience participation. In summary, this chapter provided a comprehensive understanding of the current challenges faced by opera companies worldwide, with a specific focus on South Africa.

Some scholars, instead of dwelling on the challenges experienced by opera houses, offer valuable insights and steps that could be implemented to alleviate the persistent challenges faced by these companies globally, such as the need for diversification. Through diversification, collaboration, technological integration, and community engagement, opera companies can not only survive but thrive in the evolving landscape of the arts.

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework that underpinned this research is introduced.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

The opening of this chapter offers a detailed examination of the theoretical framework underpinning this study, with a particular focus on social constructivism. This framework is explored in depth to elucidate the rationale for its selection and its relevance to the research. Social constructivism emphasises the significance of social interactions and cultural contexts in the formation of knowledge, making it a fitting epistemological perspective for this study (Hjort & Laver, 1997; Jackson, 2011; Kim, 2001). Derived from Jerome Bruner's constructivism theory established in 1966, social constructivism extends the idea that individuals develop their understanding of the world through engagement with their experiences and reflective thought (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Olorode & Jimoh, 2016). This chapter not only examines the theoretical underpinnings of social constructivism but also discusses its implications for the research, providing a comprehensive review of existing literature to contextualise its application.

Social constructivism is a learning theory propounded by Lev Vygotsky in 1962 (Vygotsky, 1962). According to the social constructivism theory, language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate, and understand reality. Social constructivism also posits that knowledge and meaning are therefore not fixed or inherent but are constructed through social interactions and cultural contexts. This is essential when applying the theory to the opera industry, as this theory highlights the dynamic interplay between artists, communities, and audiences in the creation, production, and the reception of opera. Social constructivism theory is thus important in the opera industry as opera is a social and cultural practice that is co-constructed through the interactions and collaborations among various stakeholders (Burnard, 2012). Through this social constructivist relationship, opera companies, as well as artists can bring their own perspectives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds into their artistic expressions, as their creative processes are shaped and influenced by their interactions with fellow artists, communities, and the broader cultural environment (Burnard, 2012; Lingo & Tepper, 2013).

The theory of social constructivism is used here to argue that the concepts of financial autonomy, community engagement, and creative collaboration are fundamental for companies and artists in the opera industry. According to the social constructivist perspective, these concepts form a comprehensive theoretical framework for the opera industry to adopt in order to grow in knowledge and understanding. Worldwide, the opera industry flourishes as a socially and culturally relevant art form by embracing financial autonomy, community participation, and creative collaboration. This framework places a strong emphasis on the value of co-creation, inclusion, and artistic autonomy, which would ensure a robust and long-term future for opera.

Considering the social constructivism theory in the context of the South African opera industry is particularly relevant, given the unique social, cultural, and historical settings that shape opera production, performance, and interpretation in this region (Nomcweya, 2018; Roos, 2010). South Africa's rich diversity is intricately woven with complex narratives of cultural identity, post-Apartheid reconciliation, and community dynamics. The concepts of community engagement, empowerment, and audience development and accessibility (Mugovhani, 2021; Rassool, 2000) are critical in understanding how opera is not only produced and performed, but also how it is received and embraced by various communities within this diverse nation.

Recognising these elements is fundamental for opera companies seeking to resonate with South African audiences and to integrate opera into the broader cultural tapestry of the nation. Through a social constructivist lens, the South African opera industry can acknowledge and interact with these distinct social, cultural, and historical settings. In addition to encouraging the industry to confront social issues, promote cultural inclusivity, and empower varied perspectives within the South African context, it will also create a deeper knowledge of how opera is co-constructed through social interactions and cultural influences (Marx, 2008). The opera scene in South Africa has the potential to be transformed into a potent tool for reflecting on and engaging with the complexities of the nation's history and society (Spies, 2015; Yende, 2017).

The following section describes each concept as an aspect of this study, linking these concepts with the social constructivism theory.

3.2 Financial autonomy

From a social constructivist perspective, the imperative of financial autonomy for opera companies in South Africa is rooted in the acknowledgement that social and cultural contexts play a pivotal role in shaping the creation, reception, and sustainability of artistic endeavours (Florea, 2014; Spies, 2015). Social constructivism puts emphasis on the influence of social factors, shared meanings, and the collaborative construction of knowledge in shaping individuals' perceptions of the world and their actions within it. In the specific context of opera in South Africa, financial autonomy is perceived as a mechanism for empowering opera companies and artists, granting them agency in decision-making processes and artistic expressions (Florea, 2014; Spies, 2015). The social constructivist lens recognises that artistic practices are not isolated but are intricately interwoven within broader social, cultural, and economic frameworks. When opera companies and artists have financial autonomy, they are better positioned to navigate and respond to these intricate frameworks while preserving the authenticity of their artistic vision.

According to Florea (2014), financial autonomy facilitates the pursuit of creative vision and innovative approaches by opera companies and artists, allowing them to maintain artistic integrity without undue external influence. From a socially constructed viewpoint, control over financial resources is synonymous with the agency to shape artistic practice in alignment with principles and objectives. This autonomy, in turn, contributes to fostering a diverse and dynamic opera scene in South Africa that authentically reflects the unique cultural and social dynamics of the nation (Alexander, 2020; Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989). The social constructivist perspective underlines the interconnectedness of financial autonomy, artistic agency, and the broader socio-cultural context. It recognises that the opera industry is not merely an economic entity but a socially embedded practice. In this regard, financial autonomy emerges as a pivotal factor, facilitating the navigation and shaping of the intricate social landscape within which opera in South Africa exists (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Mugovhani, 2021; Rassool, 2000). Agid and Tarondeau (2010: 277) defined financial autonomy as follows:

The financial autonomy of an opera house is defined as the ratio between box office income and the total budget. Expressed per-ticket-sold [...] the ratio of the average ticket price to the full cost per ticket. These two intermediate variables are introduced to separate the direct effects of policies on achievements from their indirect effects through the intermediary of average prices or full costs per ticket.

Given Florea's emphasis on financial autonomy encompassing the volume effects of theatre size, production volume, and physical capacity, as well as the more direct financial effects of ticket prices and costs, it becomes evident that achieving financial autonomy for South African opera companies solely through ticket sales might be challenging (Florea, 2014). If the revenue from ticket sales is insufficient to cover the costs, it becomes crucial for opera companies to explore alternative strategies. This may involve seeking funding from government grants, private donors, sponsorships, or partnerships with cultural institutions. Collaborative efforts and strategic alliances with other organisations in the arts and culture sector could also be explored to enhance financial sustainability.

Moreover, investing in outreach programs, educational initiatives, and community engagement projects may not only contribute to the cultural enrichment of communities but might also attract additional sources of funding and support. Embracing digital platforms for streaming performances or creating digital content can expand the reach of opera companies, potentially attracting new audiences and additional revenue streams. This might also be necessary to explore a combination of traditional and innovative strategies to secure the necessary financial support for opera companies to thrive and continue contributing to the cultural landscape. Spies (2015) corroborates this statement, stating that opera companies in South Africa require a vigorous financial strategy to alleviate the financial issues the opera industry faces. In substantiation, Florea (2014:778) reveals:

Financial autonomy is associated with the direct funding coming from box offices as a ratio of the total budget, being directly linked to the size and physical capacity of the respective theatre, a feature which, at least in Europe, represents a historical given.

Financing opera companies' challenges governments increasingly worldwide and the financial challenges facing opera companies have become a pressing concern for governments globally (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010). Governments, grappling with budget constraints and competing priorities, are finding it increasingly difficult to allocate sufficient public funding to sustain opera companies. This shift in financial dynamics has led opera companies to explore alternative funding sources, including private philanthropy, corporate sponsorships, and collaborations with cultural institutions (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Florea, 2014).

Several factors contribute to the complexity of financing opera companies. The elaborate nature of opera productions, coupled with substantial expenses related to venue rentals, production costs, artists' fees, and promotional activities, places a significant strain on financial resources (Florea, 2014). Additionally, evolving societal preferences and changing government priorities could influence the allocation of public funds, necessitating opera companies to diversify their revenue streams for financial resilience. In response to these challenges, opera companies are proactively seeking private support. Initiatives such as philanthropic partnerships, endowments, and collaborations with businesses have become integral components of their financial strategies (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Florea, 2014). These efforts not only contribute to the financial health of opera companies but also foster stronger connections between the arts and the private sector.

Moreover, the advent of digital technologies and the prevalence of online platforms offer new opportunities for opera companies to engage audiences and generate revenue through virtual performances, streaming services, and online events (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Florea, 2014). Adapting to these changing dynamics is paramount for opera companies to successfully navigate the evolving landscape of cultural financing. By doing so, they will be able to continue to provide enriching cultural experiences while ensuring their financial sustainability in a challenging economic environment.

Financial autonomy has become one of the successful strategies for European opera houses (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010). While increasing ticket revenue is essential, it is also vital to acknowledge that a broader approach may be necessary for sustained

financial health, especially considering the substantial government funding that many European opera houses receive. In more specific terms, financial autonomy represents an improved, workable solution for the South African opera industry, now and in the future, as opera companies currently receive limited government subsidies.

In this study, the argument for financial autonomy serves as the foundation for proposing that, in South Africa the government should extend greater subsidies to opera companies without imposing control in return. The pursuit of both financial autonomy and sustainability emerges as a strategic approach, offering opera companies the prospect of cultivating a dynamic and artistically vibrant atmosphere that nurtures imagination, cultural authenticity, and artistic integrity. This objective is deemed crucial within the framework of social constructivism theory, which guides the analysis of the situation by emphasising the profound impact of social and cultural contexts on opera companies.

From this perspective, financial autonomy transcends its role as a mere financial goal. Instead, it transforms into a means to reflect the rich cultural history and intricate social dynamics of the nation within the opera scene. By providing opera companies with the financial autonomy to make independent decisions, the opera landscape becomes a mirror reflecting the diversity and authenticity of South Africa's cultural heritage. Moreover, embracing financial autonomy empowers both businesses and artists with the freedom to exercise their creative and independent judgement in decision-making processes. This autonomy contributes significantly to the creation of a thriving and culturally resonant opera landscape in South Africa. It enables opera companies to respond dynamically to the ever-evolving cultural milieu, fostering innovation, and ensuring that operatic expressions align with the cultural tapestry of the nation.

In essence, the call for financial autonomy coupled with increased government subsidies is not just a fiscal strategy; it is a holistic approach aimed at creating a resilient and culturally embedded opera industry. Through the lens of social constructivism theory, this study advocates for a model where financial autonomy becomes a catalyst for artistic freedom, cultural authenticity, and the continued vibrancy of opera in the unique context of South Africa. Financial independence is

crucial for opera companies as it allows them to pursue artistic goals and maintain creative integrity without external constraints. It is evident that by integrating this concept into the theoretical framework, the discussion can highlight how financial autonomy is not merely a matter of economic survival but also a way to foster an environment where artistic and social interactions can flourish. This perspective aligns with social constructivism's view that knowledge and creative expression are shaped by the autonomy and interaction of individuals and groups.

3.3 Community engagement

Community engagement in the opera industry is the concept of forming authentic, long-term relationships between opera companies and their respective communities (Borwick, 2012; Vasconi, 2014). This is in line with the emphasis of social constructivism theory on the importance of social interactions and cultural contexts in the construction of knowledge and meaning (Clements, 2016; Inomata, 2001). In the South African opera industry, community engagement has become fundamental as it has recognised that opera is not solely an individual artistic expression, but a collaborative and interactive endeavour (Gobbato, 2018; Spies, 2015). Hence, engaging with local communities allows opera companies and artists to incorporate diverse perspectives, cultural traditions, and community needs into their creative processes (Clements, 2018; Gobbato, 2018). This involvement fosters a sense of shared ownership, relevance, and inclusivity, making opera more meaningful and responsive to the communities it serves.

Borwick (2012) states the importance of community relationship-building in the performing arts by learning, action, and the expression of needs and values. Borwick's philosophy focuses on adopting and encouraging opera companies to create new partnerships and establish stronger patronage through meaningful, more authentic communication outside the arts community to ensure that opera becomes an essential part of broader community development. Borwick (2012) suggests that it is essential to involve the community in opera to ensure sustainability in the industry. Influenced by Borwick, Vasconi (2014) points out that, in the opera industry, community engagement has become an essential practice for establishing long-term, reciprocal relationships between opera companies or industry and their respective communities,

particularly those who do not yet attend opera productions. Vasconi (2014:13) further states:

Engagement is the best way to ensure a meaningful arts experience; to stimulate the greater community in a way that allows the individual to better understand themselves, their community, and the role of opera in that community. Furthermore, investing in the unique characteristics of a given community better ensures relevancy and funding.

Community engagement has become a vital approach to audience development in the opera industry (Vasconi, 2014). Previously marginalised South African communities will find opera meaningful if opera companies adapted to the community engagement philosophy. Gobbato (2018) defines community engagement in the South African opera industry as an important approach to ensuring that the industry becomes sustainable. Community engagement has many benefits for opera companies. These benefits include attaining new audiences, while the community benefits by learning about the opera (Vasconi, 2014).

Poor community engagement in the opera industry often stems from a lack of meaningful interaction and tailored efforts. When opera companies fail to connect deeply with the communities they aim to serve, the impact of their outreach can be limited. For instance, if an opera company's outreach efforts are sporadic or lacking in depth, it may result in a superficial understanding of opera within the community, rather than fostering genuine interest and appreciation.

Consider the Jozi Opera's initiative to educate rural and disadvantaged communities. If its educational programs are irregular or do not cater to the specific needs and interests of these communities, the outreach may fall short of its objectives. Similarly, Gauteng Opera's work with schools and charities may be ineffective if these interactions lack meaningful substance or fail to create a lasting impact.

Cape Town Opera's extensive efforts with youth and schools might also suffer from poor engagement if its programs are not adapted to the unique characteristics and challenges of each community. Programs that are not tailored to local contexts may fail to resonate with the participants, diminishing their effectiveness.

Poor community engagement in the opera industry goes beyond mere absence of effort; it concerns the quality, relevance, and continuity of the engagement. Effective outreach involves targeted, sustained, and context-sensitive initiatives that address the specific needs and dynamics of the communities involved, ensuring that engagement is both impactful and meaningful. Engaging with local communities enhances the relevance and impact of opera productions by reflecting the social and cultural contexts in which they are performed. Social constructivism, which emphasises that meaning is constructed through social interactions, underscores that involving communities in the opera process enriches the experience for both artists and audiences. By integrating community engagement into the theoretical framework, opera companies can build stronger connections with their audiences and reflect diverse cultural narratives, ultimately creating more resonant and relevant productions.

3.4 Collaboration

The concept of creative collaboration was used in the social constructivism perspective that underlines the collaborative nature of knowledge construction and meaning making (Ostrower, 2003; Shilvock, 2002; Webster, 2011). In the South African opera industry, creative collaboration is perceived as essential, because it recognises that no single individual can fully encompass the breadth and depth of operatic production (Spies, 2015). Opera companies can access a wealth of knowledge, skills, and creativity through fostering collaborations between artists, directors, designers, and production teams. The quality of production is raised by creative collaboration, which also encourages interdisciplinary thinking and the investigation of novel concepts, producing powerful and memorable opera experiences.

Therefore, according to the social constructivism theory, collaboration exists in the arts sector as a business model for effective operation in the industry. The effectiveness of creative collaboration is a means to increase creativity and encourage input from multiple perspectives (Ostrower, 2003; Shilvock, 2002). Creative collaboration is essential for opera companies to improve their revenue and to reduce uncertainty regarding the future (Shilvock, 2002). Collaboration theory follows two significant approaches: artistic and management (John-Steiner, 2000; Shilvock, 2002; Spies,

2015). Hill (2016) highlights the importance of understanding collaboration as practical to theory in the creative industries. In defining the artistic approach and the management approach, Hill (2016) states that the former is used to examine collaboration in an artistic sense; while the latter uses a management angle to look at collaborative activity within the creative sector. The former is very particular in approach and focused ultimately on output. It might be about the use of space, environment or networks to create collaborative artistic works, whether a curated exhibition, a performance, or a single piece that involves many artistic hands and where the creativity has become something new and different from the works of the individual artists involved.

Collaboration theory looks at how businesses can develop through collaboration in the performing arts industry. The principle of collaboration permits the performing arts to apply business approaches to the sector to mitigate financial problems (Colbry, Hurwitz & Adair, 2014; Hill, 2016; Shilvock, 2002). Ostrower (Langeveld et al., 2014:14) agrees, pointing out that,

... collaborations are formed to exploit opportunities in terms of different resources such as connections to the target audience, administrative expertise, artistic expertise, volunteer time, fundraising and financial capabilities, space, and, generally, knowledge and experience.

Shilvock (2002) defines collaboration theory as a standard for the success of opera companies in the 21st century:

One very practical method for managing resource dependencies and environmental uncertainties is to develop strategic partnerships with organisational stakeholders. Most opera companies' relationships with external parties are short term: audiences commit to single performances or a season at best; government grants must be reapplied for on an annual basis; corporations provide funding when they can, but they reserve the right to pull out if the money is needed elsewhere; collaborations with other arts organisations are undertaken for isolated special events. These transitory associations are incredibly valuable in providing resources to the opera company, but they do not lessen environmental uncertainty (Shilvock 2002:13–14).

Collaborations or partnerships provide strong relationships among opera companies and expand opera companies' competencies. Langeveld et al. (2014:30) highlight that

... when the organisation recognises that its work can only be realised by working together and voluntarily decides with which parties it will collaborate to prevent financial threats, the collaboration is urgent but not enforced.

Thus, in this research, collaboration theory underscores the significance of integrating creativity into the operations of opera companies as a means to ensure their future stability and success. Through adopting principles from social constructivism, the South African opera industry has the potential to significantly enhance creativity, encourage innovation, and optimise resources. This approach also promotes more effective audience engagement and the development of lasting relationships through a business model centred on collaboration. Collaboration enables a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to both artistic production and operational practices within the opera industry. It allows for a more diverse and holistic representation of artistic and cultural narratives, which can greatly enhance the overall efficacy and impact of opera productions. By working together, artists, communities and other stakeholders can pool their expertise and resources, leading to more innovative and resonant performances.

Furthermore, collaborative efforts play a crucial role in the success and innovation of opera productions. Social constructivism highlights the importance of collaborative interactions in the co-creation of knowledge and artistic expression. Through these interactions, opera companies can create richer, more meaningful experiences that resonate with a wider audience, reflecting the diverse cultural and social contexts in which they operate. By embracing collaboration and social constructivism, opera companies can strengthen their connections with audiences and enhance their artistic offerings, ultimately contributing to a more dynamic and sustainable opera industry.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter extensively reviewed social constructivism theory for integration into South African opera companies as fundamental approaches to address the financial crisis in the industry. Social constructivism provides a valuable epistemological

perspective in the opera industry. It promotes collaborative work and active audience engagement, it encourages diverse interpretations, and ensures cultural relevance. Social constructivism could be adopted by the South African opera industry to foster a dynamic and inclusive artistic environment that values the various perspectives and experiences of everyone involved, improving the opera experience for both performers and audiences. Understanding the social dynamics within the South African context is vital since social constructivism emphasises that knowledge and meaning are formed via social interactions. Opera companies should learn to interact with other social groups, learn from them, and include their viewpoints and issues into their works by using social constructivism.

The opera industry extends beyond individual artistic expression, and this chapter highlighted the significant impact of interactions and collaborations among artists, communities, and audiences. Through the lens of social constructivism, the examination of these concepts underscores the dynamic interplay among various stakeholders within the opera ecosystem. Operatic productions, as uncovered by this study, are inherently collaborative endeavours that surpass individual artistic expression. The intricate process involves a collective effort, uniting a diverse array of artists, creatives, and technicians to harmonise their skills and perspectives in creating a unified work. This internal collaboration within the industry reflects the richness and complexity inherent in opera production.

Furthermore, it is important to differentiate this internal collaboration from the broader collaborative efforts with communities and other arts organisations. While the internal collaboration pertains to the intricate teamwork involved in creating the opera itself, external collaboration involves engaging with wider communities, establishing connections, and partnering with other arts entities. This study acknowledges the dual nature of collaboration within the opera industry, underscoring both the internal synergy that shapes artistic output and the external partnerships that contribute to the industry's vitality and significance within a broader societal context. The importance of shared meaning-making, knowledge formation, and the co-creation of opera experiences is emphasised, and the socio-cultural environment in which opera functions is acknowledged.

Community engagement is essential to sustain South African opera companies as social constructivism places a strong emphasis on how social interactions, cultural circumstances, and shared meaning-making shape people and groups. The relevance of the audience in the South African opera industry is acknowledged by the social constructivism philosophy. The participation, encouragement, interpretation, and criticism of the audience are crucial to the longevity and cultural importance of opera. It is evident that opera companies can benefit from the meaning-making process, improve the quality of their performances, and promote a sense of ownership and belonging within the South African community by actively involving the audience. A robust and inclusive opera ecosystem in South Africa is facilitated by including the audience as active participants in the opera experience.

According to the social constructivism theory, creative collaboration emerges as a vital resource for South African opera companies and artists. It extends beyond the intrinsic importance of individual creative artists to underline the unique value of collective endeavours. This collaborative spirit is instrumental in not only influencing the emotional resonance and significance of opera productions but also in harnessing the creativity of artists to drive innovative ways of interacting with and involving the wider community. These creative collaborations serve as dynamic means to express cultural diversity, challenge conventions, foster innovation, and actively engage with communities through imaginative initiatives. The growth of a thriving and inclusive opera ecosystem in South Africa is facilitated by recognising the collective creativity of artists as an essential element, particularly in shaping novel pathways for community interaction. The South African opera business can produce meaningful, lively, and welcoming productions that reflect the nation's multiculturalism and interact with its people by embracing collaboration. Collaboration fosters innovation, expansion, and the long-term viability of South Africa's opera business.

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed description of the research methodology and design implementation during the secondary research component phases. This study uses a qualitative research method. This chapter outlines the study participants, the selection criteria, the sampling process, as well as the purpose and the reasons for the choice of methodology. The data collection instruments for this study and the procedures followed in the data collection process are discussed in detail. The research design is documented to provide the overall structure of the study and to orientate the reader within the framework in which data was collected, interpreted, and analysed. This chapter ends with a discussion regarding the ethical considerations and the rights of the participants.

4.2 Researcher's positionality

In social sciences, positionality has become a vital aspect of research, requiring scholars to identify and articulate their positionality in the research. Holmes (2020) points out that positionality in research defines both the individual's interpretation of the world and position assumed in relation to research tasks, and the social and political setting of the research. Examiners and supervisors therefore expect postgraduate students to report on their positionality and the influence thereof on their academic research (Bourke, 2014). In academic research, the concept of positionality holds paramount importance, particularly within the realm of qualitative research. Positionality refers to the researcher's recognition and understanding of their own position in relation to the study, as well as an acknowledgment of the dynamic nature of their own and others' positions throughout the research process.

As this research project was situated in a social constructivist philosophical paradigm, the paradigm influenced me as researcher during participation with the selected participants, leading to a strong co-construction of knowledge and insight into this study. Therefore, this chapter presents my reflection and consideration of the data collection and the significant influence it had on this research. This is essential when

revealing the earlier knowledge and insights a researcher might have conveyed to the co-construction practice (Bourke, 2014; Chacko, 2004).

I had worked as an opera singer in Gauteng Province before I started the data collection process as a researcher. Therefore, I consider that my knowledge, identity, background, experience, and principles influenced the research process positively. At least 14 of the research participants know me as a former opera singer, and this factor might have influenced their interactions with me. For example, when I introduced the research project to opera managers from the industry during the relationship construction, they might have been influenced to perceive the study as important. Regarding the participants, some artists who know me showed zeal to participate in this research during the building of rapport. Additionally, because I am an opera singer and I know some of the challenges faced by opera companies, my communication might have influenced participants regarding how the questions were probed. However, I always tried to remain as objective as possible to avoid introducing any personal bias, or any prompting of questions and answers.

4.3 Qualitative research methodology

The study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa, as well as to identify viable solutions for their future sustainability. It also aimed to provide a detailed understanding of the individuals' experiences within these companies and the social contexts that influence their living and working environments (Mouton, 2001; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). By utilising a qualitative methodology, the study transcends mere statistical analysis, allowing for an exploration of the underlying motives, reasons, and meanings driving individuals' actions and behaviours (Bailey, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Keel, 1996).

This qualitative lens proved invaluable in examining the intricate dynamics within opera companies, shedding light on the multifaceted impact of social, cultural, and economic factors on their operations and prospects in South Africa. The approach was suitable for a thorough investigation into the challenges faced by these companies, providing a nuanced understanding that informs the development of effective strategies and interventions for their future success (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 1993).

The qualitative methodology adopted in this study was instrumental in exploring the underlying reasons behind the decline of funding for opera companies in South Africa. By focusing on the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the issues, this approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of individuals’ life experiences, beliefs, and attitudes, offering critical insights into the challenges faced by the opera industry (Bless et al., 1993). This methodology provided participants with the opportunity to engage with the problem based on factual findings rather than assumptions, aligning with best practices in research (Babbie, 2010; Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

In contrast to quantitative studies that focus on numerical data, this research embraced a qualitative and investigative approach to delve into the complexities of funding decline and operational difficulties faced by opera companies. It sought to uncover the nuanced meanings and interactions that characterise the current challenges and potential solutions for the future of these companies. It is evident that by emphasising a holistic understanding of the issues, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive view of the factors contributing to the decline and to identify strategies for addressing these challenges moving forward.

The data collection process primarily involved semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected participants, drawn from the researcher’s personal experience as an opera singer affected by the closure of Opera Africa in 2012. The study concentrated on engaging opera company managers and state funding agencies in the Western Cape and Gauteng Provinces of South Africa. Through these interviews, the study aimed to elicit rich and in-depth information from the selected individuals, providing a robust foundation for understanding the complexities surrounding opera companies in South Africa.

4.3.1 Qualitative research sample size and design

4.3.1.1 Population and sampling

This study included opera companies and state funding agencies to identify the current challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa. The decision to employ a specific research location was relevant to acquiring easy access to the specific

population. Selecting a population location is crucial, hence the researcher carefully selected locations that are representative of the industry's dynamics in the country.

Effective sampling was critical to this study as the choice of study participants would influence the quality of the research findings. Therefore, instead of studying an entire population, a smaller, representative portion of the population was selected from which to draw conclusions about the larger group to make the research manageable, cost-effective, and practical, while still striving for accurate and meaningful results. Sampling is a valuable part of research as it is rarely practical, efficient or ethical to study whole populations (Creswell, 2009; Keel, 1996).

There are two main sample domains according to sampling theory, and these are probability and non-probability. This study selected non-probability sampling because it does not involve randomisation. This sampling process includes quota, snowball, expert, accidental, and judgemental/purposive sampling processes (Bless et al., 2013). To ensure manageable data, this study employed snowball and purposive or judgemental sampling for the semi-structured interviews. This means that participants (opera company managers and state funding agencies) were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives, rather than being chosen randomly or to represent a certain demographic profile.

The selection process focused on identifying individuals who had special experience, perspectives, or expertise relevant to the research topic. This approach ensures a targeted and in-depth exploration of the subject matter, as participants are chosen precisely for their ability to provide valuable insights and information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The aim of using snowball and purposive/judgemental sampling for the semi-structured interviews was to gather nuanced and detailed data from participants due to their knowledge and experiences that were pertinent to the research questions. These sampling approaches ensured that the data obtained would be directly aligned with the goals of the study, leading to a more comprehensive and insightful analysis.

The study's sample included participants from two groups: opera company representatives and state funding agencies. The sample of 14 participants from these two categories was selected using snowball and purposive/judgemental sampling

techniques (Bless et al., 2013). Snowball sampling was used because this study was conducted during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, most of the participants were in various locations that I was unable to reach physically, due to the pandemic restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the virus. Therefore, core participants were identified as relevant to the study who then recommended other individuals with relevant knowledge. The study used online videoconferencing platforms such as Skype, Telegram, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, and e-mail to reach the participants.

Second, the study participants were chosen using a judgemental or purposive sample technique. Because of my background as an opera singer and my familiarity with the current state-funding agencies in South Africa, I was able to choose the participants who were able to represent the sample in the study. Additionally, I had connections with many individuals who had once run opera companies in South Africa and detailed knowledge about the funding system. Only the few participants who fulfilled the selection requirements were chosen for interviews. These requirements were that participants had to be the managers of either a present or past opera company, or that they were financial supporters of opera companies both now and in the past, or that they had been part of an opera company. As a result, individuals who did not fulfil these requirements could not take part in the study.

Avoiding any form of bias in the data collection is critical in ensuring the integrity and reliability of the research. I asked open-ended questions that encouraged participants to provide detailed and unbiased responses. I avoided leading questions that could suggest or encourage a specific answer, and regularly reflected on the interactions during the research process to identify and address any unconscious biases that may have emerged.

In this regard, interviews were conducted with the selected participants in an attempt to garner diverse views about the issues under investigation. The decision on the sample size (14) was based on the intention to generate rich data and to understand the perceptions and experiences among the relatively homogeneous groups of individuals. The decision to employ a specific research location was motivated by the

need for easy access to the specific population. Table 1 outlines the number of participants selected for interviews in this study.

Table 4.1: Participants in the study

Level	Number and justification	Percentage
Opera company managers	10	71%
State funding agencies	4	29%
Total number of participants	14	100%

Source: Researcher

This study identified the population that would shed more light onto the situation and an in-depth understanding of the challenges experienced by opera companies in the country. The study did not comprise of any specific race, gender, age or other demographic qualities as it was assumed that the challenges experienced by the South African opera companies were not related to any of these aspects.

4.4 Qualitative data collection and data management

In this study, data collection was pivotal to achieving the aims set out in Chapter 1. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data and to guide the investigation.

4.4.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews provided answers to the questions regarding the participants' perceptions about challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa in relation to funding. Semi-structured interviewing is a form of qualitative research method that allows researchers to have some open-ended questions or topics to guide a conversation; however, the discussion is flexible and can adapt to the participants' responses and insights. In semi-structured interviews, researchers have a general idea of the type of information they want to gather, but they also allow the conversation to flow naturally and to explore new avenues of inquiry (Blanche et al., 2006). This

methodology is clearly appropriate for investigative research where the research questions cannot be specifically articulated (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). The research sub-aims of this study were focussed on comprehending experiences, views, thoughts, values, and processes. In this respect, semi-structured interviewing was a suitable qualitative method to generate facts, or understandings of concepts, attitudes, experiences, processes, behaviours, or predictions (Atkinson et al., 2000).

Bless et al. (2013) noted that semi-structured interviews are frequently used to obtain participants' subjective perceptions about a certain circumstance or event they have encountered. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), this methodology employs a detailed interview schedule and is effective when there is sufficient subjective knowledge about an experience or phenomena. Open-ended questions can be freely answered during semi-structured interviews, and the researcher can delve deeper into the participants' answers (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Haverkamp & Young, 2007).

Semi-structured interviews were suitable for this study due to my objective knowledge about the current challenges faced by South African opera companies. The semi-structured interviews in this study also provided in-depth insights regarding workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. This method of collecting data allowed participants to express their personal experiences and opinions in an unrestricted way, which supplied sufficient data to fully comprehend the problems being investigated (Lune & Berg, 2009; Swedberg, 2020).

In-depth interviewing, which is often used in other social research projects, is vital to understanding people's lived experiences and the meaning they assign to those experiences (Hatch, 2002; Hays & Singh, 2011; Labaree, 2009). During interviewing, participants' responses were focussed on several topics under investigation (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Martinez-Mesa et al., 2016). In a semi-structured interview, open-ended questions based on pre-determined themes are asked and are sandwiched between probes intended to elicit more in-depth responses. The use of the interview guide in this study's data collection phase was typical of qualitative research and aided in steering the conversation towards the subjects and problems.

As part of the first day of data collection, before the semi-structured interviewing process commenced, I developed a 'roadmap' that would be employed during the data

collection interviews. As this research study was investigative, it followed a proper interview guide. However, follow-up questions were asked where necessary. In addition, participants were given flexibility in this study to ensure that participants responded to all the questions. Figure 4.2 illustrates the roadmap that was followed to ensure accuracy in this study.



Figure 4.2: Interview process (Source: S. J. Yende)

The participants in this study were approached with a two-fold strategy. Initially, opera company managers and practitioners were the primary points of contact, and ten individuals from this group were recruited to participate in the research. Following this, efforts were made to engage with representatives from governmental funding agencies. However, accessing these agencies posed challenges due to gatekeepers and concerns among potential participants regarding the critical nature of the study in relation to funding distribution for opera companies in South Africa. Consequently, the interviews with governmental funding agency representatives were conducted cautiously and with purposefully recruited participants to address these challenges. This two-step approach ensured that data collection commenced with the opera company perspective, and subsequent efforts were made to include insights from governmental funding agencies, taking into account the complexities associated with accessing this particular group of participants.

During the data collection process, anonymity or confidentiality was protected by removing any personally identifiable information (PII) from the data in the presentation phase. Prior to the actual data analysis, I also thoroughly cleaned and pre-processed the data to remove any outliers, duplicates, or irrelevant information that could introduce bias.

Every effort was made to ensure the quality of the research project throughout the data collection process. Hence, the study interview guide was developed (see Appendix 4) to ensure that the participants responded effectively to the questions. This phase was significant in the research project as it offered an itinerary to negotiate and guide the interview process towards answering the research question. Since this research study was investigative, it followed a standardised interview guide.

4.4.2 Effect of language

English was used as the language of communication, but this language is not my mother tongue, nor that of some of the participants. In this study, all participants communicated consistently in English throughout the interview process. This helped to ensure consistency in the data collected and analysed, which was important for the accuracy and reliability of the findings. However, it is important to acknowledge that this may have resulted in poor communication with some interviewees and that it might have limited the findings (Morse et al., 2002). Therefore, at the initial stage of this research, close attention was paid to the issue of language, among other restricting factors of the research process, to ensure that this study would be carried out successfully.

4.4.3 Interview setting and time

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the research process was significantly influenced by various restrictions. Participants faced limitations on their locations, affecting how interviews were conducted. To comply with health guidelines, some participants opted for face-to-face interviews with masks, while others preferred home visits. Additionally, interviews were conducted via online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet. This shift to virtual interviews introduced challenges, including concerns about internet data usage and connectivity in general, which may have led to incomplete responses from some participants.

4.4.4 Inclusion and eligibility criteria and site sampling

The study focused on a targeted sample from two South African provinces: Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria) and the Western Cape (Cape Town). These provinces

were selected due to their strong presence of opera as an art form and the availability of state funding agencies and opera companies. The choice of these provinces facilitated participation despite the pandemic restrictions, with interviews conducted through Skype, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams in adherence to social-distancing measures.

4.4.5 Exclusion criteria

Excluding opera singers from this study was a deliberate and strategic decision in order to maintain a clear and focused research objective. First and foremost, the exclusion of opera singers aligned with the defined scope and objectives of the study. By narrowing the focus to specific stakeholders within the opera industry, such as opera company managers and state funding agencies, the research aimed to delve deeply into the challenges and potential solutions that are crucial to the sustainability and future success of opera companies in South Africa. This focused approach allowed for a more in-depth exploration of the unique dynamics and issues faced by these key players. By excluding opera singers, the study prioritised the examination of organisational and funding-related challenges. Opera company managers and state funding agencies are pivotal in shaping the operational and financial landscape of these companies. Their perspectives and experiences offer valuable insights into the broader issues affecting the industry. This focused approach enabled a detailed analysis of the strategies and interventions that can be implemented to address these challenges effectively. By narrowing the scope, the study was able to allocate sufficient resources, time, and attention to thoroughly investigate the experiences, perspectives, and strategies of opera company managers and state funding agencies.

It is worth noting that this exclusion does not diminish the importance of opera singers as stakeholders in the industry. Their contributions are invaluable, and their experiences and perspectives merit separate and dedicated research. However, for the purposes of this study, a focused approach was essential to provide actionable insights into the challenges and potential solutions specific to opera companies, as viewed through the lens of opera company managers and state funding agencies.

4.5 Data analysis

This study employed a qualitative research methodology with a specific focus on thematic analysis to investigate the challenges and potential solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. Special emphasis was placed on the importance of careful data analysis, particularly when dealing with unstructured data, as noted by Leedy and Ormrod (2010). The raw data collected during interviews and the fieldnotes were considered foundational, but they required processing to ensure accurate reporting. This involved transcribing the interviews verbatim, reviewing observations, organising them, and making editorial decisions about what to include and exclude.

Data transcription is identified as the initial and critical step in qualitative data analysis, ensuring precision in capturing participants' responses (Bless et al., 2013). I meticulously transcribed the interviews, paying attention to elements such as emphasis, tone, speed, timing, and pauses, as these are crucial for interpreting the data. The interviews were conducted in English, the primary language of the research, and no challenges were reported with this data collection approach.

Following transcription, I engaged in careful listening to the recordings alongside the transcriptions to verify the accuracy and completeness of the data. Concurrently with this process, I cleaned the data and added pseudonyms to protect the identities of the participants. Any information that could potentially reveal their identities was removed. In cases where participants' names or identities could be inferred from context, they were anonymised as Participants 1, 2, and so forth to safeguard confidentiality, in accordance with the guidelines provided by Bless et al. (2013:314). The data transcripts underwent repeated reviews to ensure accuracy and to provide an overview of the gathered data. Once the transcription phase was complete, the data was considered well-prepared for the subsequent stages of analysis, as recommended by Bless et al. (2013:314).

There are different categories of data analysis, including grounded theory, cultural models, ethnographic mapping, discourse analysis, interpretive analysis, and thematic analysis. In this study, thematic analysis was chosen as the method to interpret the answers to the questions posed to the participants. This approach aims to provide a concise description of emergent phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2008; Padgett, 2017).

Thematic analysis involves interpreting findings in terms of themes and is widely used in qualitative research (Bickman & Rog, 2008). Padgett (2017) highlights that it is well-suited for interpreting themes from in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis suited this study, as it dealt with in-depth interviews that necessitated a thorough analysis of individuals' experiences. This approach was facilitated through qualitative data analysis (QDA) using the computer software package NVivo.

The thematic analysis process followed the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2008), where the researcher serves as the main instrument for coding, theming, de-contextualising, and recontextualising the gathered data. Preliminary and provisional themes were developed before arriving at the final themes. The themes that emerged are extensively discussed in Chapter 6, enabling a deeper understanding of the insights and implications of the study.

In summary, this study employed the qualitative research methodology, emphasising thematic analysis, to investigate the challenges and potential solutions for opera companies in South Africa. The careful handling of data, from transcription to analysis, ensured the accuracy and validity of the findings. The engagement with the data culminated in the emergence of themes that formed the basis for meaningful conclusions and insights in the subsequent chapters. This approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of the complexities surrounding opera companies in South Africa.

4.6 Secondary data

Secondary data played a crucial role in enhancing the depth and breadth of this research. This refers to information collected by other researchers in similar studies, even if it was not specifically targeted for the current research question (Church, 2002; Johnston, 2017). In this study, secondary data was not intended to replace primary data, but rather to complement and enrich the existing dataset. It acted as a form of triangulation, bolstering the reliability and credibility of the research findings derived from primary data (Church, 2002; Smith, 2008). Various sources of secondary data were tapped into, including government reports, and previously published academic research, such as articles, dissertations, and theses. Additionally, internal organisational documents were consulted to provide further support for the primary

data, predominantly through the literature review method outlined in Chapter 3. This comprehensive approach ensured a well-rounded understanding of the subject matter.

Moreover, looking at international literature was deemed imperative to gain a broader perspective of the challenges faced by opera companies. Examining secondary data from a global context allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of the origins and underlying causes of these challenges. The integration of secondary data was particularly beneficial in presenting viable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. By drawing on a wide array of sources, the study was able to offer a well-informed perspective on potential strategies and interventions. This not only enriched the depth of the research findings, but also provided a more robust foundation for informed decision-making in the context of opera companies.

In essence, the inclusion of secondary data in this study served to augment the research process. It provided valuable context, historical insights, and a broader understanding of the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa. By incorporating a diverse range of sources, including government reports, academic research, and organisational documents, the study was able to offer a comprehensive and well-rounded exploration of the subject matter. This, in turn, contributed significantly to the credibility and reliability of the research findings and offered practical solutions for the future of opera companies in the region.

4.7 Data interpretation

In this study, remarks and interpretation of the research were completed in relation to the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2. The interpretation was completed based on the key findings collected by using both qualitative and secondary/literature research (Bailey, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Keel, 1996). As presented in Chapter 5, the interpretation phase presents a detailed description of the results from the data analysis. The interface used during this phase was important in drawing sound conclusions and recommendations. In this research study, the integration of the data aimed to reach an accurate conclusion (Chapter 6).

4.8 Research evaluation: Trustworthiness of the study

The fundamental question to take into consideration in any qualitative research study is how to ensure a high quality of research and results. In this study, the credibility of qualitative research was established by considering its transferability, dependability, triangulation, and conformability (Creswell, 2009; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Morrow, 2005). As a result, many tools were employed to ensure the validity of this research (Brink, 1993; Sbaffi & Rowley, 2017). It employed well-established methods that are frequently used in social science research rather than solely relying on triangulation. Participant validation, also known as member checking or informed feedback, was one method of determining trustworthiness utilised in this study, by explaining to the research participants the findings of the research and soliciting their feedback.

Through this procedure, the researcher was able to determine whether the research participants agreed with the findings and recommendations – whether it reflected and complemented their participation in the study. An in-depth analysis of the differences provided in the results would have been conducted if the feedback demonstrated that the study participants' experiences were not well grasped. This would have indicated the necessity for additional data collection or the introduction of a new research methodology (Bless et al., 1995). To strengthen the credibility of the research findings, adequate verbatim quotations were used throughout the study. To make the reader more aware of the information gathered and how it was evaluated, actual quotations from the original data are included in the final section of this study (Houghton et al., 2013; Stutton & Austin, 2015; Trochim, 2006).

4.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics are a crucial consideration in all research while upholding the rights of the research participants and in upholding moral conviction and being as genuine as feasible. The following measures were considered:

- a) The researcher adhered to the university's ethical standards at all times.
- b) The purpose of the study was explained to each participant before their involvement.

- c) The researcher quoted and referenced all the reviewed papers. Everyone who took part did so voluntarily and after providing informed consent to do so.

All personal data was anonymised to safeguard the participants' identities. Protection against harm, informed consent, the right to privacy, honesty and openness were the ethical principles of this research.

4.9.1 Informed consent

Before the inception of data collection with the participants, I requested the opera company managers to permit me to conduct the research. The consent to conduct the research was approved (Appendix 2). Participants were then informed about the purpose of the research and they could decide whether they were willing to participate in it or not. These three steps were followed to ensure that accurate, satisfactory, and detailed information was obtained regarding the current challenges and to discover workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa (Pietrzykowski & Smilowska, 2021).

The information leaflet was transcribed in English on the University of Cape Town's letterhead and was made available to the participants to read carefully (Appendix 2). I also expanded on the contents of the information leaflet and described the level of participation that would be expected in terms of the study's duration and activities. After clarifying the research, the participants were asked to confirm their agreement to participate in this project with their signature and these signed forms were kept safe by me. The information leaflet also offered contact information of persons regarding ethical issues and the validity of the study.

4.9.2 Voluntary participation

The participants who took part in this research study did so voluntarily. They were informed about their right to withdraw and that they had the freedom to discontinue their participation even before the completion of the project.

4.10 Conclusion

The most suitable research methodology was adopted to enable this study to address the research questions and to reach the goals associated with the research. More

specifically, an acceptable methodology was applied to collect data for the research and suitable safeguards were put in place to assure the trustworthiness of the research outcomes. This chapter described the research design and methodology followed in the research project. The justification of the importance of the research methodologies used in this study, namely mixed methods (qualitative and secondary data), and how the methods were executed in this research, were explained and detailed.

This chapter also disclosed that two sampling methods were employed in the qualitative research method. The qualitative research method portion adopted a purposive sampling method, and in-depth interviews (IDI) were employed as the fundamental data collection tool. Data analysis involved thematic analysis using NVivo. Secondary research complemented the qualitative analysis.

The chapter was concluded with a comprehensive discussion of validity and reliability, and the ethics regarding the researcher and participants' roles and contributions.

Chapter 5: Brief overview of funding models for opera houses abroad

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 described the data collection procedure that comprised of qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The data was analysed and interpreted according to thematic analysis. As some participants referred to funding models for opera houses in the Global North, this chapter provides a brief overview of funding models for opera houses abroad. In this study, countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) were selected as they have extensive opera programmes and as many South African opera companies have developed a good working relationship with some of these opera companies.

Perhaps, it is essential to mention that although, Germany is renowned for its exemplary opera funding model, which is highly regarded in the performing arts world. However, I chose not to analyse the German funding model for opera houses for two primary reasons. First, the German model, characterised by extensive government funding, is not applicable to the South African context due to significant differences in funding structures. South Africa's opera landscape operates under different financial constraints, making the German model impractical. Instead, I focused on the funding models from the UK and the USA, as these are more relevant and adaptable to the South African environment. Second, there is limited English-language literature available on the German funding model, which further influenced my decision.

It is important to take a closer look at the selected opera houses abroad to provide some workable solutions for South African opera companies. Before discussing each country, it is important to highlight that funding models for opera houses abroad can vary widely, depending on the country, region, and specific opera house. Each opera house may have its own unique mix of funding sources and strategies to ensure its financial sustainability and artistic success. The literature review discussed the various funding models and current situations from the two selected countries abroad to recommend workable alternative models.

5.2 The UK funding model for opera houses

Opera houses in the United Kingdom have been recipients of substantial government funding over an extended period – a trend underscored by Rudland’s findings in 2023. As Harvey (2016) notes, the UK’s local government has consistently held a prominent role as a dedicated supporter of the arts and culture. This involvement can be traced back to a time before a dedicated national department for culture was created, encompassing a wide range of cultural initiatives such as public libraries, municipal galleries, music education, art festivals, and public art support. In the UK, local government funding has served as a bedrock for artistic and cultural endeavours, playing a pivotal role even before the establishment of a national entity like the Arts Council England (ACE). The financial contribution from local government has often surpassed that of ACE, emphasising the enduring commitment of local authorities to nurturing the arts at grassroots level.

ACE, as a national body, fulfils a distinctive role in supporting the arts on a broader scale, working in conjunction with local government funding. It acts as a national advocate for the arts, providing strategic support and resources to ensure the vitality of artistic and cultural expressions at national level. To elaborate, the mention of ACE in relation to local government funding is not meant to imply a direct association but to draw attention to the dual sources of support for the arts in the UK. Both ACE and local councils play complementary roles, with local government contributions standing out as a testament to the depth of commitment at the community level. This nuanced funding landscape, with both national and local entities playing critical roles, underscores the multifaceted and collaborative nature of sustaining the arts and culture in the United Kingdom.

A study conducted by Rudland (2023:63) states that performing arts organisations like opera houses continually apply for funding from ACE to receive this financial help. This entails making a case for how they meet the numerous requirements outlined by ACE to support the funding allocation. Since ACE’s Creative People and Places programme was introduced in 2013, there has been a greater focus on ‘participatory’ arts programmes for which funding has been given to organisations and people who work with communities to encourage people’s participation in creative activities.

An example from the 2017–18 season of Opera North in Leeds provides a clear illustration of the diverse funding sources on which opera houses in the UK rely. For that season, the government, particularly through ACE, played a substantial role by providing 67% of the financing, amounting to slightly over 12 million British pounds. In contrast, ticket sales contributed a relatively small proportion, accounting for just 13% of the total funding. Another noteworthy source was fundraising activities, which comprised 20% of the financial support (Rudland, 2023). This breakdown highlights the significance of government funding, as well as the need for diversified revenue streams to sustain opera houses (Rudland, 2023).

Evidently, opera houses in the UK, supported by ACE as a core funding source, have experienced notable success. The consistent backing from ACE has played a crucial role in providing stability and resources for these institutions. For instance, Daniel (2016:117) states:

Opera North itself has had recent success, with the Arts Council core funding increased to £10.4 million per year for the period between 2015 and 2018, amounting to 63% of the company's turnover. Prior to that, in 2012, the company had become a major recipient of the DCMS' 'Catalyst Endowment Fund', a donation-match funding award of £3 million.

Opera houses in the UK rely heavily on funding from ACE. This support has allowed them to maintain high artistic standards, offer diverse programming, and to engage with audiences in meaningful ways. As a result, opera houses in the UK have been able not only to survive, but to thrive in the cultural landscape, contributing significantly to the vibrant arts scene in the country. This demonstrates the positive impact of strategic funding partnerships in ensuring the longevity and prosperity of cultural institutions. ACE, which receives funds from the government, uses grants and other funding programmes to assist opera houses and other cultural institutions across the country (Daniel, 2016; Rudland, 2023).

However, it is impossible to overlook that on 17 January 2023, ACE released a report that left many opera houses such as the English National Opera and Glyndebourne Opera House devastated after the reduction of funding. In response to ACE's funding cuts, Richard Davidson-Houston, the managing director of Glyndebourne, expressed

concern. He described the broader funding settlement as devastating for many in the opera sector, which had been specifically targeted with significant cuts. The extensive budget reductions across opera houses in England have had a crippling effect on their operations, potentially leading to job losses for numerous artists. This situation underscores the profound challenges faced by the opera sector in England due to the substantial reduction in funding, with tangible repercussions for both the operational viability of these cultural institutions and the livelihoods of artists within the industry. However, while the recent report is threatening the sustainability of opera in the UK, ACE still plays an essential role in supporting the development and sustainability of opera in the UK, as well as fostering artistic excellence, innovation, and accessibility.

It is interesting to note that, in response to the shortfall in funding from ACE, opera houses, such as Opera North in Leeds, employ a range of strategic initiatives to diversify their revenue streams and ensure financial sustainability. One notable approach is the active engagement with individual donors, philanthropic organisations, and benefactors who share a profound passion for the arts. Opera North, for instance, has implemented targeted fundraising campaigns that resonate with its audience and supporters. These campaigns go beyond traditional solicitation and aim to create a sense of community and shared ownership in supporting the opera house. The ‘Support Opera North’ campaign, for example, encourages individuals to contribute to specific projects, fostering a direct connection between donors and the artistic endeavours they are supporting.

Donor recognition programs are another integral component of Opera North’s strategy. By acknowledging the generosity of individual donors, philanthropic organisations and benefactors, Opera North not only expresses gratitude but also builds lasting relationships. The opera house has established various recognition tiers, offering donors unique benefits and experiences based on the level of their contribution. This approach not only encourages ongoing support but also creates a sense of belonging among donors. Special events constitute yet another avenue for securing additional financial support. Opera North organises events that blend cultural enrichment with philanthropy, providing a platform for donors to engage with the opera house in a more intimate setting. For example, exclusive previews, behind-

the-scenes tours, and private performances for donors are innovative ways in which Opera North combines artistic experiences with opportunities for financial support.

In essence, Opera North's multifaceted approach to diversifying revenue streams serves as a compelling example of how opera houses navigate financial challenges. By actively involving the community, recognising the contributions of donors, and creating unique opportunities for engagement, Opera North exemplifies a proactive stance towards securing additional financial support beyond ACE funding.

It should be noted that, before the disbandment of the four performing arts councils in the early 1990s, South Africa's funding model for the arts shared many similarities with that of the UK. This indicates that there was a structured approach to supporting the arts, possibly involving government funding and oversight. However, it is important to recognise that the socio-political context in South Africa during that period was vastly different from that of the UK. The Apartheid era in South Africa led to a complex and deeply divided society, which undoubtedly influenced how funding was allocated and distributed for the arts. Since the disbandment of the performing arts councils, there have been shifts in funding models and strategies within South Africa's arts and culture sector, reflecting the evolving social and political landscape of the country. Understanding this historical context can provide valuable insights into the development of the arts in South Africa and shed light on how funding models have adapted over time. It also underscores the importance of considering historical and cultural factors when discussing funding and support for the arts in any country.

5.3 Funding model for opera houses in the United States of America

It is essential to foreground this section by highlighting that opera houses in the United States of America (hereafter, US) frequently rely on a variety of financial sources to maintain their operations (Auvinen, 2001; Brehm, 2017; Scorca & Rourke, 2010; Shilvock, 2002). Depending on the size, location, and financial position of an opera house, the funding strategy used in the US can change. According to the National Endowment for the Arts (hereafter, NEA) (2004), government funding in the US only makes up a small portion of total revenue in the opera houses. On average, for opera companies, it amounts to around 5–10% of the total revenue. Another 5–10% of the funding comes from business sponsorships, and another 5–10% from foundation

donations. More-or-less a quarter of total revenue comes from gifts from private investors. This was substantiated by Scorca and Rourke (2010) who pointed out that opera management in the United States grows from a unique funding structure that places the major responsibility for supporting opera companies on the private sector. In the United States, on average, opera companies earn 40% of their revenue from the sale of subscriptions and single tickets. Another 10% is earned from a variety of sources: advertisements in performance programmes, sale of merchandise at gift shops, and earnings from endowments, among others. The remaining 50% of operating revenue comes from contributions from public and private sources.

Following Scorca and Rourke's (2010) assertion, US opera houses have a unique financial model that is characterised by a higher amount of private funds and minimal government support for opera companies. Although the US have a unique funding model, Scorca and Rourke (2010) highlighted that US opera managers face a particularly difficult problem since they must strike a balance between artistic originality and financial administration, while paying particular attention to revenue generation. This is dissimilar from the scenario in Europe where general directors may spend a lot more time on purely artistic matters and a lot less time on marketing, fundraising, and general administration, thanks to large government financing resources.

Scholars such as Auvinen (2001), Brehm (2017), Scorca and Rourke (2010), and Shilvock (2002) delved into the intricate factors contributing to the funding landscape of opera in the United States (US). The historical context, marked by the nation's diverse cultural heritage and the absence of a longstanding royal patronage system, necessitated a funding structure distinct from that of many European counterparts. Cultural circumstances, encompassing the vast and varied American arts landscape, have led to a decentralisation of funding sources. Unlike some European countries where public funds play a more dominant role, the US opera sector often relies heavily on private sources, including individual philanthropy, corporate sponsorships, and foundations. Furthermore, legal frameworks, including tax incentives for charitable giving, have incentivised private individuals and organisations to contribute significantly to opera funding. This combination of historical, cultural, and legal factors has resulted in a funding model for opera in the US that places a substantial

value on private financing. Understanding these dynamics provides insights into the nuanced financial structure that supports opera in the US.

In the context of opera management in the United States, the significant reliance on ticket sales for a substantial portion of income indeed influences programming choices and poses distinctive challenges. This phenomenon is reflected in the operational dynamics of various US opera companies, with specific instances providing insights into the delicate balance required in catering to audience preferences while promoting new and innovative works. For instance, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, one of the largest and most renowned opera companies in the US, has grappled with the challenge of balancing traditional productions with more avant-garde works. The pressure to draw larger audiences and maintain a steady income stream has, at times, led the Met Opera to prioritise well-established classics that are familiar to a broad audience. High-budget productions, such as grand opera spectacles, often dominate the season lineup, reflecting a calculated strategy to appeal to a wider demographic and ensure robust ticket sales.

Conversely, smaller opera companies like The Industry in Los Angeles, known for its commitment to pushing artistic boundaries, have faced the inherent challenges of securing funding for experimental and avant-garde productions. The industry's emphasis on producing cutting-edge works that may be less familiar to traditional opera audiences has sometimes resulted in a need for diversified funding sources. The company actively seeks grants, sponsorships, and partnerships with organisations that align with their avant-garde artistic vision, allowing them to venture beyond mainstream programming.

These examples illustrate the intricate dance that US opera companies perform between meeting audience expectations for more established productions and pushing artistic boundaries with new and innovative works. The need to strike a delicate balance is palpable in the choices made by opera companies, where financial considerations play a significant role in shaping the overall programming strategy. As a result, strategic planning of seasons, careful consideration of audience appeal, and proactive pursuit of additional funding sources become essential components of successful opera management in the United States.

5.4 A lesson from the opera houses abroad and their funding models

Opera houses in both the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) grapple with similar challenges rooted in their funding models. A predominant challenge faced by these cultural institutions is the substantial reliance on ticket sales for generating revenue. This commonality not only impacts the financial aspects but also exerts a considerable influence on the artistic direction taken by these opera houses. The pressure to cater to the existing preferences of audiences, driven by the imperative to maintain a steady income stream can, at times, limit the scope for exploring more avant-garde or experimental productions.

Furthermore, the intricate task of balancing artistic originality with financial viability is particularly pronounced in the US opera landscape. Here, private financing assumes a pivotal role, necessitating a delicate equilibrium between catering to mainstream tastes to ensure financial stability and fostering an environment conducive to innovation. The challenges inherent in this dynamic underscore the complex relationship between artistic vision and fiscal responsibility.

Despite these challenges, several key takeaways emerge from the experiences of opera houses in both the US and the UK. A critical lesson involves the imperative of diversifying funding sources beyond the realm of ticket sales. Private funding channels, encompassing individual donations, corporate sponsorships, and foundation support, prove to be indispensable components for the sustained financial health of these institutions. The UK model serves as a noteworthy example, showcasing a robust public-private partnership where public funding from Arts Council England is complemented by private donations.

The US, in turn, offers insights into adaptability within a funding landscape that often features only limited government support for opera companies. This adaptability becomes a strategic necessity, highlighting the importance of proactive engagement with both public and private funding sources. Strategic planning emerges as another critical element, emphasising the need to curate seasons that strike a delicate balance between offering established classics to appease existing audiences and introducing innovative productions to captivate new ones.

Moreover, the engagement with private donors stands out as a focal point in the sustainability of opera houses. Drawing lessons from successful strategies employed by renowned institutions like the Metropolitan Opera in New York and The Industry in Los Angeles, opera houses can actively cultivate philanthropic relationships. This engagement not only secures funding for diverse productions but also establishes a sense of community ownership and support for the arts. In essence, there is a nuanced interplay between financial sustainability and artistic innovation. As these institutions navigate the complexities of their funding landscapes, the lessons learned provide valuable insights for the broader opera industry, encouraging adaptability, financial diversification, and collaborative approaches for long-term success.

There are notable parallels between the funding challenges faced by South African opera and those in the United States, including limited government support and a reliance on private funding. While recognising economic differences, lessons from the US, such as legal incentives and diversified funding strategies, can offer valuable insights for South African opera companies. The vast geographical landscapes of both countries suggest shared challenges in audience outreach and adaptability to diverse cultural contexts. Understanding mechanisms like tax incentives for charitable giving in the US may inspire similar approaches in South Africa, fostering philanthropy and contributing to the sustainability of the opera industry.

The levels of private philanthropy and corporate sponsorship available in the UK and the US cannot be replicated in South Africa. Different cultural norms and business environments also affect the availability of private funding while the stability and long-term sustainability of funding sources tend to vary. Economic, political, and social factors in South Africa may require different strategies for securing and maintaining funding.

Although there are some merits to the US funding model, the UK funding model may be more viable for South African opera companies. This is because, before 1994, the South African funding model for opera closely resembled that of the United Kingdom. Substantial state support was a hallmark of both models, with government funding playing a crucial role in sustaining opera companies. The state provided significant financial assistance to opera houses and other performing arts institutions, enabling

them to produce high-quality performances. This approach mirrored the UK's funding strategy, where government support through organisations like Arts Council of England (ACE) was pivotal in maintaining a vibrant operatic and cultural landscape. Both countries recognised the importance of state intervention in the arts to foster cultural development and ensure the accessibility of opera to a broad audience.

While there may be valuable lessons and principles that can be adopted from these funding models, it is important to recognise that a one-to-one transfer is not always feasible, especially in the South African landscape. Instead, a nuanced approach that considers the unique circumstances of the South African opera industry might be necessary to develop effective and sustainable funding strategies.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the comparison with the UK and the US landscape, it is important to acknowledge that opera companies in South Africa are already employing various strategies to diversify their revenue streams and secure additional financial support. These strategies are essential for the sustainability and growth of opera in South Africa. However, the unique socio-economic and cultural context of South Africa presents distinct challenges for opera companies. Factors such as economic disparities, historical legacies, and varying levels of cultural emphasis on opera significantly impacts on the ability of these companies to thrive. The financial constraints and limited resources in certain areas of South Africa can make it difficult for opera companies to secure consistent funding and to attract a sustainable audience base. Ultimately, while the unique challenges in South Africa are substantial, they also present opportunities for creativity, innovation, and community engagement. With the right strategies and support, opera companies can play a vital role in enriching the cultural landscape of South Africa.

This section emphasised the unique funding structure of opera houses in the UK and the US. This study highlighted the funding model of opera houses in the UK, with a primary emphasis on the pivotal role played by ACE. It showed how the UK government, particularly through ACE, has played a significant role in supporting the arts and culture on a national level by allocating substantial funding, while the local government has played a significant role over an even longer period of time through

deep engagement with the arts and culture of the various communities, and significant contributions towards their artistic endeavours. The literature showed that opera houses, for example Opera North in Leeds, often seek funding from ACE, aligning their cases with ACE's requirements. The introduction of ACE's Creative People and Places program in 2013 has enhanced the focus on participatory arts, fostering community engagement. A financial breakdown of Opera North's 2017–18 season in Leeds illustrated diverse funding sources, with ACE providing 67%, ticket sales 13%, and other fundraising activities contributing 20%. These statistics underscore the significance of government funding and the need for varied revenue streams. The study also briefly touches on the historical context of arts funding in South Africa, noting similarities with the previous model in the UK before the disbandment of performing arts councils in the early 1990s. It emphasises the importance of considering historical and cultural factors when discussing funding for the arts in any country, as socio-political contexts shape funding models and strategies over time.

The literature revealed the unique funding structure of opera houses in the US and the challenges they face in balancing artistic originality with financial administration. For instance, it points out their reliance on a diverse range of financial sources, with government funding constituting a relatively small portion. Private contributions, including sponsorships, foundation donations, and gifts from investors, play a significant role in supporting opera companies in the US. The financial model in the US stands in contrast to Europe, where larger government financing allows general directors to focus more on artistic matters and less on fundraising and administration. The distinctive funding structure in the US is attributed to historical, cultural, and legal factors, placing a substantial pressure on private funding sources.

The study also pointed out that the reliance on ticket sales for revenue significantly shapes the programming decisions of opera companies (Auvinen, 2001; Scorca & Rourke, 2010). Striking a delicate balance between satisfying existing audiences and presenting novel works is acknowledged as a complex challenge within the opera industry (Auvinen, 2001; Scorca & Rourke, 2010).

It is prudent to acknowledge that to address the unique challenges faced by opera companies in the Western Cape and Gauteng, tailored strategies are crucial.

Implementing localised funding models such as regional grants and public-private partnerships can diversify revenue sources as it is the case with the UK. Also, community engagement through outreach programmes and cultural festivals, along with innovative programming that reflects regional diversity, can boost audience development. Additionally, leveraging technology for digital engagement and virtual fundraising, coupled with capacity building through training and networking, will enhance operational effectiveness as both the UK and the US opera houses are using this model. Advocating for increased government support and mastering grant writing are also essential for sustaining and growing the opera industry in these provinces.

In considering lessons from abroad, the passage underscores that directly applying funding models from the UK or the US to the South African opera industry presents challenges due to distinct socio-economic, cultural, and institutional contexts. It acknowledges that South Africa's economic landscape, cultural heritage, and availability of resources differ significantly from these countries. As a result, a nuanced and tailored approach is advocated for developing effective and sustainable funding strategies for the South African opera industry. Chapter 6 presents the situation in South Africa as seen in the data analysis. Through comprehensive data analysis, this chapter offers a detailed examination of the funding landscape, shedding light on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by South African opera houses. By juxtaposing the Global North perspective with the South African scenario, the chapter aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the intricacies involved in sustaining opera in diverse cultural and economic contexts.

Chapter 6: Data analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the findings – Opera company managers

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the findings of the study using empirical data analysis and interpretation. As highlighted in Chapter 4, this study relied heavily on a thematic analysis to analyse and interpret the qualitative data using NVivo 12 software to analyse collected interview data from selected participants. This chapter presents the rich data assembled from the in-depth interviews. This section discusses the data that corresponds directly with the research aims and sub-aims of this study. As highlighted in Chapter 4, the data was limited to ten opera company managers working in operating opera companies and opera company managers from closed opera companies. Also, data collection was limited to four state funding agencies. The interviews, conducted over a period of six months to a year during the COVID-19 pandemic (2021–2022), involved both face-to-face and virtual sessions, depending on participants' preferences.

This section discusses the participants' interviews that resulted in emerging themes, namely: state funding policy and its impact on opera companies; political change and perceptions of opera and the performing arts; opera managers' perceptions of government's misconceptions about the opera industry; collaboration for opera companies; long-term financial planning for opera companies; benefits of community engagement in the opera industry; influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the decline of state funding; the impact of digital technology on the opera industry; and some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera scene.

6.2 Data presentation

6.2.1 State funding policy and its impact on opera companies

In 1994, South Africa underwent significant political transformations marked by the end of Apartheid. This pivotal year saw the country's first democratic elections leading to Nelson Mandela's presidency and the establishment of a new political order. The findings of this section underline the profound impact of these political changes on various sectors, including the arts. One noteworthy consequence emerged in 1996 with

a shift in state funding policies, affecting many performing arts companies. According to Roos (2010:62), the years following 1994 witnessed the dissolution of the four Performing Arts Councils, with the new government implementing different criteria and revising subsidy policies for arts productions. The restructuring of arts funding became a major challenge in the aftermath of the new dispensation. Numerous theatres and orchestras faced financial crises, with some on the verge of bankruptcy or closure. Orchestras had to either merge or adopt *ad hoc* performance models. Given the costliness of opera as an art form that is heavily reliant on institutional subsidies, local opera production companies were compelled to undergo transformations in their financial strategies.

The altered political landscape prompted a re-evaluation of cultural priorities, redirecting financial resources and support away from certain artistic endeavours. Due to the new state funding structures, opera companies were effectively forced to become private organisations responsible for generating their own income. Opera companies now had to create viable business models for their operation and survival (Roos, 2010). As a result, several opera companies faced financial constraints, reflecting the intricate relationship between political decisions and the cultural fabric of the nation. The closure of opera companies signalled not only the fiscal challenges arising from revised state funding policies, but also the broader implications for artistic expression and cultural diversity in post-Apartheid South Africa. This view is shared by several other scholars (Burdukova, 2010; Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015).

Emphasising the prolonged nature of the issue, it is important to highlight that the decline in funding for performing arts in South Africa has persisted since 1996. Companies such as Gauteng Opera and Opera South Africa, both established after 1996, along with Opera Africa, which tentatively commenced operations in 1994, have continued to grapple with significant challenges in sustaining themselves. The common thread binding these entities is the formidable struggle for survival, primarily attributable to the substantial reduction in state funding. This extended timeline of financial strain reflects the enduring and systemic nature of the challenges faced by performing arts organisations in South Africa (Burdukova, 2010; Spies, 2015). This trend not only signifies a loss for the cultural landscape but has also directly impacted the livelihoods of young opera artists who face challenges in finding consistent

employment. The closure of these orchestras, including the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO), New Arts Philharmonic Orchestra Pretoria (NAPOP), Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB) orchestra, Cape Town Symphony Orchestra (CTSO), and the National Chamber Orchestra (NCO), had a ripple effect on the broader arts community. This includes musicians, singers, directors, costume designers, and many others who contribute to the production of opera. It underscores the need for a sustainable and supportive environment for the arts, including adequate funding and resources. This section delves into the intricate interplay between political decisions, funding policies, and the challenges faced by the country's operatic landscape during this transformative period.

This is substantiated by an observation by Participant 3 who highlights a specific example of the negative consequences of declining government funding for opera companies:

Let me start by highlighting that the opera industry often faces challenges related to funding, and when government support diminishes, it can have a significant impact on the sustainability of opera companies. For instance, Gauteng Province used to have lovely opera companies that absorbed young opera graduates into the industry. However, due to the decline of government funding, the companies were unable to cover their expenses, and this led to the closure of these companies. Government funding is essential for supporting the arts, as it allows opera companies to cover their expenses, provide opportunities for young opera graduates, and continue their cultural contributions to society. When funding declines, our companies struggle to maintain operations, pay performers and staff, stage productions, and promote events. We ended up closing and this meant job losses for artists, musicians, administrative staff, and other professionals involved in the industry. It can also limit the prospects for young opera graduates who were previously absorbed into the industry.

Similarly, Participant 5 indicates that:

Most [of the opera companies] had to terminate ... operations due to lack of funding, leaving many young opera artists unemployed. Hence, we do not have stable opera companies around Gauteng Province.

Likewise, Participant 2 mentions that “the present state funding is insufficient for opera companies to cover all their monthly expenses”. Participant 7 reveals that “opera companies have been significantly bedridden as government and private donations dry up”. The insights shared by participants offer a comprehensive view of the formidable challenges confronting the opera industry in Gauteng Province. The continuous decline in government funding emerges as a central theme, with participants’ narratives highlighting repercussions that extend beyond immediate job losses for opera professionals to restricted training opportunities for emerging opera graduates. This complex array of challenges paints a vivid picture of the broader struggles faced by the opera sector in navigating financial constraints.

Also, one should not overlook the contribution of the performing arts to the wider economy and cultural provision enriches the narrative. Economically, the performing arts play a substantial role in job creation, tourism, as well as the overall cultural economy (Spies, 2015). Beyond employment generation, the sector attracts audiences, contributing to tourism and related industries. The cultural and creative sectors also serve as catalysts for innovation and entrepreneurship, fostering economic growth and sustainability. Culturally, the performing arts are rightly positioned as integral to the societal fabric, providing platforms for creative expression, cultural exchange, and community engagement. They play a pivotal role in shaping collective identity and heritage, fostering understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. Access to the performing arts enhances the quality of life for individuals and communities, fostering creativity, empathy, and a shared sense of belonging. In recognising and valuing these contributions, it becomes evident that supporting the performing arts transcends mere investment in artistic expression. Instead, it is a critical investment in the overall well-being and vibrancy of society. This underscores the importance of sustaining a thriving cultural ecosystem that benefits both the economy and the public.

On the same note, Participant 1 explains:

One of the big challenges facing opera companies now is the decline of the state funding for the opera industry, while opera companies do not, and never have, sustained themselves through ticket sales, and the funding decline for the opera industry has contributed to the closure of many opera companies in South Africa. In South Africa, opera companies rely on patronage donations to cover their expenses and unfortunately, not all of us [opera companies] receive such generosity from individuals. Hence, many opera companies have terminated their operations.

The pressing issue confronting opera companies in South Africa revolves around the declining availability of state funding. This challenge is compounded by the inherent difficulty these companies face in generating sufficient revenue solely from ticket sales. Instead, their financial sustainability hinges significantly on the generosity of patrons who contribute donations to cover operational expenses. The observation made by P1 resonates with Spies (2015), who emphasises the substantial challenge posed by this reliance on patronage, given that not all opera companies receive the necessary financial support from individuals. This financial vulnerability underlines the precarious position of the opera industry, intensifying its reliance on external support, particularly from government sources. The consequence of this persistent shortfall in state funding is glaringly apparent in the closure of numerous opera companies across South Africa. This not only leaves a void in the cultural landscape but also triggers far-reaching effects on the livelihoods of associated artists, musicians, and professionals. The insights from Olivier (2014), Spies (2015), and Yende (2021) collectively emphasise the wide-ranging impact of the funding challenges, highlighting the interconnectedness of the opera sector with the broader artistic community.

In essence, the financial struggles of opera companies, underscored by a shortage in government funding, create a ripple effect that extends well beyond the confines of individual organisations. The closure of these entities not only diminishes the richness of the cultural tapestry but also disrupts the careers and livelihoods of those dedicated to the art form. This interconnectedness reinforces the urgency of addressing the

financial vulnerabilities faced by opera companies and cultivating a sustainable ecosystem that ensures the continued vibrancy of the arts in South Africa.

Participant 6 states that:

I think I should say that opera is one of the most complex art forms worldwide and requires great state funding. Unfortunately, a sad difficulty is that the government has not seen fit to sustain funding for opera companies in a proper way. To work properly, opera companies need to be funded on an ongoing basis. Hence, I think the biggest challenge for opera is to get some sustainable government funding.

Contextualising the participant's response within the South African funding landscape becomes imperative. Participant 6's statement adeptly articulates the intricate financial dynamics surrounding opera as an art form in South Africa. The participant highlights that opera stands as one of the most elaborate and demanding artistic expressions in the country, requiring substantial financial backing for its sustenance. Expressing concern, the participant laments the insufficient allocation of funding by the government for opera companies, highlighting a notable gap in sustained financial support crucial for their ongoing operations. This sentiment echoes the broader challenges faced by the opera sector in securing the necessary resources to thrive. The participant's perspective sheds light on the nuanced relationship between the intricate nature of opera as an art form and the critical need for robust financial support, emphasising the impact of funding decisions on the viability of opera in South Africa.

Government funding, while significant, is often supplemented by other revenue streams. This aligns with both local (Burdukova, 2010; Spies, 2015; Yende & Mugovhani, 2021) and international literature (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Florea, 2014) demonstrating that government funding is a substantial but not sole source of support for opera companies. Agid and Tarondeau (2010) affirms that many opera companies around the world receive funding from a combination of sources, including government subsidies, private donations, ticket sales, grants, and corporate sponsorships.

Participant 4 highlights that “since we are not fully subsidised by the government, we rely on some form of private sources to sustain performances. However, private funding is also on the declining scale”. According to the opera company manager’s statement, in the absence of complete government subsidies, they have to rely on private funding, but private funding is also experiencing a decline. This indicates a dual challenge for opera companies in South Africa in terms of both public and private financial support. Olivier (2014) and Spies (2015) mention that private sponsorships for opera companies in South Africa have been diminishing, resulting in the closure of opera companies.

Gobbato cited in Roos (2010:64–65) explains:

With the Government’s declining to increase the total amount of funding available for the performing arts and assigning the entire budget for this funding to a body known as the National Arts Council while permitting any and all performing groups to apply for [...] funding, it hardly came as a surprise that Cape Town Opera was at first refused any form of funding from this national source. Even now, after many applications and evidence of job creation for underprivileged communities, Cape Town Opera receives an amount of less than 5% of its total annual budget from national sources.

The qualitative findings from this study align cohesively with insights drawn from both local and international literature, providing a comprehensive understanding of the financial landscape facing opera companies. The evidence underscores that a decline in state funding contributes significantly to the array of financial challenges confronting many opera companies (Florea, 2014; Spies, 2015). This correlation between qualitative findings and broader literature accentuates the global nature of the issue, emphasising that opera companies, irrespective of geographical location, grapple with financial hurdles when faced with diminishing state support.

The financial support that the state allocates to opera companies is intricately linked to a combination of factors, including the government’s priorities, economic conditions, and societal perceptions of the value and significance of opera as an art form. The state’s budgetary decisions reflect its overarching priorities and the prevailing economic landscape. Consequently, variations in state funding for opera are

often influenced by shifts in these priorities and economic circumstances. Examining this scenario through the lens of social constructivism provides a nuanced understanding of the connection between the reduction in state funding and the potential closure of opera companies. Social constructivism emphasises the impact of interpersonal relationships, cultural contexts, and shared meanings on individuals' perceptions and behaviour. In the realm of opera funding, it highlights how societal views, norms, and values play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics and viability of these cultural organisations.

As societal beliefs and values evolve, there may be a corresponding shift in the distribution of state finances, impacting the level of financial support extended to opera companies. The reduction in state funding can be seen as a complex interplay between changing societal perspectives on the importance of opera and the allocation of resources by the state. In this context, social constructivism offers a framework to comprehend not only the financial aspects but also the cultural and societal forces influencing the fate of opera companies. The overarching premise is that the financial sustainability of opera companies is not solely determined by economic factors but is deeply intertwined with the broader sociocultural context. By recognising the intricate relationships between state funding, societal beliefs, and the viability of opera organisations, stakeholders can better navigate the challenges posed by fluctuations in financial support, ultimately contributing to the resilience and continued cultural significance of opera as an art form.

6.2.2 Political change and perceptions of opera and the performing arts

The evolving perspectives from participants indicate that, following the political changes post-1994, the government initially expressed strong commitment to supporting diverse art forms, including opera. The Government White Paper Policy of 1996, reflective of the post-Apartheid ethos, explicitly promised backing for cultural expressions, emphasising the importance of nurturing creativity and sustaining artistic endeavours. This commitment was particularly emphasised in White Paper Article 16, Chapter 4 on the Performing Arts Councils, stating:

Accordingly, the PAC needs to be restructured to preserve the infrastructure and skills developed over decades, aligning their activities with the artistic and

cultural priorities established by the NAC and the general objectives of the Government.

However, as time progressed, a significant shift occurred in 1996, marking a pivotal moment where the initial assurances faced challenges (Olivier, 2014). Explored in section 6.2.1, the optimism surrounding government support for the arts encountered obstacles, and the promises outlined in the 1996 Government White Paper were not fully realised. This shift set the stage for the diminishing government support discussed in the subsequent sections. This underscores the complex dynamics surrounding government support and its actual impact on the opera sector, emphasising the need for a nuanced examination of the political and funding landscape to understand the challenges faced by these cultural entities. This view is substantiated by numerous scholars who affirm that despite the government's strong advocacy for redressing historical imbalances in South African arts and culture, opera companies have faced significant challenges in sustaining their operations (Mugovhani, 2012; Smith, 2022; Spies, 2015). The argument that funding opera can contribute to redressing historical imbalances is grounded in the acknowledgement of opera as a historically Eurocentric art form that was used for marginalised indigenous and diverse cultural expression. However, the limited funding allocated to support opera has made it difficult for this goal to be achieved.

Despite the government's intentions, the actual allocation of resources to support opera companies did not match the rhetoric, resulting in ongoing difficulties for the sector. Participant 6's assertion in stating, "the changes that took place in 1994 in the arts sector contributed to the closure of the opera companies in South Africa", aligns with the argument presented in section 6.2.1. It underscores the unintended negative consequences of political shifts and policy changes on the viability and sustainability of opera companies. This reinforces the notion that the reforms introduced in 1994 had a notable impact on the opera sector, contributing to its challenges rather than fostering its growth as initially intended. The consistency in perspectives highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of the relationship between political changes and the arts.

Participant 4 articulates:

A sad occurrence that took place in 1994 contributed to the closure of opera companies in South Africa ... was when the previous state-funded performing arts councils were disbanded. During this time, funding of the opera companies was reduced and unfortunately, opera companies could not sustain themselves and had to shut down.

Participant 5 agrees that “with the change of political dispensation in 1994, the survival of the opera industry in South Africa during and after the extensive political changes has been extremely difficult due to various reasons”. This view is consistent with Roos’s observations that, during 1994, opera in South Africa faced adversity as the financial structures supporting production through the PACs underwent a significant shift. By 1996, all four PACs were notified that the existing structures would be supplanted by a National Arts Council (NAC), and in 1998, all funding channels established by the pre-1994 government were slated to discontinue (Roos, 2010). As noted in the White Paper article 21, Chapter 4 on the Performing Arts Councils:

The PACs will receive declining subsidies from central government as transfer of payments over the next three years. At the end of this period, the government will subsidise the core infrastructure, core staff and essential activities of the PACs. All other locations will be funded through the NAC. This will require them to diversify their funding base as well as to restructure their ticketing policies. Additionally, the companies associated with performing arts councils, like all other performing arts organisations, will be able to apply to the NAC for grants-in-aid. This shift in funding signals the transformation of the PACs from virtually free-standing production houses to becoming infrastructure accessible to all. The process of change will be complete by the year 2000 and will be assisted by the resources of the NAC and Ministry.

Half of the participants (five out of ten) express that the changes in 1994 were a challenging period, and that the operations of opera companies have been affected ever since. The transition to a democratic government is described as a profound shift in state power, influenced by the history that preceded it. Many achievements of the previous government, particularly in the arts, were viewed with suspicion by the new

government. However, if a democratic government places a high value on preserving cultural heritage, fostering artistic expression, and embracing diversity, it may opt to support opera through public funding. As an art form with a profound history, opera significantly contributes to a society's cultural foundation, providing employment opportunities for artists, nurturing artistic creativity, and delivering a unique and immersive experience to audiences.

The literature review underscores the immense importance of opera in South Africa, shedding light on its profound impact on the nation's diverse cultural heritage and its historical role in promoting racial unity (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). Examining the cultural landscape of the 2000s, Musa Xulu's pioneering work, particularly *Ubuntu, Togetherness in Harmony*, emerges as a significant example. Xulu's innovative productions not only showcased the technical brilliance of performance (opera) but also positioned it as a powerful tool for cultural expression and collaboration among diverse racial and ethnic groups.

It is evident that by bringing together artists from different backgrounds, these performances transcended racial boundaries, offering a shared space for artistic expression. Moreover, the Apartheid era witnessed groundbreaking collaborations in productions like *Porgy and Bess*, where black and white artists collaborated against the backdrop of institutionalised segregation. This historical context illuminated opera's unique ability to serve as a catalyst for promoting racial harmony. The shared creative endeavour of these productions challenged societal norms, providing a tangible example of how opera can break down barriers between different communities.

Recognising the historical contributions of opera to fostering intercultural understanding, it becomes evident that the art form has played an important role in shaping South Africa's narrative. These instances of artistic collaboration and cultural exchange reveal the potential of opera as a dynamic force for social change. Consequently, investing in opera aligns seamlessly with the principles of social constructivism theory, emphasising the importance of dismantling barriers and establishing inclusive spaces within the arts industry (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015).

Recognising the potential of opera to contribute to South Africa's cultural fabric and promote inclusivity, a strategic increase in state funding becomes imperative. By actively supporting opera, the government can play a crucial role in creating an environment where diverse voices and cultural expressions thrive, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and dynamic arts community in South Africa. This aligns with the overarching argument in the thesis that emphasises the importance of sustained government support for the opera sector amid observed funding declines.

6.2.3 Opera managers' perceptions of government's misconceptions about the opera industry

This section delves into the perspectives of opera managers regarding what they perceive as government's misconceptions about the opera industry. It explores how these professionals, intimately involved in the day-to-day operations of opera companies, interpret and respond to the policies and attitudes emanating from government. By shedding light on these perceptions, the section aims to provide insight regarding potential gaps in understanding between the government and the opera sector. Through interviews with opera managers, the narrative unfolds to reveal the nuanced dynamics of how government decisions impact on and, in the eyes of these managers, sometimes misunderstand the intricacies of the opera industry.

The primary misconception stems from a historical belief that opera primarily caters to the white population. As a result, many influential politicians do not view opera as an art form worthy of state funding. While the opera managers' perspectives provide valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge that the state funding agencies have a more nuanced view of the situation. Their considerations involve a range of factors, including budget allocations, policy priorities, and assessments of the broader cultural landscape. This will be discussed in detail in the section on funding agencies in this study. However, it is important to approach this issue critically and to consider multiple viewpoints to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

Participant 3 states:

I will tell you why opera companies are struggling with government funding. One of the significant challenges we are currently facing is the perception of

the government towards opera. Most politicians do not see opera as an art form that is worthy of state funding because they have believed for many years that opera is for the white class population.

Similarly, Participant 5 indicates that “most of our politicians in parliament see opera as an art form that belongs to the Apartheid period rather than the art form”. Likewise, Participant 1 indicates:

I do not believe that the decline of state funding for the opera industry has anything to do with the economy. It is just the wrong perception of the government towards opera. For instance, if we compare the funding for opera with another genre such as Hip-hop or another African genre, opera comes last to be funded.

On the same note, Participant 7 explains:

The reason why the opera industry is struggling financially is because of the government’s perception towards opera. Most of them do not like opera as they have a wrong understanding of it. Hence, they will never come to theatres, but they do support other genres and even go to their concerts. I will never expect funding for opera companies to increase until I see the government being at the forefront towards supporting the success of opera.

The participants in the interviews collectively highlight a common theme regarding the challenges faced by opera companies in securing government funding. They all emphasise that the primary obstacle lies in the negative and incorrect perception held by politicians towards opera as an art form. The participants argue that this perception has persisted over the years, leading to a reluctance among politicians to allocate state funding to opera. Specifically, they note that many politicians view opera as an art form catering primarily to the white class or as something associated with the Apartheid period, rather than recognising its cultural and artistic value. This perception, according to the participants, has resulted in opera receiving less financial support compared to other genres like Hip-hop or African music. These findings are supported by Olivier (2014), while Spies (2015) affirms that the government’s poor perception

also occurs with orchestra and ballet as the performing arts struggle to obtain state funding.

Participant 7 underscores that this negative perception extends to politicians' lack of attendance at opera events, with most of them preferring other genres over opera performances. It is evident that participants contend that the decline in government funding for opera companies is primarily due to the government's misconceptions and biases regarding opera. They stress that, without a change in this perception and a more proactive government stance in supporting opera, financial struggles within the opera industry are likely to persist.

Participant 6 declares that:

If government was to change their perception towards opera, I am convinced that funding for opera companies would improve. You cannot expect private or external stakeholders to fund opera companies if the government does not fund it.

Seven research participants indicated that funding would continue to decline unless the government's perception is adjusted. Based on the findings, it is clear that government politicians' misunderstanding, and wrong perception of the opera industry emanates from their own lack of interest in opera, ballet or classical music. Thus, opera companies continue to experience a funding decline in the country.

6.2.4 Collaboration for opera companies

6.2.4.1 Collaboration with other entities

The premise of this study suggests that opera companies can explore short-term approaches to boost their revenue. Some of the short-term financial planning strategies highlighted include collaboration with other entities and diversifying performance venues, such as hosting events and performing in stadiums and unconventional spaces. These findings align with both local (Spies, 2015:33) and international literature (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Shilvock, 2002) demonstrating that opera companies can host special events, such as galas, fundraisers, or themed performances, to generate additional income. These events can attract patrons who

may not typically attend opera and provide an opportunity to showcase the company's talent in unique ways.

It is interesting to note that Participant 1 mentions:

In our company, we have developed short-term financial planning for surviving and this involves exploring various revenue-generating opportunities and adapting to new circumstances. We are currently collaborating, and diversifying performance venues as our strategy to help our company address financial challenges and expand their reach. We have also considered touring to other cities or regions to perform in different venues and attract new audiences. Outreach performances in schools, community centres, and public spaces can also help raise awareness and generate goodwill.

This view is supported by Participant 3:

As part of our short-term strategy, we are developing short-term collaboration with sports organisations ... is a very important strategy for increasing resources for opera companies in South Africa.

Responding to the question, Participant 6 asserts that:

Each opera company's short-range collaboration will depend on its unique goals, resources, and audience demographics. For us, we seek out creative and strategic collaborations, this has helped us to enhance our outreach, build meaningful relationships with audiences online, and ultimately contribute to the sustainability and growth of the opera company.

Participant 7 states:

As for us, short-range collaborations are valuable strategies that help us to ensure success and prepare for the future. We have decided to collaborate with local businesses, such as restaurants, cafes, and hotels, to host joint events or performances. This has assisted us to attract new audiences to the opera and promote the business's services. In addition to attracting new audiences, this collaboration helped us in building stronger ties with the local community and

foster a sense of cultural exchange. We are hoping that this will lead to potential sponsorship opportunities or partnerships for future performances.

Another interesting response is from Participant 8:

We aim to collaborate with local composers, because the truth of the matter is, we know what's out there, the more than we know our own. That's true. Also, having said that, in the collaboration, we also need access to music, we need access to this music. Yes, there's rules there's, there's ways to go about it in terms of the rights and all those abilities not there. Collaboration with local composers not only enriches the opera repertory, but also strengthens the link between the opera industry and South Africa's cultural heritage. It provides an opportunity to develop significant and relevant musical expressions that resonate with local audiences, while promoting South African composers' skills on the international arena.

According to Participant 6:

Each opera company's short-range collaboration will depend on its unique goals, resources, and audience demographics. For us, we seek out creative and strategic collaborations, this has helped us to enhance our outreach, build meaningful relationships with audiences online, and ultimately contribute to the sustainability and growth of the opera company.

Also, Participant 9 says that:

Our short-term collaboration is to start touring and offering opera performances in various community setups. I think taking opera to humble communities where most of our opera stars come from can have a profound impact on broadening access to the art form and fostering cultural appreciation. Touring in humble communities will allow us to reach audiences who may not have had previous exposure to opera. Introducing them to this art form can enrich their cultural experiences and broaden their understanding of diverse art forms. I think touring in humble communities to offer opera presents a unique opportunity to enrich lives through the arts and promote cultural exchange. By sharing the beauty of opera with diverse

audiences, you contribute to the growth and preservation of this remarkable art form, while fostering a stronger and more inclusive arts community. We are planning to have concert performances as we believe it is more efficient and less expensive than setup an opera production from scratch.

Participant 10 motivates:

Our short-term collaboration has already started where we are working with different industries such as hospitality and we want to expand this by working with sports to create an attractive sponsorship package, enticing businesses and corporations to support the event financially.

The participants provide valuable insight concerning the short-term financial planning and collaboration in the opera industry. For instance, Participants 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10 point out that their companies have already adopted short-term strategies. These participants also highlight the potential benefits of short-term collaborations with sports organisations to increase resources for opera companies in South Africa. Participant 7 discusses their collaboration with local businesses like restaurants, cafes, and hotels to host joint events or performances. This approach not only attracts new audiences, but also strengthens ties with the local community. Participant 8 emphasises the value of collaborating with local composers to enrich the opera repertoire and promote South Africa's cultural heritage.

Participants also mention the importance of creative and strategic collaborations to enhance outreach and build meaningful relationships with audiences online, contributing to the sustainability and growth of the opera company. It is interesting to note that Participant 10 highlights ongoing collaborations with industries like hospitality, expressing a desire to expand by working with sports to create an attractive sponsorship package, encouraging financial support from businesses and corporations. The participants emphasise the diverse approaches and partnerships that opera companies in South Africa are adopting to address financial challenges and expand their reach. These strategies range from venue diversification, community outreach, composer collaborations, and industry partnerships, all with the goal of ensuring short-term success and preparing for the future.

Participant 2:

I would say, it is essential for opera companies to carefully select collaborations that align with their mission and goals, and to communicate effectively to maximise the benefits of these short-term partnerships. These collaborations have helped our opera company before to expand our audience base, increase community engagement, and strengthen our financial resources, contributing to our long-term sustainability and growth. Also, collaborating with restaurants, hotels, or cafes to host opera-themed dinners or performances can create a captivating and memorable experience for guests. This collaboration brings together the pleasures of fine dining with the enchantment of live opera, appealing to both seasoned opera enthusiasts and newcomers to the art form.

Participant 4:

This is a crucial question for us opera companies in South Africa. To generate more revenue and engage with audience, we have opted for collaboration and hosting events in alternative venues like restaurants and other public spaces can be effective ways to achieve these goals. In our company, we believe that performing in alternative venues like restaurants and public spaces opens opportunities to reach audiences who may not typically attend traditional opera performances. This can lead to increased ticket sales and expanded audience engagement. Also, as part of our short-range collaboration, we have decided that after the pandemic, we will have events hosted in alternative venues that can offer unique and intimate experiences for the audience, creating memorable moments that encourage repeat attendance and word-of-mouth promotion.

Participant 5:

Let me point out that sports organisations in our country have strong connections with sponsors, which can open new sponsorship opportunities for opera companies. This can provide additional financial support for the production. This is one of the valuable short-term collaborations to co-

productions with sports organisations. This can be a valuable short-term strategy for opera companies, especially in attracting new and diverse audiences to the theatre. For me, this collaboration is essential in creating a unique and innovative experience that blends the worlds of sports and opera, breaking traditional barriers and attracting a broader audience base.

Participants 2, 4, and 5 all emphasise the importance of strategic collaborations for opera companies. These findings are corroborated by Agid and Tarondeau (2010), Shilvock (2002) and Spies (2015) who state that collaboration is the catalyst for the opera industry's growth, innovation, and sustainability. Collectively, opera companies can maximise their resources, broaden their audiences, and stage works that will be remembered by audiences. It is interesting to note that Participant 2 highlights the need for opera companies to choose collaborations that align with their mission and to communicate effectively to maximise benefits. This participant also believes that collaborating with restaurants, hotels, or cafes to host opera-themed events is important, creating a captivating experience for guests, and appealing to a wider audience.

Participant 4, with a specific focus on South Africa, highlights the importance of hosting events in unconventional venues such as restaurants and public spaces. This strategy is seen as a means to not only generate revenue but also to connect with a broader audience. The participant asserts that exploring non-traditional opera venues creates opportunities to engage with individuals who may not typically attend opera events, ultimately resulting in heightened ticket sales and increased audience participation. In a similar vein, Participant 5 suggests forging partnerships with sports organisations to provide financial support for opera productions. It is evident that by leveraging the established relationships that sports organisations have with sponsors and audiences, this approach is considered a practical avenue for securing funding. Yende (2017) advocates for strategic collaborations between opera and sports organisations as a short-term approach to attract a diverse audience and secure funding for theatres. This involves blending the realms of sports and opera to create a unique and compelling cultural experience.

Yende supports various collaborative avenues, including alternative venues and partnerships with sports organisations, emphasising their distinct advantages for the growth and sustainability of South African opera companies. This dual strategy involves diversifying performance spaces and integrating sports elements into opera, offering a novel and appealing cultural experience (Yende, 2017). These insights are substantiated by the research of Shilvock (2002) and Spies (2015) who both emphasise the essential nature of collaboration for opera companies, citing benefits such as audience expansion, increased community engagement, and enhanced financial resources. The consistent thread across these findings underlines the consensus on the positive impact of collaboration as a strategic approach for opera companies to address financial challenges and to fortify their long-term viability.

6.2.4.2 Collaborations with other opera companies

Agid and Tarondeau (2010) explains that co-productions are an increasingly valuable form of collaborative cooperation among opera companies worldwide. The short-term collaboration focuses on the intersection of entertainment performance and sport to develop funds. For instance, many performing arts activities are used for the opening of ceremonies, such as the Olympics, and the FIFA World Cup, among others. This can even be adopted by the local sports events instead of using background music. This view is also supported by Bowers and Wilkins (2021), who affirm that opera performance and sports can be powerful together.

Through this short-term collaboration, opera companies can improve their revenues and increase engagement with the different other organisations as a short-term strategy in two ways: (1) looking to diversify involvement by attracting a wider range of audience than those they already attract, and (2) broadening involvement by attracting larger audiences into theatre. It is also important to acknowledge that the Cape Town Opera has been involved in other collaborations in South Africa. Hence, it can operate even with shrinking government support. This can be well-managed when a clear relationship is established with sports departments or organisations.

Participant 8 states:

Also, we have started doing concerts in gardens, people's houses, and restaurants as part of our excellent initiatives for audience development in the opera industry. We believe that embracing alternatives and intimate performance spaces allows opera companies to reach new and diverse audiences and fosters a deeper connection with the community. Performing in smaller venues like gardens and houses creates an intimate and immersive experience for the audience, enhancing their connection with the music and performers. While funding remains an important part of supporting opera companies, audience development activities such as performances in gardens, houses, and restaurants can help to recruit new sponsors, build a dedicated community of opera aficionados, and ensure long-term financial stability. Opera companies may thrive and evolve in an ever-changing cultural milieu by establishing a balance between financial efforts and audience participation.

Embracing alternative and intimate performance spaces can be a game-changer in engaging new audiences and building a deeper sense of community. Participant 8 believes that performing in gardens, houses, and restaurants offers a unique and personal experience that can be incredibly compelling for audiences. This closeness to the performers and the music can create lasting memories and a strong sense of connection. This approach to audience development is not only about providing memorable experiences, but also about ensuring the financial sustainability of opera companies. Evidently, by diversifying performance venues and engaging with different audiences, it opens opportunities for new sponsors and dedicated supporters. This holistic approach can help opera companies navigate the challenges of the ever-changing cultural landscape.

6.2.5 Long-term financial planning for opera companies

This study concludes that the inability of audiences to afford ticket prices and the inability of opera companies to acquire new audiences quickly contribute to the decline of earned income for opera companies. This could be attributed to the deteriorating economy of the country that has left many having to face unemployment, as well as the

rising cost of living. While costs for productions and tickets continue to increase, audience size and individual donations remain mostly constant (Brehm, 2017).

This study concludes that opera productions pose a notable financial challenge as they are inherently expensive, and as relying solely on ticket sales frequently falls short of covering these substantial costs. The complexity of this financial burden arises from various factors, encompassing high production costs, expenses related to marketing and promotion, artistic and creative expenditures, shifting priorities within the industry, economic influences, and the heightened competition for funding. This multifaceted nature underscores the intricate financial landscape that opera companies navigate, emphasising the need for diverse funding sources and strategic financial management to ensure the sustained vitality of this artistic form. Given these challenges, many participants mention that opera companies must adopt long-term financial planning as they struggle to generate sustainable income from government subsidies. When opera companies have an appropriate and long-term financial plan in place, this can assist them to continue to function during difficult times in the industry. Given the funding challenges, many participants mention that opera companies must adopt long-term financial planning and look for alternative income streams, for example:

Participant 1:

Long-term planning is essential for us as it helps our company to remain relevant in the opera industry. This has also helped us to foresee the future and prepare for it in a practical approach as opposed to being reactive. Also, planning for the long term ensures financial stability by creating realistic budget projections, diversifying revenue sources, and identifying potential cost-saving measures. This has helped us to create a solid foundation for their financial stability and resilience. These strategies allow them to navigate financial challenges, adapt to changing market conditions, and continue fulfilling their artistic mission for years to come.

Participant 2:

For me, long-range financial planning is essential as this involves creating a comprehensive financial strategy that extends beyond the immediate year and looks several years into the future. Long-range financial planning assists opera companies with cash flow by securing funds before the season of the production starts and allows the artistic team more flexibility in selecting repertory. Also, opera companies can become more proactive, strategic, and financially resilient by incorporating long-term financial planning into their operations. Opera companies may focus on their artistic vision, prepare ambitious shows, and create unforgettable experiences for their audiences, while preserving a healthy cash flow and financial sustainability by securing funding in advance.

Participant 3:

I also believe that as opera industry, we must build a long-term relationship with prestigious private funders such as the ABSA, SASOL, and National Lotteries Commission among other organisations, with this kind of relationship and exposure ... will help us to have a long financial stability, while gaining further visibility and business opportunities for years to come.

Correspondingly, Participant 4 believes that it is essential for opera companies to develop long-term financial strategies to ensure that the industry survives:

To be honest with you, in this era where opera companies are financially crushed, it is important for us [opera companies] to have a solid plan to ensure that we survive. The harsh truth is that the industry is changing every day. Therefore, opera companies need to have long-term financial planning, and this will determine whether we will survive in the future or not. For instance, we can better position ourselves to weather financial challenges, capitalise on opportunities, and succeed in a dynamically changing market by establishing a thorough long-term financial plan. Adaptability, creativity, and a commitment to artistic excellence are critical components of a long-term plan that ensures opera companies continue to enhance the cultural landscape and

deliver the wonder of opera to audiences for future generations. This can possibly enhance our financial revenues.

In response to the question of long-term planning, Participant 5 states:

We believe that long-term financial planning is critical for the opera industry's sustainability and resilience, especially during difficult times in the country. Opera firms may better navigate economic changes and unforeseen catastrophes by implementing appropriate financial strategies and establishing a sound financial basis. Long-term financial planning, we feel, aids opera companies in establishing and maintaining a healthy financial position. Opera firms can reduce financial risks and preserve financial stability even during periods of economic instability by successfully managing resources. Opera organisations can anticipate and prepare for anticipated obstacles and catastrophes by developing a long-term financial plan. Contingency plans can be put in place to deal with unexpected circumstances, ensuring that the company's operations and mission are not jeopardised.

Participant 6 admits that long-term financial planning is essential:

We are a small opera company performing seasonally, for us long-term financial planning is essential, as it provides us with the foundation for financial stability and consistent artistic achievement. We should not ignore that opera in its nature is a complex and resource-intensive art form because it involves not only talented opera singers, but also intricate sets, costumes, and orchestral accompaniment. As such, it requires careful and strategic financial management to sustain and flourish over time.

Participant 7 mentions that the issue of the economic crisis has led to reduced public and private funding for the arts:

In the current economic market and funding decline for opera companies, we must understand and embrace long-term planning to ensure that we have a successful artistic integrity and financial improvement. For me, long-range financial planning is crucial for the sustainability and success of South African opera companies, especially in the face of declining government funding. We

are now attempting to build a strong relationship with major donors who are passionate about the arts and have the capacity to make significant contributions. I believe that cultivating strong connections with these individuals will lead to substantial financial support over the long term.

According to Participant 8:

As our long-range financial planning, we want to create multi-year financial plans and budgets that align with their artistic and organisational goals. This will also provide us with a clear roadmap for financial sustainability and helps in identifying potential challenges in advance.

Participant 10 states that:

Our long-range financial planning for our company is to keep strong relationships with different industries to ensure that we have a sustainable industry in our country. We would further engage retailing sports stores for long-term financial support. I believe that the opera industry can build a strong financial basis for the future by taking a deliberate and diverse approach to finance and cultivating long-term ties with many industries. Collaboration with retailing sports stores and other businesses will not only provide financial support, but it will also improve links between the artistic community and the corporate sector, fostering a sustainable and dynamic cultural landscape in South Africa.

It is interesting to note that participants unanimously stress the importance of long-term financial planning for opera companies. They highlight benefits such as ensuring future relevance and preparedness, establishing a solid financial foundation through realistic budgeting, securing funds ahead of productions, enabling proactive and strategic approaches, and building resilient relationships with funders. It is viewed as a foundational tool for sustainability, particularly for a resource-intensive art form like opera. Finally, participants emphasise the value of collaboration with different industries for long-term financial support and the need for alignment with artistic and organisational goals in multi-year financial plans. Collaboration with retailing sports

stores and other businesses not only provides financial backing, but it also strengthens ties between the artistic community and the corporate sector.

Both local and international literature supports the findings that engaging in long-term planning and crafting strategic responses to address resource dependency is crucial for the sustainability of opera companies (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Burdukova, 2010; Shilvock, 2002). This approach involves carefully analysing financial aspects and developing strategies to either increase revenue or manage expenses effectively. By doing so, opera companies can work towards closing the earnings gap and ensuring their long-term viability and success.

Participants 4, 5, and 7 highlight the inherent unpredictability associated with heavy reliance on government funding and donations, which are subject to political and economic shifts. Specifically, government allocations for the arts can fluctuate based on evolving political agendas and budgetary constraints. Similarly, donations from private sources are susceptible to changes in the economy, alterations in philanthropic priorities, and even the individual circumstances of donors. This variability in funding streams further complicates the creation of a dependable long-term financial plan.

Therefore, within the context of this study, achieving long-range financial planning in opera companies is found to be essential and this requires opera companies to implement systematic approach that includes financial goal setting, financial analysis, revenue projections, expense budgeting, cash flow management, financial risk management, monitoring and reporting, and financial collaboration (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Shilvock, 2002).

The findings also reveal that opera companies with long-term planning have stronger financial stability and can overcome the current financial crisis in the industry. The findings establish that long-term planning is essential for the opera industry to develop a strong relationship with private funders. Long-term planning will result in improved financial stability for many South African opera companies and reduce many of the future uncertainties. This is also in line with financial autonomy, which encourages opera companies to have long-term planning in place without putting significant pressure on the company's costs.

6.2.6 Benefits of community engagement in the opera industry

The findings established that improving engagement between the community and the opera industry is essential. However, according to Olivier (2014) the perception that opera is a Eurocentric art form associated primarily with the white minority has led to a lack of support from government and previously disadvantaged communities. This viewpoint has created a barrier, leading to opera being perceived as exclusionary and disconnected from their cultural experiences (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). This view originated before 1994, when the Apartheid government's support of many art forms, opera included, created cultural division. Thus, black communities relate to opera as an 'Apartheid art form'. This perception is illustrated by Participant 4, who states:

I believe that it is important for us as opera companies to engage the marginalised communities in opera since many of these black communities, including our government, believe that opera is for the old white population.

Participant 3 states that “there are so many benefits in community engagement, this increases audiences in theatres”.

Participant 5 declares that:

I think we have undermined the benefits of community engagement in the industry. As opera companies, we receive a subsidy from the state, based on the number of people we have as the audience in theatres.

However, according to Participant 6:

Without an audience, there will be no performance and subsequently there will be no income. Thus, engaging communities in opera can give us the reason for the performance and private sectors to fund us.

Participant 2 argues that “in the black communities, there is an audience that needs to be reached out to as many black communities enjoy opera music”. Participant 2 also maintains that this community engagement benefits the opera companies as they “gain new audiences and increase potentiality for funding”.

It is interesting to note that participants collectively stress the importance of engaging marginalised communities in opera. Participant 4 highlights the misconception that opera is primarily for the older white population and emphasises the need to challenge and change this perception. Participant 3 emphasises the numerous benefits of community engagement, particularly in increasing audience attendance in theatres, while Participant 6 underscores the critical link between community engagement, audience attendance, and financial sustainability for opera companies. Participant 5 points out that community engagement directly impacts the subsidy received from the state, as it is based on audience numbers. This highlights the financial significance of community involvement for opera companies. Participant 7 shares positive outcomes from their company's community engagement efforts, indicating its effectiveness, while Participant 2 highlights the untapped audience potential in black communities and stresses the benefits of community engagement in expanding opera's reach.

They emphasise that engaging with these communities not only brings in new audiences, but it also enhances the potential for funding, which contributes significantly to their financial sustainability.

Furthermore, this community outreach has a positive impact on society. Participant 1 states that:

In our company, we believe that community engagement in the opera industry is a powerful strategy for increasing funding. For instance, when an opera company is actively involved and connects with the local community, it leads to various benefits that directly or indirectly contribute to securing financial support. Another benefit for engaging with the community allows opera companies to build strong relationships with potential donors and patrons. Donors who feel connected to the company's mission and impact are more likely to contribute financially. This helps us to identify and cultivate major donors who are passionate about the arts and willing to make significant contributions to support the opera company's activities. Engaging previously disadvantaged communities has helped us to promote cultural equity by breaking down barriers and providing equal access to cultural experiences. We also acknowledge the rich cultural heritage, and we seek to contribute to

the diverse communities through opera. We believe that this can expand the opera audience, creating a more inclusive and representative space for people from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures.

Participant 7 believes that:

It goes without saying that opera companies that actively connect with their communities have a beneficial impact on society and generate a sense of ownership and pride in the public. Individual donations, business sponsorships, and charity grants may increase because of this. Building relationships at the grassroots level is critical for us because it leads to positive word-of-mouth marketing and referrals. When members of the community feel connected to the opera company, they are more likely to advocate for its importance and contribute to its financial viability. We have been doing community engagement as the company, and we have been progressing very well.

Participant 9 says that:

Before the PACs were disbanded, Performing Arts in South Africa used to put on opera, musicals, and ballet because they had the funding to do it and those Arts Councils were well funded by the government. But it was, it was because of political will. The government of those days thought that funding Arts Councils was important. So, they put money into Arts Councils. And I have to say that in those days, there were groups of singers, certainly in the Cape, who travelled to the Transvaal. It was them that travelled around the province, going to schools and small communities, performing excerpts from opera, so building up a following for opera. And I think we need to get back to that where people could travel around. It does not have to be expensive. You can put, you know, a combi load of people, a taxi loads of people who can travel around with an electric keyboard, performing in schools, performing in small community halls, performing in both school halls at weekends, and taking opera out of the cities to people who might not otherwise hear opera. And I think we have lost that political will to bring that sort of activity to the country at large. It has to go out into the rural communities, so that everyone

understands what it is, and it would be so much more meaningful now. When people ...from patriotism, for example, have reached the highest level of opera in the world, to come back and say, this is what I have done.

Some participants also highlight the connection between community engagement and donor acquisition, which indicates that community engagement not only expands the audience base, but also creates opportunities for financial support. According to Participant 1, these opportunities include building strong relationships with potential donors and patrons who align with the company's mission, as well as promoting cultural equity and equal access to cultural experiences, creating a more inclusive space. Participant 7 highlights the positive societal impact and the sense of ownership and pride that such outreach generates among the public, potentially leading to increased individual donations, business sponsorships, and charity grants. Building relationships at the grassroots level also leads to positive word-of-mouth marketing and referrals, bolstering the opera company's financial viability. Participant 9 reminisces about a time when government funding enabled widespread opera performances, advocating for a return to this approach. This participant stresses the importance of making opera more accessible and widespread, especially in rural communities, to help people appreciate it on a broader scale, particularly when led by accomplished performers.

Scholars highlight that some opera companies, such as Cape Town Opera, that are involved in community engagement are gradually developing a new generation of audiences (Gobbato, 2018; Olivier, 2014). The participants' view of the benefits of engaging the community is cemented by recognising that the audience is a contributor to artistic enterprises.

Engaging previously disadvantaged communities is essential for opera companies to ensure inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility in the arts, especially as opera had been coined as an art form for white audiences (Spies, 2015). Various scholars point out that opera companies can collaborate with community groups, non-profit organisations, educational institutions, and regional cultural organisations that support historically underserved communities (Mugovhani, 2011; Nomcweya, 2018). Together with the community, this can foster collaboration, trust, and understanding, as well as open

doors for cooperative projects and campaigns (Spies, 2015). For example, opera companies can provide discounted tickets, group discounts, specially priced tickets, or financial aid to formerly underserved populations, thereby enhancing the accessibility and affordability of opera (Brehm, 2017).

Opera companies can create accessible educational programmes that are targeted to the need of previously underserved populations. Such opportunities for community members to acquire knowledge about opera, its history, and its cultural relevance include seminars, masterclasses, and residencies (Jonker, 2019; Olivier, 2010). For instance, Cape Town Opera (CTO) has actively engaged with previously disadvantaged communities (like Khayelitsha) to ensure inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility in their programming, while taking into account cultural sensitivity and language accessibility (CTO, 2019).

Furthermore, community engagement can be used as another short-term strategic aspiration for opera companies to improve their sources of revenue (Motsoatsoe, 2016; Spies, 2015). Effective community engagement situates opera as an art form worthy of financial support (Motsoatsoe, 2016). Engagement helps opera companies find the financial support they require because they actively and authentically pursue relationships that further define their existence in certain communities. Most opera companies do not fully engage the entire community. It only appeals to people who understand its concept of entertainment value. As a result, rather than the larger community for which the events are intended, these people become the exclusive focus of community activities.

As highlighted in this section, community engagement is essential. The community engagement theory corroborates that community engagement benefits include financial improvement, innovation, and industry sustainability. Due to declining government funding, such engagement is especially necessary. Furthermore, improving community engagement in the opera industry is a fundamental approach to ensure that opera is appreciated, and that in turn it provides a better understanding of opera to the community.

6.2.7 Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the decline of state funding

The COVID-19 lockdown not only disrupted community engagement, but also precipitated a noticeable reduction in government funding for the arts. This dual challenge significantly impacted the opera industry's traditional modes of operation. In response, opera houses swiftly pivoted towards technology-driven performances, marking a transformative shift in their approach. This transition enabled them to reach audiences in innovative ways, leveraging virtual platforms and digital experiences (Yende, 2021). Evidently, by embracing these technological advancements, opera companies demonstrated resilience and adaptability, highlighting their commitment to the continued vitality of the art form amidst unprecedented global circumstances. This section will now examine this evolution in greater detail.

During the pandemic period, live performances were interrupted. This interruption presented a significant challenge for the industry, forcing it to adapt and find alternative ways to continue its operations. Participants' experiences and observations of and during this turbulent period are outlined below.

Participant 2:

Honestly, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about unprecedented challenges for governments worldwide, including South Africa, which had to prioritise public health and emergency response measures to combat the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact on the population. As a result, funding allocations were redirected towards healthcare systems, vaccination programmes, and economic stimulus packages to support businesses and individuals affected by lockdowns and restrictions. The shift in priorities towards immediate health and economic needs meant that arts and culture funding, including support for opera companies, took a backseat. It is sad that arts were considered non-essential during the acute phase of the pandemic, and the limited financial resources were primarily directed towards urgent health measures and economic recovery initiatives. One would agree with me that during such crises, as South African opera companies we faced a double

blow. First, the closure of performance venues and suspension of events due to lockdowns resulted in significant revenue losses for opera companies. Second, the decline in state funding and public support further exacerbated financial challenges and uncertainty for the survival of these organisations. For me, it is essential to recognise that the arts play a vital role in society, contributing to well-being, creativity, cultural identity, and social cohesion.

Participant 1:

It is hard to say that for opera companies to survive in the country it needs to almost start again, given the fact that COVID-19 has brutally affected the traditional method of performance in theatres. The COVID-19 pandemic has had severe economic repercussions worldwide, and South Africa was not immune to its effects. The traditional method of performance in theatres, which heavily relies on live audiences and gatherings, was severely disrupted by lockdowns, social distancing measures, and restrictions on public gatherings. As a result, many opera companies faced significant financial challenges, with reduced revenue from ticket sales, cancelled performances, and limited opportunities for fundraising. The decline in economic activity during the pandemic likely led to reduced government revenue in South Africa, making it more difficult for the state to allocate funds to support various opera industries.

Participant 3 affirms that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the opera industry:

[S]ince the COVID-19 pandemic, it was confirmed that there was a significant decrease of sponsorships to the opera industry, which affected opera artists and ancillary workers, ranging from those in charge of lighting, sound engineering, and ticket sales, among others. With opera companies facing closures or limited operations due to restrictions and safety measures, many companies had to cancel or postpone performances, resulting in substantial financial losses.

Participant 4:

The reallocation of funding during the COVID-19 pandemic to address immediate public health and economic issues has had a negative influence on the provision of resources to the opera business and other creative sectors. The epidemic presented unprecedented problems, and governments around the world were forced to prioritise resources to address urgent healthcare demands, give economic assistance to individuals and businesses, and support key services. In such critical times, support for the arts, including opera, may not have been prioritised by governments concerned with addressing the public health issue and reducing the economic repercussions. While allocating cash to vital sectors was necessary to preserve lives and protect livelihoods, it also emphasised the arts sector's weakness and reliance on government help. When this happened, we had to cancel performances, ... revenue losses, and increased operational challenges due to restrictions on gatherings and closures of venues. This made it more difficult for them to generate income and secure alternative funding sources during the pandemic. The termination of opera performances represents a loss of state funding for the opera industry, too. For us, live performances are a crucial source of revenue for opera companies, as ticket sales, sponsorships, and other related income streams play a vital role in supporting their operations and artistic activities.

Participant 5:

Well, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative implication on the state funding for us as opera companies. The COVID-19 pandemic in the opera industry has changed many things and worsened the financial challenges that have been already affecting the opera industry in South Africa. This means that there have been increasing job losses in the opera industry, especially freelancing artists who have lost their income due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participant 6:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge detrimental influence on the South African opera industry, increasing existing financial issues and contributing

to significant employment losses, particularly for freelance artists. Opera companies, like many other arts organisations, faced a multitude of financial challenges during the pandemic, including cancelled performances, reduced ticket sales, increased operational costs related to safety measures, and loss of revenue from ancillary activities. These challenges were exacerbated by the uncertainty surrounding the duration of the pandemic and the timeline for resuming live performances. This affected our funding as we could not plan appropriately.

Participant 7:

The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation of opera productions, concerts, and tours that indicates a loss of income, revenue from ticket sales and decrease in sponsorships. The economic uncertainties caused by the pandemic have also led to a decrease in corporate sponsorships and individual donations to the arts, including opera. Many businesses and individuals are facing financial challenges, making it difficult for them to provide the same level of support they may have offered before the pandemic.

Participant 8 explains that:

As opera company, we started our operation in 2019, however, when COVID-19 came in 2020, a lot stopped as we had to cancel our performances and even now in 2021, we are hit hard by COVID. This is very challenging because if we operate that means we must buy sanitisers and to buy mics, which is impossible with our current budget.

Participant 9:

COVID has changed a lot of things in the opera industry worldwide. Many opera performances, tours, and events had to be cancelled or postponed due to restrictions on public gatherings and travel during the pandemic. I would say that opera companies faced financial difficulties as ticket sales and revenue from performances were severely impacted by closures and restrictions. Public funding and private donations, which are crucial for opera

companies, faced uncertainty due to economic challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Participant 10:

I think the COVID-19 pandemic came in the worst time in the South African opera industry where there was already a decline of state funding. This has exacerbated the ongoing financial challenges in the industry. With restrictions on public gatherings and theatre closures, we have faced a severe decline in ticket sales and revenue from live performances. This loss of income has further strained our financial resources, forcing us to minimise the employability of young opera singers. For us, the financial impact of the pandemic, coupled with the existing decline in state funding, has led to financial instability, making it challenging to cover operational costs and sustain artistic activities.

Participants unanimously agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant and detrimental impact on the South African opera industry. The traditional method of live performances, which is central to opera, was severely disrupted by lockdowns, social distancing measures, and restrictions on public gatherings. This led to substantial financial challenges for opera companies, including reduced revenue from ticket sales and limited fundraising opportunities. Additionally, the reallocation of funding towards immediate health and economic needs during the pandemic resulted in decreased support for arts and culture, including opera companies. This created a double blow for the industry, with closures of performance venues and suspension of events causing significant revenue losses.

Moreover, the pandemic brought about unprecedented challenges, with reduced sponsorships and financial support for opera artists and ancillary workers. Many companies had to cancel or postpone performances, resulting in substantial financial losses. The economic uncertainties caused by the pandemic led to a decrease in corporate sponsorships and individual donations to the arts, further exacerbating financial difficulties. These findings align with both local (Yende, 2021; Van der Hoven, 2023) and international literature (Roca et al., 2021; Tsioulakis & FitzGibbon, 2020) mentioning that the pandemic not only disrupted operations, but it also

intensified existing financial challenges in the industry. With restrictions on public gatherings and closures of theatres, there was a severe decline in ticket sales and revenue from live performances. This loss of income strained financial resources, impacting the employability of freelancers and young opera singers and the overall financial stability for opera companies.

This view is also shared by the Cape Town Opera (2019:35), commenting on the impact of COVID-19 in the functioning of the company:

COVID-19 had an impact on CTO operations after the 2019 financial year: six local opera performances from March through May were cancelled, as well as 15 international performances scheduled in Germany, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. CTO has been able to postpone an additional three local performances to later in 2020, and to reallocate two of the cancelled performances to another project. The overall cancellations resulted in approximately R2,6 M in lost income, which is mitigated by a number of factors: a R1,2 M reduction in costs related to cancelled events, company salaries and general operational expenses; an increase in donations of R300,000 from local government and foreign trusts; and an increase of R750,000 over budgeted amounts from touring income due to favourable exchange rates and payment of unanticipated cancellation fees. The remaining income will be sourced through successful applications to COVID-19 relief funds and a mutually agreed reduction in loan liability repayments.

It is also important to mention that despite the lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 restrictions, Cape Town Opera was able to perform a total of 19 local performances, reaching a total of 4065 people, as well as 14 overseas performances, reaching a total of 10,166 people (Cape Town Opera, 2020). These performances provided an opportunity for the Young Artist Programme vocalists to demonstrate and enhance their abilities and stagecraft, as well as for fans to hear the Cape Town Opera Chorus, as opposed to other small opera companies such as Sempre Opera, Jozi Opera and the Isango Ensemble who were not able to continue with their performances. In her interview with Linette van der Merwe, Van der Hoven (2023:279) points out that “Sempre Opera has cancelled all performances for 2020 and will recommence

rehearsals for *Le nozze di Figaro* in March 2021”. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa. This is also substantiated by Van der Hoven (2023:256) who points out that “in South Africa, opera was slowly dying even before COVID-19”.

However, it is important to recognise that the opera industry in South Africa has shown resilience and adaptability during the pandemic. Companies have explored digital platforms, streamed performances online, and engaged with audiences virtually to continue their artistic endeavours (Van der Hoven, 2023).

Therefore, South African opera companies and artists can broaden their artistic repertoire, foster their creativity, and adapt to the changing digital context by acquiring digital skills that will enable them to be relevant to their audience. This will not only give them the freedom to pursue new artistic avenues but will also provide an opportunity to engage and interact with audiences in fresh and interesting ways.

6.2.8 The impact of digital technology on the opera industry

This study established that there are a variety of opinions among opera managers when it comes to the role of digital technology in the South African opera industry. For instance, within the discussions, several participants emphasised the transformative potential of digital technology as a robust tool that theatres should actively adopt. Beyond its role in enhancing the presentation of opera performances, participants highlighted its significance in revolutionising the marketing strategies employed by opera companies. In the contemporary landscape, leveraging digital platforms for promotional campaigns, live-streamed performances, and interactive audience engagements can significantly broaden the reach and impact of opera. However, other participants mentioned that digital technology cannot be a viable strategy to solve challenges faced by the opera industry as there are too many unique challenges involved. This study’s premise reveals the advantages and disadvantages of embracing digital technology in the opera industry.

Participants commented on the impact of digital technologies in the opera industry as follows:

Participant 1:

The impact of digital technologies on the opera industry has been significant to the advancement of the industry globally. Over the past few years of COVID-19, digital advancements have transformed various aspects of the opera world, affecting how opera is created, produced, distributed, and experienced. As we are still in the season of the pandemic, I think it is clear that online performance has become a key driver for the growth of the industry of performing arts, particularly in the opera industry. I would say, for me, digital technologies have brought both opportunities and challenges to the opera industry, especially in South Africa. While they have expanded access and engagement, they have also raised questions about the balance between digital and live experiences, the impact on traditional revenue models, and the need to maintain the essence of opera as a live performing art form. As technology continues to evolve, the opera industry will need to adapt and find innovative ways to leverage digital advancements while preserving its artistic integrity and historical significance.

Participant 2:

During this time, we are forced to use digital technology and I think it will have a good and bad impact in our operation. Digital platforms provide opportunities for us to increase audience engagement and interaction. For instance, through digital technology we can host virtual backstage tours and engage in social media interactions to foster a closer relationship with their audience. However, some of the challenges we experience is that the shift to digital operations requires staff with digital skills, which is currently lacking in some opera companies. I believe that inadequate digital infrastructure can hinder the smooth adoption of digital technology in the opera industry. Also, we should keep in mind that while digital technology opens new revenue streams for opera companies, not all potential audience members have access

to reliable internet connections or digital devices, leading to a digital divide in access to online performances.

Participant 3:

I believe that digital technology plays a crucial role in the modern opera industry, especially now that we are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic when in-person performances may not be possible. Embracing digital platforms and developing digital skills are essential for opera companies to continue engaging with audiences, showcasing performances, and generating income. However, as you mentioned, this can require a significant investment, which can be challenging for a developing country like South Africa. I believe that the long-term benefits of expanding opera's reach and attracting new audiences may outweigh the drawbacks. Even in the face of economic constraints, the South African opera business may harness digital technology to sustain and enhance its creative greatness. The industry may thrive and contribute to the cultural fabric of the country by embracing the digital revolution.

Participant 4:

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to the opera industry, forcing us as opera companies worldwide to adapt quickly and embrace digital technologies to continue engaging with audiences and artists. With gathering limits and venue closures, we have turned to virtual performances and livestreaming to reach audiences. Although it was difficult, digital channels enabled us to deliver opera productions online, allowing audiences to experience performances from the safety and comfort of their own homes.

Participant 5:

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country, we as opera companies had to immediately explore alternative revenue streams, such as online ticketing for virtual performances, digital subscription models, and crowdfunding campaigns.

Participant 6:

During the COVID-19 epidemic, using digital media and online activities was a critical and innovative move for us, as well as many other companies in the opera industry. Despite the pandemic's challenges, we were able to adapt and maintain relationships with our audiences through virtual performances, online showcases, and digital engagement. Shifting to digital platforms allowed us to continue engaging with our audiences. As we move beyond the pandemic, integrating digital elements into traditional opera performances and exploring hybrid formats could further enrich the opera-going experience and attract diverse audiences.

Participant 7:

Well, one cannot doubt the essential impact of digital technologies on the opera industry were both positive and negative. The digital technologies have had a transformative impact on the opera industry, both before and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. These technologies have opened new opportunities, expanded access to opera, and enhanced audience engagement in various ways. In South Africa, digital technologies have undeniably brought significant opportunities and challenges to the opera industry.

Participant 10:

I would say, digital technologies in South African opera industry have both positive and negative impact. Now because we experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, digital technology is good as we can showcase our productions. The negative side of this is that digital technologies is expensive for both opera companies and audience. In South Africa, we do not have stable internet connection and data is expensive for marginalised communities.

Participants unanimously agree on the significant impact of digital technology on the opera industry, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. They acknowledge that digital advancements have transformed various aspects of opera, affecting how it is created, produced, distributed, and experienced. The participants highlight several benefits of digital technology, such as increased audience

engagement and interaction, the ability to host virtual tours and engage with audiences through social media, and the opportunity to explore alternative revenue streams like online ticketing, digital subscription models, and crowdfunding campaigns. This view is supported by Gerber (2021) who affirms that the use of digital media paratexts is a significant tool for opera companies such as Cape Town Opera. This allows them to showcase their aesthetic abilities through various forms of media distributed online, including social media platforms and the internet, which provides a wider reach compared to traditional local printed media (Gerber, 2021; Spies, 2021).

However, there are shared concerns and challenges. Participants mention the need for staff with digital skills, potential barriers due to inadequate digital infrastructure, and the existence of a digital divide in access to online performances. Additionally, there is recognition that digital technology can be expensive, both for opera companies and audiences, particularly in regions like South Africa with unstable internet connections and high data costs. The participants express a nuanced perspective on the role of digital technology in the South African opera industry, recognising its potential benefits, while also acknowledging the challenges and limitations that come with its implementation.

Despite the challenges posed by the digital landscape, these companies are recognising the importance of adopting online platforms to reach wider audiences, potentially reshaping the landscape of South African opera for the future. This adaptation to digital media signifies a proactive response to evolving audience preferences and technological advancements in the performing arts sector.

6.2.8.1 Advantages of digital technology in the South African opera industry

Participants highlight that digital technology in the opera industry provide the industry with advantages when they aim to reach new audiences worldwide. The study observed that digital technology is a vital instrument for attracting new audiences while retaining and increasing the loyalty of existing audiences.

Participant 1:

We have also embraced digital platforms, which I believe, it will have many benefits. For instance, it enables our performances to be accessed from

anywhere in the world with an internet connection. This breaks down geographical barriers, allowing our company to connect with audiences in diverse regions and countries.

Participant 2:

I think digital platforms have revolutionised audience engagement and interaction for opera companies and the performing arts in general. For instance, digital platforms allow us to live-stream performances to audiences worldwide. This enables people from different locations to experience the opera in real-time, broadening the company's reach. For us ... this was advantageous for audience building.

Participant 3:

As opera companies, we must know that digital platforms provide several advantages to the opera industry, particularly during periods of closure and restrictions on live performances. Adopting digital technology can save opera businesses by allowing them to continue engaging with fans and reaching new viewers in different locales. I also believe that recognising and adapting to new audience expectations in the digital age is critical for opera companies to stay relevant and engage a larger and younger audience. Digital technological innovation has changed how people consume content, especially performing arts such as opera. Embracing digital streaming and online engagement opens several possibilities for reaching out to new and future audiences.

Participant 4:

Using digital platforms has played a crucial role for us in enhancing audience engagement within the opera industry, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. These platforms have allowed us to foster meaningful connections with their audiences, create immersive experiences, and encourage active participation. We also allow our audiences to share their experiences through user-generated content, such as reviews, videos, and artwork inspired by

opera performances. This involvement creates a sense of ownership and empowerment among the audience.

Participant 5:

Digital technology has completely transformed the theatre to the current technological revolution. Therefore, competition for leisure time has also increased, demanding us as opera companies to find new approaches for engagement and creativity in theatrical productions to make connections with digitally saturated audiences. Digital technology has enabled opera companies to reach audiences beyond physical theatre spaces through online streaming and virtual performances. Live-streamed or pre-recorded opera productions can be accessed by audiences worldwide, expanding the reach and accessibility of the art form.

Participant 6:

In the South African context, digital initiatives have played a vital role for us to make opera more inclusive and accessible to a wider range of audiences, especially those from marginalised communities. Opera companies have been able to create a more accessible and engaging experience for all by leveraging internet platforms and digital technology.

Participant 7:

It is critical to acknowledge that internet platforms have made opera performances more accessible to a wider audience. Audiences from across the world might enjoy opera shows without having to travel to actual venues. Another advantage is that fans can attend opera performances from the comfort of their own homes or on the road, avoiding time-consuming travel and making it easier to incorporate opera into their busy schedules. For me, digital platforms provide on-demand viewing choices, allowing spectators to see opera performances at their leisure, which is very beneficial for individuals with hectic or unexpected schedules.

All participants agree unanimously on the transformative impact of digital platforms on the opera industry. They highlight several key benefits of digital platforms on the opera industry. The participants agree that digital platforms break down geographical barriers, allowing opera performances to be accessed worldwide. This widens the reach of opera companies and connects them with diverse audiences in different regions and countries. This view is supported by Yende (2021) who affirms that digital technology plays a crucial role in the opera industry.

It is interesting to note that participants feel that live-streaming performances on digital platforms enables real-time engagement with global audiences. This broadens the companies' reach and facilitates audience building. In the South African context, digital initiatives have made opera more inclusive and accessible, particularly for marginalised communities (Yende, 2021). Participants also concur that the effectiveness of digital platforms in facilitating meaningful connections with audiences, creating immersive experiences, and encouraging active participation is contingent upon the quality of the technology employed. The consensus underscores the importance of leveraging state-of-the-art digital tools and ensuring a seamless integration of technological solutions to maximise the potential for audience engagement. This perspective aligns with the recognition that the success of digital initiatives in the opera industry hinges on the careful selection and implementation of high-quality technology to deliver immersive and interactive experiences for audiences. Digital platforms enable audiences to share their experiences through user-generated content, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment. On-demand viewing options also cater to individuals with busy or unpredictable schedules.

These observations are in line with the creative artistic concept that the opera industry should develop digital skills to enhance their creativity and reach a wider audience.

6.2.8.2 Disadvantages of digital technology in the South African opera industry

Limitations due to a skills gap

The integration of digital technology in the South African opera industry introduces a dual narrative of opportunities and challenges, as revealed by participants' insights. While digital advancements promise operational efficiency and enhanced audience

engagement, the transition is hindered by notable drawbacks. Participants emphasise the necessity for high-level digital skills from managers to performers, underlining a potential threat to the industry's sustainability due to a skills gap. Financial constraints emerge as a consistent concern, with the high cost of digital initiatives posing challenges, particularly for companies with limited resources. Audience-related issues, such as disparities in internet access and technical difficulties, highlight the risk of a digital divide and the potential exclusion of marginalised communities. This nuanced perspective underscores the need for a balanced approach and strategic interventions to navigate the complexities of digital integration in the South African opera industry.

Participant 1 mentions that:

Some of the disadvantages about digital technologies in the South African opera industry are that digital technology requires extensive digital skills from managers to performers. Due to the lack of these skills, South African opera companies could battle to function successfully. Disparities in access to digital technologies and the internet have limited the reach of online performances to specific urban areas or regions with better internet infrastructure.

Financial burden

The financial burden associated with the adoption of digital technology is a consistent theme among participants. Issues like the cost of innovation, lack of funding, and the challenge of allocating resources for digital transformation are prominent concerns.

Participant 2:

Digital technologies have disadvantages in the opera industry for countries like South Africa. Some of the disadvantages include the innovating cost, which is very costly, and most opera companies cannot afford. In our context, not all opera companies, especially those in remote or economically challenged regions, may have access to reliable internet connections or the latest digital tools.

Participant 3:

Adopting and maintaining digital technology can be costly, especially for us as we have limited resources. High-quality digital productions require investments in equipment, platforms, and skilled personnel. In our country, not all audience members have access to reliable internet or digital devices, limiting their ability to participate in digital opera experiences.

Participant 4:

While digital technology has brought significant advantages to the opera industry, it comes with certain disadvantages, particularly related to cost and expertise. Adopting and maintaining digital technologies has been expensive for South African opera companies, especially for those with limited financial resources.

Participant 5:

Developing and maintaining digital initiatives can be costly for opera companies, and the return on investment may be impacted if the target audience faces internet connectivity and data restrictions.

Participant 6:

Digital technology was just expensive in our company. Implementing digital initiatives and expanding accessibility can be expensive, especially for developing opera companies that do not receive sufficient funding from the state....

Participant 7:

Expenses and internet connectivity are key barriers for opera companies in embracing digital platforms. These issues can have an impact on the accessibility and effectiveness of digital efforts, particularly in countries such as South Africa, where internet infrastructure and pricing may be limited for some sectors of the population.

The participants in the discussion consistently highlight the financial burdens associated with the adoption of digital technology within the South African opera industry. One of the recurring themes is the high cost associated with digital technology, which is seen as a significant obstacle for opera companies, particularly those situated in economically challenged regions (Yende, 2022). For instance, Participant 2 emphasises the costly nature of digital technologies, citing that many opera companies cannot afford the necessary innovations. Participant 3 points out the high costs of adopting and maintaining digital technology, highlighting the need for investment in equipment, digital platforms, and skilled personnel. This sentiment is echoed by Participant 5, who highlights the costliness of developing and maintaining digital initiatives, emphasising the potential impact on the return on investment when the target audience faces internet connectivity and data restrictions.

This view is shared by Yende and Buthelezi (2022), who state that accessibility of reliable internet connections and the latest digital tools is a challenge, especially for companies in remote or economically-disadvantaged areas. This underscores the digital divide within the opera industry, where not all organisations have equal access to technological resources. Limited resources further exacerbate the financial challenges faced by opera companies, making it difficult for them to embrace high-quality digital productions (Spies, 2021).

In summary, the challenges associated with the adoption of digital technologies in the South African opera industry are multifaceted, encompassing not only technical aspects but also broader socio-economic considerations. One of the key challenges is the need for digital skills development. As opera companies navigate the digital landscape, there is a pressing demand for skilled personnel who can effectively leverage digital tools and platforms. This involves not only artists and performers but also technical support staff to ensure the seamless execution of digital initiatives. For instance, in the South African context, Yende (2021) points out that financial constraints emerge as a pervasive issue, impacting everything from the acquisition of necessary equipment to the implementation of digital strategies. This is supported by Khokhlova (2019) who states that limited funding resources, particularly for smaller opera companies, pose a substantial barrier to embracing digital innovations fully.

The discussion also emphasises the challenges related to audience access, ranging from limited internet connectivity to disparities in digital device ownership. This not only restricts the reach of digital opera experiences but also raises concerns about inclusivity, especially for those in remote or economically disadvantaged regions. The potential digital divide adds another layer of complexity, indicating the risk of exacerbating societal inequalities through uneven access to digital cultural offerings. In light of these challenges, strategic considerations and targeted interventions become imperative to navigate this digital transition successfully. This includes investment in digital literacy programmes, financial support mechanisms, and infrastructure development to create a more inclusive and sustainable digital landscape for the South African opera industry.

The digital divide

While digital technologies are acknowledged as a potential game-changer for reaching new audiences, challenges related to data restrictions, lack of internet connectivity, and technical issues are significant concerns.

Participant 1:

While in recent years, digital technologies have been recognised as a powerful tool for expanding audience reach and engagement in the opera industry, there are significant challenges in South Africa that need to be addressed. Limitations related to data restrictions and internet connectivity are particularly noteworthy.

Participant 5:

Access to reliable and high-speed internet is limited or unavailable in some areas of South Africa. This can hinder audiences from accessing digital opera content, live streams, or online ticketing platforms, thereby limiting the reach of opera companies.

Participant 6:

Technical issues, such as internet connectivity problems, buffering, or glitches in online performances, have frustrated audiences and deterred them from engaging with digital opera content.

Participant 10:

Digital technologies cause a digital divide that poses significant challenges in ensuring equal access to opera content and cultural experiences. Inequalities in access to technology and digital resources have the potential to further widen existing inequalities in society, limiting opportunities for marginalised communities to engage with opera and other cultural offerings.

The recognition of digital technology as a transformative force for expanding opera audiences is coupled with a sober acknowledgment of substantial challenges, particularly within the unique context of South Africa (Khokhlova, 2019; Yende & Buthelezi, 2022). The promise of digital technologies to broaden engagement is juxtaposed with the formidable obstacles posed by data restrictions, limited internet connectivity, and technical issues. These challenges not only hinder the seamless adoption of digital tools, but they also raise critical questions about inclusivity and access.

The discussion underscores the potential exclusion of marginalised communities due to the digital divide. As digital technologies become integral to the opera experience, disparities in access to technology and resources risk exacerbating existing societal inequalities (Khokhlova, 2019; Yende, 2021). The acknowledgement of this widening gap underscores the urgent need for comprehensive strategies. Addressing the digital challenges in South Africa's opera industry requires innovative solutions that go beyond technological considerations (Yende & Buthelezi, 2022). It calls for a holistic approach that considers infrastructure development, educational initiatives, and policies to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that opera content and cultural experiences are accessible and enriching for all segments of the population. As the industry strives for broader inclusivity, these challenges become not only

technological, but also social imperatives to be addressed for a more equitable cultural landscape.

6.2.9 Some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera scene

It is interesting to note that participants agree that there are various workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera scene to enhance the situation in the South African opera industry. Some of these solutions are already in place in some opera companies in South Africa. Participants were very aware of the way that successful European opera companies function as proven by the extracts that follow.

Participant 1:

Most of opera companies in South Africa have a completely different funding model. They are far more reliant on government funding, which is not sustainable and reliable for the future. Before thinking about adopting the European funding model, it is important to note that European opera houses often rely on a mix of funding sources, including government support, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, and ticket sales. I believe that adopting workable solutions from successful European opera houses can be extremely advantageous for increasing funding and sustainability for South African opera companies. European opera houses have extensive experience navigating the challenges of arts funding and creating viable funding structures. South African opera companies can strengthen their financial stability, artistic achievements, and community influence by learning from their techniques and experiences. South African opera companies can explore similar diversification to reduce dependence on one source and increase financial stability.

Participant 2:

Well, before I say anything, let me highlight that given the dynamic nature of South African opera companies' financial situation, it is essential for us to conduct a thorough assessment of our funding model, financial sustainability,

and opportunities for diversification. Engaging in strategic planning, seeking professional financial advice, and exploring new funding avenues could help us navigate challenges and build a more stable and sustainable financial future. As highlighted earlier, as opera companies, we can collaborate with industry experts, arts advocacy organisations, and peers to share best practices and exchange insights on successful funding strategies. Each company may need to tailor their approach to fundraising based on their specific circumstances and long-term goals. Ultimately, a multifaceted approach that considers both traditional and innovative funding sources can provide opera companies with the resilience and adaptability needed to thrive in the ever-changing arts funding landscape in South Africa.

Participant 3:

There are several workable solutions that South African opera companies could consider adopting from successful European opera models to enhance their situation and address various challenges they face. For instance, European opera houses have been expanding their repertory to include works by living composers and opera productions that reflect a greater range of cultural experiences. Adopting this technique has the potential to attract a younger, more varied audience, while also enriching the cultural environment.

Participant 4:

It is important to first understand that every country and opera company's situation is unique, adopting successful strategies from European opera models can provide valuable insights and inspiration. Adaptability, innovation, and community engagement are essential characteristics that can enable South African opera enterprises to overcome problems and achieve a sustainable future. Opera companies can establish a devoted and supportive patron base by actively listening to their audiences' needs and tastes, reaching out to diverse areas, and fostering genuine connections. Embracing innovation, particularly in the digital realm, has the potential to broaden the scope of audience involvement and accessibility, allowing opera companies to

expand beyond physical venues and connect with audiences in new ways. Furthermore, encouraging collaborations, partnerships, and sponsorships can help to leverage resources, increase networks, and improve financial sustainability.

Participant 5:

The success of South African opera companies resides in their ability to embrace their various audiences' distinct cultural history, promote inclusivity, and build a sense of ownership and pride as is the case in Europe. Opera companies can establish a dynamic and relevant opera industry that resonates with the nation's people by recognising South Africa's diversity and reflecting it in their creative programming and community engagement. South African opera companies can pave the road for a bright and sustainable future by being forward-thinking and adaptive, ensuring that the art form continues to enhance the cultural landscape and inspire audiences for future generations.

Participant 6:

Adopting successful European opera company tactics can provide significant insights and viable answers for improving the position of South African opera companies. For instance, European opera companies frequently receive financial help from business partners and sponsors. South African enterprises can acquire private sector funding to augment government subsidies by cultivating ties with businesses and demonstrating the good social impact of opera. In South Africa, opera companies can find business companies and sponsors whose values coincide with their artistic goals and community impact. Look for companies that have a history of supporting the arts, cultural enrichment, or social growth.

Participant 7:

South African opera companies can learn a lot from the experiences of successful European opera houses in various ways and this includes diversifying their repertoire, engaging with the community, seeking private

sector partnerships, embracing digital initiatives, nurturing talent, and pursuing philanthropic support and grant funding. I believe that if we adopt these workable solutions, the opera industry in South Africa could secure the financial support necessary for long-term sustainability.

Participant 8:

There are some European successful strategies that can be adopted. For instance, South African opera companies can explore grant funding and philanthropic partnerships to bolster their financial resources. Also, partnering with sports organisations or other industries can create unique and innovative performances, attracting new audiences and generating interest in opera. As opera companies in the country, I believe that we can broaden our reach, improve our financial stability, and develop a lively and sustainable opera sector that resonates with audiences and stakeholders alike by implementing these techniques. Opera companies must be adaptable, creative, and flexible to succeed in today's dynamic and competitive arts world.

Participant 10:

This is a difficult question to answer but I would say in Europe, most opera houses have strategic collaborations with local businesses, corporations, and philanthropic organisations and I believe that we can do that to create a successful opera industry in our country. However, this will mean that we must provide appealing sponsorship packages that provide commercial benefits as well as evidence of the opera company's social effect. This can encourage long-term financial viability by establishing an endowment fund that can offer a consistent income stream for South African opera companies. Through targeted fundraising activities and donations, this fund can be created over time. (...) Extend opera performances beyond big cities by travelling to smaller towns and regions to broaden the fan base and obtain local sponsorship and support.

Participants offered a range of strategies for South African opera companies to enhance their financial sustainability. Participant 1 emphasises the need for South African opera companies to diversify their funding sources, drawing inspiration from successful European models. Participant 2 stresses the importance of a thorough assessment of funding models and opportunities for diversification considering the dynamic financial situation. This participant advocates for strategic planning, seeking professional financial advice, and exploring new funding avenues. Collaboration with industry experts and peers is recommended for sharing best practices and successful funding strategies.

Participant 3 suggests adopting strategies from European opera houses, such as expanding the repertoire to include works by living composers and productions reflecting diverse cultural experiences which would enrich the cultural landscape. Participant 4 emphasises adaptability, innovation, and community engagement as essential characteristics for South African opera companies to achieve sustainability. Embracing digital innovation and seeking collaborations, partnerships, and sponsorships are also recommended to enhance financial sustainability. Participant 7 highlights various strategies for South African opera companies to learn from successful European counterparts, including diversifying the repertoire, community engagement, private sector partnerships, digital initiatives, talent development, and seeking philanthropic support and grant funding. Participant 10 suggests forming strategic collaborations with local businesses, corporations, and philanthropic organisations, creating appealing sponsorship packages that offer both commercial benefits and evidence of the opera company's social impact.

They also advocate for establishing an endowment fund through targeted fundraising activities and extending performances to smaller towns and regions to broaden the fan base and gain local support. Scholars point out that South African opera companies can accomplish long-term financial sustainability while simultaneously developing an environment of community ownership and engagement by putting these methods together and focusing on social constructivism (Spies, 2015; Yende, 2021).

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the decline in state funding for opera companies in South Africa, stemming from political changes in 1994 and evolving government priorities, has led to profound challenges. The shift towards private funding models and the subsequent closure of numerous opera companies has not only signified fiscal struggles but has also had broader implications for cultural diversity and the livelihoods of artists. The persistent financial strain, as highlighted by participants and supported by literature, has emphasised the urgent need for sustainable government funding to ensure the vibrancy of the opera sector.

This financial vulnerability extends beyond immediate job losses, impacting on training opportunities for emerging artists and the overall cultural landscape. Recognising the economic and cultural contributions of the performing arts, particularly opera, has underscored the need for sustained investment. Understanding the global trend of declining government funding for opera companies, has provided a basis for informed discussions and strategic planning, fostering a sense of shared experience and solidarity within the global opera community.

The sociocultural context, as viewed through the lens of social constructivism, has added nuance to the understanding of the connection between state funding, societal beliefs, and the viability of opera organisations. The evolving perspectives of participants highlighted the complex dynamics surrounding government support and its impact on the opera sector, emphasising the need for nuanced examination of the political and funding landscape.

Furthermore, this section explored opera managers' perspectives on government misconceptions about the industry, primarily the belief that opera caters mainly to the white population. Participants stressed that this misconception has led to reduced government funding. They argued that changing this perception is crucial for securing financial support, as private stakeholders may follow the government's lead. Short-term financial strategies, such as collaborations with sports organisations and local businesses, were suggested to boost revenue. Additionally, long-term financial planning was highlighted as essential for sustainability, involving diversifying revenue sources, securing funds in advance, and building relationships with private funders to

navigate economic challenges. Overall, the section emphasised the impact of government perceptions on opera funding, proposing various strategies for financial resilience.

Participants stressed community engagement and the importance of challenging the perception that opera is exclusive to the older white population, emphasising the potential for outreach in black communities. Community engagement not only expands the audience base but also fosters relationships with donors and patrons, contributing to financial sustainability. Scholars also highlight the role of opera companies in developing new audiences through community involvement. To ensure inclusivity, it was suggested that opera companies collaborate with historically underserved communities, offering discounted tickets and educational programs. Ultimately, community engagement is deemed essential for financial improvement, innovation, and the long-term sustainability of the opera industry.

In this chapter, it was highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound negative impact on state funding for the South African opera industry. Government priorities shifted towards health and economic needs, redirecting funds away from arts and culture, including opera. Overall, the South African opera industry faced a double blow from the pandemic – closures of performance venues and a decline in state funding.

Despite the challenges, the opera industry demonstrated resilience by embracing digital technology. Opera houses pivoted to virtual platforms, live-streamed performances, and online engagement to reach audiences. Participants acknowledged the transformative potential of digital technology, highlighting its role in enhancing opera presentations and revolutionising marketing strategies. However, challenges such as the digital divide, the need for digital skills, and financial constraints were also recognised.

Participants unanimously recognised the advantages of digital technology in the South African opera industry, emphasising its role in reaching new global audiences and increasing loyalty among existing ones. They highlighted benefits such as breaking down geographical barriers, live-streaming performances worldwide, fostering meaningful connections with audiences, and creating immersive experiences. Digital

platforms are seen as vital for audience engagement, especially during periods of closure and restrictions on live performances. Additionally, participants acknowledged the potential of digital initiatives to make opera more inclusive and accessible, particularly for marginalised communities.

Despite the advantages, participants expressed concerns about the challenges associated with digital technology in the opera industry. These challenges include the need for extensive digital skills, disparities in access to digital technologies and the internet, high costs of innovation, and the risk of widening the digital divide. The financial burden of adopting and maintaining digital technology was a consistent theme, with participants highlighting the costs of equipment, platforms, skilled personnel, and potential impacts on return on investment. Participants in the discussion highlighted various workable solutions that can be adapted from the European opera scene to enhance the situation in the South African opera industry. Firstly, there was a consensus on the importance of diversifying funding sources. Participants stressed the need to draw inspiration from European opera houses that rely on a mix of government support, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, and ticket sales. This approach would increase financial stability and reduce dependence on a single source. Secondly, participants recommended a thorough assessment of the funding model, financial sustainability, and opportunities for diversification. Engaging in strategic planning, seeking professional financial advice, and exploring new funding avenues were highlighted as essential steps for navigating challenges and building a stable financial future. Thirdly, adopting successful strategies from European opera houses, such as expanding the repertoire to include works by living composers and productions reflecting diverse cultural experiences, were suggested. This approach aims to attract a younger and more varied audience while enriching the cultural environment.

Private sector partnerships and sponsorships were also highlighted, with participants suggesting acquiring private sector funding to augment government subsidies. Establishing ties with businesses and showcasing the social impact of opera could attract sponsorships. Seeking partnerships with local businesses, corporations, and philanthropic organisations was proposed to create a successful opera industry. Lastly, participants recommended establishing an endowment fund through targeted

fundraising activities for consistent income. Extending opera performances beyond big cities to smaller towns and regions were suggested to broaden the fan base and gain local sponsorship and support.

In summary, the proposed solutions emphasise a multifaceted approach to ensure the long-term sustainability of the South African opera industry. By diversifying funding sources through government grants, private sponsorships, ticket sales, and donations, and implementing strategic planning for financial stability, the industry can secure the necessary support. Embracing cultural inclusivity and actively engaging local communities through outreach programs and educational initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and increase support and attendance. Adapting to changing circumstances, such as leveraging digital platforms for virtual performances, demonstrates innovation and resilience. Additionally, forming private sector partnerships can provide vital funding and resources. These strategies would not only enrich South Africa's cultural landscape but they also hold potential for international contributions through global partnerships and collaborations, positioning the South African opera industry as a significant player in the global cultural exchange and ensuring its vibrancy and influence on a broader scale.

Chapter 7: Data analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the findings – Funding Entities

7.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter covered the perspectives of opera company managers on various issues extensively, including the decline in state funding, political changes, collaboration, digital technology and viable solutions. This chapter delves into a critical analysis of the study's findings through empirical data analysis and interpretation, focusing on the perspectives and insights gathered from funding entities and stakeholders. This section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how funding organisations view and engage with the challenges and opportunities faced by opera companies in South Africa. As emphasised in Chapter 4, the research relies heavily on thematic analysis, utilising NVivo 12 software to scrutinise qualitative data collected from interviews with selected participants. The focus here is on presenting the data gleaned from these interviews, specifically addressing the research aims and sub-aims of the study. Notably, the data is confined to four governmental funding entities, as detailed in Chapter 4, and this chapter elucidates the development and presentation of themes derived from these interviews.

In this chapter key themes are explored arising from the interview questions. These themes encompass the challenges encountered by funding entities within the opera industry, the repercussions of opera company closures on opera singers, and the uncertainties faced by opera singers in the industry. The subsequent section meticulously presents data obtained from the government funding entities, providing a comprehensive discussion of the major themes identified.

7.2 Presentation of the semi-structured interviews data from the funding agencies

It is essential to foreground this section by examining the factors contributing to the decline in state funding for opera, and the perspective of funding agencies. These entities play a pivotal role in allocating resources to various artistic endeavours, including opera productions. One of the key aspects influencing their perception of opera is the evolving cultural landscape which has undergone significant shifts in

recent years. Some funding agencies may harbour certain perceptions about opera, specifically, that impact their decision-making process. These perceptions could stem from various sources, such as changing audience preferences, evolving artistic trends, or perhaps even a perception of opera as an art form that may not resonate as strongly with contemporary audiences. It is important to note that these perceptions may vary from one funding agency to another, as they are influenced by a range of factors, including leadership philosophy, public sentiment, and financial considerations.

Reflecting on the earlier chapters, it becomes evident that funding agencies' perceptions of opera play a crucial role in understanding the decline in state funding. The causes of the decline in funding, as identified by the opera companies, encompass political changes, the perception of opera, the impact of COVID-19, and the general economic climate. This nuanced examination sheds light on the multifaceted challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa. The political changes, intricately linked with the broader socio-political context, have implications for how opera is perceived and prioritised in the allocation of state funding. The restructuring of performing arts councils into the National Arts Council (NAC) represents a pivotal shift in the funding landscape. Thus, understanding the funding agencies' perspective is crucial in deciphering how these changes influence their perception of opera and their role in supporting it.

This perception of opera, as articulated by the funding agencies, becomes a focal point in comprehending the funding challenges faced by the opera companies and opera managers claim that this shift in the perception of opera contributes to the decline in funding. Funding agencies may view opera as an art form catering to a specific elite segment of society, limiting its accessibility and appeal to broader audiences.

The impact of COVID-19 and the general economic climate has further amplified the challenges faced by opera companies. The economic downturn resulting from the pandemic has heightened financial constraints, and funding agencies have had to re-evaluate their priorities. The perception of opera as a financially demanding art form possibly also influences the decision-making processes of funding agencies during times of economic uncertainty. Therefore, by examining the causes of the decline in state funding through the lens of funding agencies' perspectives, this thesis provides a

comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by opera companies. It acknowledges the interconnected nature of political, economic, and cultural factors and underscores the importance of engaging with funding agencies to shape the narrative around opera. This insight facilitates a more informed and targeted approach to addressing funding challenges, advocating for the recognition of opera's cultural significance, and fostering collaborative efforts to ensure the financial sustainability of opera in South Africa.

This chapter presents the findings garnered from the semi-structured interviews conducted among the funding agencies. From the analysis, the following themes were developed: 1) funding challenges for opera companies; 2) perceptions and impact of opera company closures; 3) causes of, or reasons for the decline/reduction in state funding; 4) impact of economic stagnancy on funding; 5) strategies to increase funding; and 6) diversification of funding methods. After presenting each theme and the participating funding agencies' responses, this chapter provides a summary according to the similarities and differences identified. These themes provide a comprehensive overview of the funding landscape for opera companies in South Africa, touching on the challenges, strategies, and broader contextual factors that shape the funding environment.

7.2.1 Funding challenges

This theme focuses on the specific difficulties and obstacles faced by the opera companies in securing financial support. It encompasses factors such as limited resources, competition for funds, and economic factors affecting the arts sector. The participating funding agencies are identified as PF1, PF2, and so forth, to differentiate them from the participants in the opera companies.

The following responses to the question regarding their funding allocation challenges were insightful:

PF1:

Well, there are many challenges that we experience as funding agency, and these are economic challenges, fiscal deficits, and competing priorities, which have led to limited resources for state funding. In times of financial strain,

governments always reduce funding for various sectors, including arts and culture. These are some of the factors that contribute towards the decline of state funding for the opera industry. However, as funding agencies, we have been able to fund projects partially and have never been able to fund the whole opera, since funding the full opera requires much funding.

PF2:

I think the main challenge we experience when it comes to funding opera is the decline of funding caused by various factors, such as changes in government leadership or ... political ideologies can impact funding priorities. Different administrations may have varying views on the importance of supporting the arts and culture. Some policymakers and government officials may not fully appreciate the significance of opera as an art form and its broader contributions to society, leading to reduced funding. For me, I would say that it is not necessarily true that opera companies are not fundable. It is just that the amount of money that opera companies require in most cases is more than what we have available to give out. As government agencies that provide funding and support to the opera industry, we have faced budget cuts due to the economic impact of the pandemic. Government has had to allocate resources to address urgent health and economic needs, resulting in reduced funding for arts and culture, including opera. This has limited the ability of government agencies to provide financial support to opera companies and artists, resulting in decreased production budgets, staff reductions, and programming limitations.

PF3:

I would say funding for the arts generally by government at provincial and national level is limited, even when the funding is granted, the disbursement process, which pays in instalments or tranches, works against the whole intent to support as in some instances the funding comes too late. There is not a dedicated fund set up by government to address the needs of this sector. I think what should happen is that the sector must apply or respond to application calls or invitations, which are over-subscribed as they cater for all

art forms. These are the factors that contribute towards the decline of state funding for the opera industry.

PF4:

Since there are many factors that contribute to the decline of state funding for the opera industry, I believe opera companies could improve how they apply for funding and find a new method of sourcing resources and not be limited to just government or a few companies for grants.

Participant F1 acknowledges several challenges faced by funding agencies, including economic challenges, fiscal deficits, and competing priorities. Participant F1 further points out that limited resources for state funding can result from reductions in funding for various sectors during times of financial strain and highlights that full funding for opera productions has been challenging in South Africa due to the substantial costs involved. Scholars such as Florea (2014) and Spies (2015) admit that securing full funding for opera productions is a challenge in many parts of the world, not only in South Africa. Opera is a complex art form that involves various cost items, such as costumes, sets, musicians, singers, orchestra, and technical support. All these components contribute to the high production costs associated with opera performances (Florea, 2014; Spies, 2015).

PF3 emphasises that the limited funding for the arts takes place by government at provincial and national levels. This participant mentions the challenges with the disbursement process, which delays funding and works against the intended support. This aligns with Spies (2015) who argues that insufficient government funding for the arts at both provincial and national levels has led to significant challenges within the opera industry. PF3 also notes that there is not a dedicated fund for the arts, which could streamline the funding process. This participant also mentions the high demand for available funding through oversubscribed application calls. This is also substantiated by Spies (2015:48):

[T]here has been no funding on a provincial level since the disbandment of the provincial arts councils. Opera companies can also not rely on government funding as there is currently no institutional assistance, as revealed in the

literature review. In the past, the National Lottery has supported companies, but in recent years, this parastatal has faced its internal challenges. Companies can therefore not rely on their support.

It is also interesting to note that PF2 provides a different perspective on the funding challenges by focusing on the impact of changes in government leadership and political ideologies on funding priorities. This participant also notes that while opera companies are fundable, the financial requirements of these companies often exceed the available funds. PF2 references the budget cuts due to the pandemic's economic impact as a factor leading to decreased support for the arts.

From the response of these two participants, it becomes clear that there is a shared recognition of the broader challenges faced by funding agencies in supporting opera companies and the arts in general. These findings align with the literature of local scholars (Roos, 2010; Spies, 2015; Yende & Mugovhani, 2021), demonstrating that significant economic constraints, fiscal deficits, and the absence of dedicated funds are all factors that limit the availability of resources for cultural initiatives. Furthermore, the disbursement process, as highlighted by PF3, introduces another layer of complexity that can hinder the timely and effective allocation of funds.

It is also interesting to note that PF4 provides some workable solutions by stating that opera companies could take proactive steps to improve their funding situation. This finding aligns with both local (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015) and international literature (Florea, 2014; Kawashima, 2020; Shilvock, 2002) that proposes that opera companies should explore new methods of sourcing funding beyond relying solely on government funding or grants from a few companies. This highlights the importance of diversifying funding sources and seeking alternative ways to sustain opera productions.

PF4's perspective introduces a practical approach to addressing the funding challenges faced by opera companies. This participant offers actionable solutions by suggesting that opera companies could enhance their funding situation through proactive measures such as the exploration of new resource acquisition methods. This guidance is affirmed by Spies (2015) who emphasises the value of diverse sources of funding, which may include collaborations, crowdsourcing, sponsorships, and other novel approaches.

7.2.2 Perceptions and impact of opera closures

This theme revolves around the perspectives and opinions held by the funding agencies regarding the closure of opera companies. It involves the discussions on the repercussions for the arts community, cultural heritage, and the wider society.

PF1:

My perception is that funding opera in the present time has completely changed from the funding of the 1980s and early-1990s in South Africa. As South Africa transitioned to a democratic society after 1994, efforts were made to address historical imbalances and promote inclusivity in the arts. However, the legacy of Apartheid still lingers, and the consequences of past funding practices can continue to affect the opera industry and other art forms today. [E]ven though the financial crisis is the fundamental issue in the opera industry worldwide, the situation has been exacerbated by the social demands. During the Apartheid era, the government was not responsible for all citizens but only a few minorities of the white population.

PF2:

My perception with regards to the closure of opera companies is that one of the significant factors that contribute towards a financial decline in the performing arts, in general, is that we have 80% of the population living in poverty. The current democratic government money had to be now spread to the 100% of the population instead of the 8% of the population as before. This meant that the budget will be drastically reduced to cater for the social needs, especially those of previously marginalised communities. For example, if you

had ... let us say you had 100 million Rands [5491871,00 USD]² to spend on arts during the Apartheid government [era], it was easy to split it in four ways into the four provinces where all the performing arts councils existed. So, I think it is a matter of priority for the government. It is a matter of priority for the survival of the country. And the needs are not the same. Currently, more costs need to go to the community rather than entertainment.

PF3:

Now, the closure of opera companies was inevitable. I understand that in pre-1994, opera companies were allocated a substantial amount of funding to run their programmes and activities. Substantial funding was provided for travel/touring and through touring, the companies could raise more funds to sustain their own activities. However, in the post-1994, no such funding is provided by government, in fact funding is withdrawn and reduced. It is true that the impact of the closure of opera companies has had a negative impact on the growth and development of talent in this area. In South Africa, young opera singers and graduates do not have places of performances or funding to do performances. Also, before 1994, the [Apartheid] government catered for a certain number of art forms such as ballet, orchestra, and opera, for a much more reduced number of people. The subsidy was available for only a certain group of the population and also geographic areas.

² The conversions provided are based on approximate exchange rates for the South African Rand (ZAR) to the US Dollar (USD) in 2022. For example, in 2022, the exchange rate was about 17.01 ZAR per 1 USD. It is important to note that these values are approximate and reflect the volatility of the exchange rate between the Rand and the Dollar throughout the year. Due to this volatility, the actual USD amount equivalent to 500,000 ZAR would vary depending on the specific exchange rate at the time of conversion. Therefore, the exact amount in USD could differ from these estimates based on the prevailing exchange rate on any given date.

PF4:

My perception is that in the 1980s to early-1990s, the [Apartheid] government catered mainly for the white population. They did not care about black people so much. It was more just a small group of white people. You need to make them happy. So, they did not have high costs for the country as it is today. However, after 1994, the current government had to cater for all the people of colour. Hence, there is so much closure of opera companies in South Africa.

The participants' responses highlight similar lenses regarding the changes in funding and support for opera companies in South Africa, particularly before and after the transition to democracy in 1994. PF1's response highlights the shift in funding for opera in South Africa from the 1980s and early 1990s to the present. The statement made by PF1 aligns with Olivier (2014), Spies (2015), and Yende and Mugovhani (2021), who state that the transition to democracy in 1994 aimed to address historical imbalances in arts funding and to promote inclusivity. The financial crisis of 2008 and the recent global COVID-19 pandemic worsened the situation, exacerbated by social demands. During Apartheid, funding prioritised white minorities rather than all citizens. Also, the white minorities grew up being familiar with opera and learned about the different forms of music at school. This did not happen in black schools (Parker, 2021).

PF2's perspective focuses on the closure of opera companies and the decline in performing arts funding, attributing the financial decline to the shift from catering to 8% of the population during Apartheid to serving the entire population post-1994. This redistribution did not only lead to reduced arts budgets, but social needs also took precedence. The government's priority shifted to community support and addressing widespread poverty rather than entertainment.

PF3 highlights the fact that, pre-1994, opera companies received substantial funding for their programmes and touring, which sustained their activities. PF3 also makes the point that the post-1994 reduction and withdrawal of government funding and subsequent closure of opera companies negatively impacted on talent growth and development, leaving young opera singers without places to perform or find employment. The participants highlight common challenges including the withdrawal

of funding, decreased budgets, and shifts in government priorities. These factors have played a collective and significant role in the shutting down of opera companies. The redistribution of resources to accommodate the needs of a broader population has strained the financial support for the arts, affecting opera companies' sustainability and leading to operational difficulties (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015).

7.2.3 Causes of the decline in, or reduction of state funding

This theme explores the significant factors contributing to the decline in, or the reduction of state funding for opera companies in South Africa. This involves economic trends, shifts in government priorities, or perceived changes in public sentiment towards the opera industry.

One of the causes highlighted by funding entities has been the COVID-19 pandemic.

PF1:

Currently, we are receiving limited funding. As the effect of COVID-19 pandemic hit, we received minimal funding from the government, and we had to start a relief fund to assist many artists. This affected many companies that rely on us for funding. However, as the COVID continued, there was a shift of resources, and the relief fund was affected, causing negative ... for opera companies. It is a common challenge for any funding agency in the country to balance immediate relief efforts with the ongoing support of established opera companies and other arts entities.

PF2:

One of the major factors that contribute towards financial decline in the performing arts in general is that in South Africa we have 80% of the population living under the poverty. The current democratic government money had to be now spread to the 100% of the population instead of the 8% of the population. This meant that the budget will be drastically reduced to cater for social needs for all South Africans, especially those of previously marginalised communities. For an example, if you if you had ... let us say you had 100 million Rands [5491871,00 USD] to spend on arts in South Africa

during the Apartheid government, it was easy to split it in four ways in the four provinces where all the performing arts councils existed. So, I think it is a matter of priority for the government, it is a matter of priority for survival of the country and the needs are not the same. Currently, there are more costs that need to go to the community rather than entertainment.

PF3:

Government has not put the art form on the priority list. Government's lack of thinking around incentives such as rebates, i.e., tax rebates has affected opera companies. Lack of broad advertising and promotion of the art form and lack of a National Audience Development Plan. Also, one should not overlook that COVID-19 came in a season where South Africa was already battling economically. I am aware that the reduced government funding for opera companies during the pandemic may have had long-term effects that will likely affect the opera industry's survival and sustainability in the post-pandemic age.

PF4:

I will talk about the current situation that contributes to the significant causes of the decline of state funding for opera companies in South Africa. In South Africa, it is unfortunate that opera companies rely on us as government agencies for funding and as a significant source of revenue. However, now in the height of COVID-19, as government agencies, we have faced challenges in securing enough funding to support opera companies and this has led to many challenges in the industry of arts.

PF1 mentions that minimal government funding was received due to the pandemic, prompting them to establish a relief fund for artists. However, the ongoing effects of the pandemic led to a shift in resources, negatively affecting the relief fund and consequently causing difficulties for opera companies. The perception of government agencies resonates with the statement by Yende (2021) who points out that the

COVID-19 pandemic has created a financial crisis in the performing arts industry, especially in the opera industry.

This was substantiated by the South African Cultural Observatory (2020:57), reporting that,

... government, commercial and non-profit entities previously affording performance opportunities, sponsorship, donor funding and other support to music performances and events have shed revenue and prospects and are no longer able to do so this.

Additionally, Yende (2021) points out that during the height of COVID-19, the South African Government funding agencies were hesitant to commit to long-term funding for opera companies due to the uncertain timeline of the pandemic and its long-term economic repercussions. Due to this uncertainty, opera companies found it extremely challenging to rely on potential government funding, as eventually there was a collapse of government funding (Yende, 2021).

PF3 highlights that government priorities have not been favourable towards opera companies, lacking incentives such as tax rebates and a National Audience Development Plan, with the added challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the existing economic struggles.

A different lens is applied by PF2 who points out that the decline in state funding can be attributed to a number of factors. During the Apartheid era, opera companies received substantial government support, particularly catering to the white population. However, after 1994, the government had to distribute resources among the entire population, which reduced the budget available for the arts. The participant emphasises the government's focus on addressing social needs for the broader population, impacting, or even depleting the funds available for entertainment and the arts.

7.2.4 The impact of economic stagnancy on funding

This theme looks at how economic stagnancy, or South Africa's current poor economic environment, has affected available funding for opera companies in South Africa. This

section involves discussions on the reduced number of corporate sponsorships, decreased individual donations, and government budget cuts.

In response to this theme, the following statements are made:

PF1:

I think the economic stagnancy has led to financial difficulties for opera companies in South Africa, making it challenging for them to maintain their operations, plan, and continue providing quality performances. In such circumstances, it becomes crucial for opera companies to seek creative solutions, explore alternative funding sources, and engage in cost-saving measures to ensure their sustainability during difficult economic times.

PF2:

I think what needs to happen in terms of the opera companies themselves is that they must create their funding strategies ... less dependent on state funding. For instance, if you look at an example, if you look at how Europe funds opera houses, what they do is that they say to the opera house, you have to you have 100%, let's say 100% of your budget is a million, we as the city, state, whatever will give you 70% and you need to raise the other 30% through ticket sales, through other means of creating revenue for yourself. So, I think for South Africa, opera companies need to start looking at that model, I think it may ultimately succeed. Ultimately, the idea that opera is an elitist art form that does not necessarily have to make money, that is an antiquated idea, it is completely out of the picture. Now, opera companies must start developing models that are business oriented, entrepreneurial in nature, so that if a company requires a certain amount of money for either operations, or for a production, you need to find different means of, of developing those revenues. Without having to ask for money from government. Opera companies must be like businesses because if you do not have the money, you cannot do the work. My main concern is that opera companies just want to depend on governmental funding only, which is not sufficient to fund opera industry due to the expenses of opera.

PF3:

The success of opera companies is reliant on funding and a paying audience. Also, economic status of individual, and orientation in terms of the art form itself has an impact. South Africans spent money on products that are broadly advertised, such as liquor, and so forth.

In summary, participants' responses illuminate crucial facets of the challenges confronting opera companies in South Africa concerning their funding and financial sustainability. The discourse unveils persistent issues such as a heavy reliance on government subsidies, limited diversification of revenue streams, and the formidable task of balancing artistic innovation with financial viability. The imperative need for cultivating partnerships, both within the arts sector and with external entities, emerges as a recurrent theme. Furthermore, participants underscore the significance of adapting to digital technologies while grappling with the financial burdens and skill gaps associated with such transitions. Overall, the insights garnered from these perspectives contribute to a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted obstacles and opportunities shaping the financial landscape of opera in South Africa. PF2 emphasises the importance of reducing reliance on state funding and advocates for a funding model where opera companies should raise a significant portion of their budgets through means such as ticket sales and other revenue-generating methods. Existing academic literature supports the findings that creating a funding model where opera companies generate a significant portion of their budgets through ticket sales and other revenue-generating methods is a practical approach to ensuring financial stability (Agid & Tarondeau; 2010; Florea, 2014; Spies, 2015).

In conclusion, the participants' insights collectively underscore the need for opera companies in South Africa to be alert to, and to adapt to changing economic landscapes. This includes diversifying funding sources, engaging audiences effectively, and adopting business-oriented approaches to ensure their financial sustainability. Opera companies must adapt to the effects of the economy, especially those made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic and discover strategies to maintain their artistic activities while addressing their financial restraints.

7.2.5 Strategies to increase funding for opera companies

This theme focuses on exploring ideas and strategies to enhance funding opportunities for opera companies in South Africa. This involves discussions around encouragement, partnerships, and innovative fundraising approaches.

PF1, addressing this theme, mentions:

I would say, opera is a significant cultural art form just like any other that represents the artistic expression of a nation's heritage. Government must see the value of arts, especially opera and increase funding. Supporting opera helps us as a country to preserve and celebrate cultural traditions, fostering a sense of pride and identity among citizens. Governments can demonstrate their commitment to promote and encourage cultural diversity, supporting creative businesses, and enriching citizens' lives through expanding arts funding. A thriving cultural industry, including opera, is fundamental to a healthy and functioning society, and increased government financing may assist assure its long-term expansion and vibrancy.

PF2 responds to this theme by asserting:

Yes, it is essential for opera companies to be innovative, like any arts organisation, to explore and invent alternative methods ... to fund their operations is crucial. Relying solely on government funding or traditional sources of income is not always sustainable or sufficient to meet their financial needs of opera companies.

PF3 states:

I think what should happen is that the government should finance a recovery plan, which could be some kind of stimulus package. The Presidential Stimulus Employment Package should cater for this and provide a substantial amount of money. Businesses were funding opera companies; government can collaborate and match these grants through Business Arts South Africa (BASA).

PF4 states:

In my opinion, to increase funding for opera companies in South Africa, various approaches are needed that involve collaboration between the government, private sector, philanthropic organisations, and the arts community. It is also important to encourage the government to recognise the value of opera as an essential cultural asset and invest in the arts sector through increased funding and subsidies. Advocate for specific allocations in the national and provincial budgets dedicated to supporting opera companies.

The funding agencies recognise the significance of opera as a cultural art form and its importance in preserving and celebrating a nation's heritage. There is also a common understanding that government funding plays a crucial role in supporting opera and other forms of artistic expression as noted by Olivier (2014) and Spies (2015). However, the participants also offer differing insights into how best to approach this funding dilemma and sustain opera companies' operations. It is interesting to note that PF2 introduces the idea of innovation for opera companies. This participant believes that opera companies should explore innovative and alternative funding methods beyond relying solely on government funding or traditional sources. This perspective highlights opera companies' need for adaptability and creativity in sustaining themselves financially. These findings align with Agid and Tarondeau (2010), and Spies (2015), who state that opera companies can establish partnerships with corporations that align with their values and objectives. Companies can provide financial support in exchange for branding opportunities, exposure, and alignment with cultural and artistic initiatives. This is substantiated by PF3 who focuses on a recovery plan for opera companies, proposing a stimulus package funded by government. PF3 also raises the option of opera companies collaborating with the private sector and organisations such as Business Arts South Africa (BASA), which could match grants provided by businesses. This approach seeks to address the financial challenges faced by opera companies through a combination of public and private support (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). PF4 takes a comprehensive approach to the topic of funding for opera companies and suggests a multi-stakeholder strategy, involving collaboration between government, the private sector, philanthropic organisations, and the arts community. This approach underscores the importance of

various sectors working together to recognise the value of opera and allocate resources accordingly. The participant also advocates that there should be specific budget allocations at the national and provincial levels to support opera companies.

In summary, these participants recognise the importance of opera as a cultural asset, but while government and politicians do not seem to recognise its value to the broader population, the funding agencies recommend that the opera companies will have little option but to search for diversified funding sources. While there are different viewpoints on how to achieve this, the overarching theme is the recognition of opera's cultural role.

7.2.6 Diversification of funding methods

The above theme includes the views of the funding agencies on opera companies having to invent other methods to fund their operations. The findings highlight that relying solely on one source of funding, such as state funding, can be risky. While the findings reveal that government funding had been a crucial part of an opera company's revenue, exploring alternative funding methods can provide stability, foster innovation, and help the company thrive in the face of various challenges. The following are the direct responses from the participants:

PF1:

In my personal experience, I think it is important for opera companies and other arts organisations in South Africa to explore and invent other methods to fund their operations. I am saying this because traditional funding sources are always subject to fluctuations, changes in government priorities, or economic downturns. Exploring alternative funding methods creates a buffer against funding uncertainties.

PF2:

Yes, it is essential for opera companies to be innovative, like any arts organisation, to explore and invent alternative methods to fund their operations is crucial. Relying solely on government funding or traditional

sources of income is not always sustainable or sufficient to meet the financial needs of opera companies.

PF3:

I believe opera companies have been innovative enough. The innovation that some opera companies have already demonstrated, such as Cape Town Opera's efforts to adapt to the digital landscape and explore new marketing strategies. Innovation is crucial for the survival and growth of any artistic organisation, especially in a rapidly changing world.

PF4:

Yes, it is important for opera companies, like any arts organisations, to explore and invent alternative methods to fund their operations. Relying solely on government funding or traditional sources of income can sometimes be unsustainable or insufficient to meet the financial needs of opera companies. The arts landscape and audience preferences evolve over time. Opera companies that rely heavily on traditional revenue sources might struggle to adapt to changing trends. Diversified funding can provide the flexibility needed to experiment with new ideas and engage with different audience segments.

All funding agency participants agree that opera companies and arts organisations in South Africa need to pursue innovative funding methods for their operations due to the limitations of traditional and government funding sources. They recognise that these traditional sources are prone to fluctuations, changes in government priorities, and economic downturns, making them unreliable. The participants emphasise the importance of exploring alternative funding approaches to mitigate uncertainties and financial challenges. They concur that relying on government funding or conventional income streams is not sustainable for opera companies. They stress the need for these organisations to be proactive in inventing and embracing alternative methods to meet their financial needs. The consensus is that innovation is essential for the survival and growth of arts organisations, particularly in a rapidly changing world and this is echoed in the works of Florea (2014), Olivier (2014), and Spies (2015).

PF3 expresses that opera companies have already tried to be innovative and cites Cape Town Opera's adaptation to the digital landscape and new marketing strategies as evidence of the sector's ability to evolve. In the context of South Africa, inventing and implementing other methods to fund opera operations is not only important but also a strategic necessity for the continued survival and success of the industry. Although government funding is acknowledged as an important source of revenue, it is seen as potentially insufficient or unstable on its own. The participants stress the need for opera companies to adapt to changing trends in the arts landscape and engage with different audience segments, which may be facilitated by diversified funding approaches. Overall, there appears to be an understanding among the participants that innovation and strategic thinking in funding are crucial for the continued success and vitality of the opera industry in South Africa.

7.2.7 Other interesting points that were raised during the semi-structured interviews

7.2.7.1 Funding difficulties for opera productions at tertiary level

In addition to the perspectives shared by the participants, PF3 states:

Also, SA is blessed with enormous talent in his field, but has two universities that specialise in the music, the Tshwane University of Technology and the UCT Opera School. However, universities also struggle to raise funding for productions and practical recitals. Postgraduate students in this field face challenges when raising funding for recitals to support their studies. Another challenge I think is that ... lack of paying audiences. SA is a country characterised by high levels of unemployment and performing artists struggle to generate money through ticket sales.

These additional remarks highlight the broad scope of the funding challenges facing South Africa's performing arts industry. PF3 highlights how financial constraints affect several facets of the ecosystem, including educational institutions, the artists, and the more general problem of audience engagement. For the country to overcome these obstacles, a comprehensive strategy that considers the nation's economic conditions, the upbringing and support of new artists, and the development of long-

term audience engagement plans will be necessary (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). To sustain the industry in the long run, efforts should be directed toward fostering audience engagement (Spies, 2015). This could involve creative initiatives that account for the economic realities of potential audience members, making performances accessible and appealing, despite the financial constraints.

7.2.7.2 *The level of production costs and budgets*

It is prudent to note the following relevant facts from PF2:

Well, I think ... if the actual budget is ... determines that an opera company should have a production. As mentioned to you earlier on, there is a way that if you as an organisation do not have any of your artistic expertise in-house, that you will have to bring them all in and there is one where you have everyone in-house and you must create the production itself. The costs then become quite different. So, there is no steadfast amount of money. That ... because I believe that if you have, for instance, R500 000 [27 459,35 USD], you can put on a production, if you have all your singers, most of your creative in terms of your designers and, and, and technicians working for the organisation on a full-time basis, you could put on a production for around R500 000 [27 459,35 USD]. But if you need to have to import ... and this is on a very minimum scale. If you need to bring all those expertise together from designers, conductor, director, all soloist, and chorus, if you have to incorporate those into the production and they are not full-time members of your organisation, then it could range from 1.5 million Rands [82 367,40 USD] to 2.5 million Rands [137 279,00 USD], depending on who you want, and how much they cost. For instance, if you do the first option, which is the R500 000 [27 459,35 USD] you want to have the likes of Pumeza Matshikiza, Pretty Yende, Sunny Dladla, then you must understand that they cost a lot more. But you also have other costs, which are transport and accommodation and all those other things. But if you do a production and you want those kinds of names to come and perform, then the R2.5 million [137 279,00 USD] budgets would be the one to use, because in that case, you will be able to afford almost everything that they asked for.

PF2 explains that the budget of an opera company significantly influences the scale of its productions. This participant mentions two scenarios: one where the company has all artistic expertise in-house, and another where they need to bring in external experts. The costs vary greatly between these scenarios. There is not a fixed budget amount, but rather a range based on circumstances. If the company has its own singers, designers, and technicians as full-time staff, they could put on a production with a budget of around R500 000 [27459, 35 USD]. However, if the company needs to hire external expertise like designers, conductors, directors, soloists, and chorus members who are not part of the organisation, the budget could range from R1.5 million [82 367,40 USD] to R2.5 million [137 279,00 USD], depending on the individuals' costs. PF2 underscores the importance of considering both the in-house approach and the cost of external professionals when determining the budget for opera productions.

It is noteworthy that some of the opera company managers who were interviewed expressed a strong interest in collaborating with South African opera singers who are living and working abroad. These managers view such collaborations as a potentially effective short-term strategy to positively influence previously disadvantaged communities (see, PF2). By involving internationally renowned South African opera singers as fundraisers or board members, these companies hope to leverage their global reputation and networks to attract funding and support for their initiatives. However, despite the potential benefits, some opera company managers have highlighted significant challenges associated with these collaborations. One of the primary obstacles is the high cost of hiring renowned opera singers. Artists such as Pumeza Matshikiza, Pretty Yende, and Sunny Dladla command substantial fees for their performances and appearances. These expenses can be prohibitive for many South African opera companies, which often operate with limited budgets and face financial constraints.

Moreover, the logistics and coordination required to facilitate these collaborations can also be complex and costly. This includes arranging travel, accommodation, and other logistical details for international artists, further adding to the financial burden on local opera companies. Additionally, there may be contractual and scheduling difficulties, as these renowned singers have busy international careers and may have

limited availability to participate in projects in South Africa. In conclusion, while the idea of collaborating with internationally renowned South African opera singers holds significant promise for enhancing the reach and impact of local opera companies, it is essential to address the financial and logistical challenges involved. By developing creative solutions and fostering supportive partnerships, it may be possible to realise the potential benefits of these collaborations and further the growth and sustainability of opera in South Africa.

7.3 Overall result from the responses

The study's findings highlight the global struggle for financial sustainability among opera companies, attributed to rising production costs, diminishing government support, and a decline in ticket sales. Participants affirm the profound impact of reduced state funding in South Africa, acknowledging its potential to result in the closure of opera companies. The following summarises the key points derived from the responses of funding agencies regarding the financial sustainability challenges faced by opera companies:

7.3.1 Reduction in state funding

Participants concur that state funding constitutes a substantial portion of opera companies' budgets. A decline in state funding can lead to financial instability, posing challenges for companies to cover critical expenses such as artists' fees, production costs, venue rentals, and administrative overheads. This financial strain can, in turn, impact the quality and frequency of productions, ultimately jeopardising the overall viability of opera companies.

Participants acknowledge the inherent value of arts and culture in society. They highlight how opera contributes significantly to social cohesion, community well-being, and the preservation of cultural heritage. They also agree that government funding has played a crucial role in ensuring that opera remains accessible and inclusive. This support has helped to make cultural experiences available to a diverse range of audiences.

Participants acknowledge the significant role of the Apartheid-era's government on the funding of opera and the broader arts sector in South Africa. The policies of racial

segregation and discrimination during the Apartheid era, lasting from 1948 to 1994, had far-reaching effects on various aspects of society, including the arts. While it strongly supported the arts and opera during that era, it was the white population who benefitted from this support, while it excluded the black majority. While there had been much hope that this scenario would improve after 1994 and the change to a democratic government, the transformation and restructuring of the performing arts sector in post-Apartheid South Africa has been a multifaceted and ongoing process. Although efforts had been made to create more equitable funding structures, challenges persist in ensuring access to resources and opportunities for opera companies, the artists and arts organisations. The Government is recognised for its ongoing efforts to address these challenges and for fostering a dynamic and inclusive arts landscape in South Africa. However, there is still not full support from government regarding the vital role of opera.

7.3.2 Funding limitations and misperceptions

Some participants assert that the current government may not have the capacity to fund opera in South Africa and that there are limited government funds available that can be allocated to the opera industry. While some funding agencies may still see opera as an Apartheid-era art form only directed at the white elite, others challenge this notion, emphasising that the demographic composition of opera companies in South Africa has evolved. They highlight the increased representation of young opera singers who were previously excluded from participating in this art form and that attendance of opera performances is open to all population groups. This demographic shift challenges the idea that opera is inherently tied to the Apartheid era or a white elite.

While participants concur that government support is essential in ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in opera, they recognise the historical influence of Apartheid policies on arts funding and acknowledge the complex, ongoing process of transforming the performing arts sector in South Africa. However, some express doubt about the government's capacity or political will to fully fund opera in South Africa, where they believe that social needs, addressing poverty and unemployment, are greater than the needs raised by the arts or opera companies.

7.3.3 Perceptions of opera managers and state funding agencies

This section delves into the contrasting viewpoints between opera managers and state funding agencies in the context of South Africa's opera industry. Opera managers contend that the decline in funding is rooted in the perception of opera as being Eurocentric and elitist, hindering its accessibility for the broader population. They advocate for a transformative shift in image, emphasising diversity and community engagement. Conversely, state funding agencies attribute funding challenges to broader economic issues, urging opera companies to prove their relevance by aligning with societal goals. The interplay of these perspectives underscores the complex dynamics shaping the opera landscape, where balancing image transformation and societal alignment is crucial for securing some financial support. At the same time, limited available government resources will remain a major challenge for opera companies, and this will force them to become pro-active, innovative, and adaptable.

7.3.3.1 The Opera Manager's perspective

Opera managers find themselves grappling with the entrenched perception of opera as a Eurocentric art form catering exclusively to a small elite. This perception, they argue, is a significant barrier to securing funding and expanding the reach of opera to a broader demographic. The stereotype of opera as an exclusive, highbrow experience creates disconnect between the art form and potential audiences, hindering the industry's growth. Therefore, to combat this perception, opera managers advocate for an innovative transformation of the image of opera. They emphasise the need to diversify the repertoire, incorporating more indigenous elements and actively engaging with communities. Breaking free from the exclusive Eurocentric mould is not just a creative choice but, according to opera managers, a strategic imperative for the survival and prosperity of opera in the South African context. However, the implementation of these changes requires financial support, and herein lies the crux. Opera managers contend that the perceived elitism of opera hinders their ability to secure the necessary funding. Bridging the gap between the art form and a wider audience demands financial resources, which they argue can be achieved through a more nuanced understanding of opera's role in a diverse and evolving society. However, this would have to be carefully researched as dramatic changes in the

repertoire could result in the loss of paying audiences and the appeal to an audience that cannot afford to pay for the tickets as poverty and unemployment are still rampant in the country. It could then mean that loyal supporters would move to international online streaming of operas. International opera houses have also been faced with limited numbers of audience attendances and when changing to ‘modern’ versions, they lost their previous supporters.

7.3.3.2 The state funding agencies’ perspective

State funding agencies approach the issue from a broader economic and pragmatic perspective. They attribute the decline in funding for opera companies to shifting economic priorities and a redistribution of resources to address pressing societal needs. In a landscape where education, healthcare, and infrastructure development compete for funding, opera’s historical associations with elitism and its small audience numbers make it challenging to justify financial support. State funding agencies stress the necessity for opera companies to adapt to the changing economic landscape and prove their relevance to contemporary South African society by diversifying programming, actively engaging with communities, and aligning activities with broader social and cultural goals. For these agencies, the emphasis is not solely on transforming the image of opera but on ensuring it becomes a more inclusive and socially conscious art form that aligns with the values and priorities of the nation. However, they did not follow this suggestion up with a promise of funding to be made available. Rather, they suggest that opera companies must be pro-active, innovative and resourceful to find other sources of funding.

7.3.3.3 The interplay

The interplay of these perspectives reveals a complex web of challenges. Opera managers advocate for a transformation of perception, arguing that this is the key to securing funding and expanding the audience base. On the other hand, state funding agencies, while acknowledging the need for change, prioritise the ability of opera to demonstrate its relevance within the broader societal context. The clash between these perspectives creates a delicate balancing act for opera companies. They must simultaneously navigate the intricacies of image transformation and align themselves with societal priorities to make a compelling case for financial support through BASA.

The interplay underscores the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by the opera industry in South Africa, requiring a holistic and collaborative approach to secure its future.

Evidently, the perceptions of opera managers and state funding agencies form a critical narrative in understanding the funding challenges faced by the opera industry in South Africa. Bridging the gap between these perspectives necessitates a nuanced approach that addresses both the image problem of opera and its alignment with broader societal goals. As the opera industry grapples with these challenges, finding common ground becomes essential for securing the financial support needed to not only survive but to thrive in the diverse and evolving cultural landscape of South Africa.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter delved into a critical analysis of the study's findings through empirical data analysis and interpretation, focusing on the perspectives from funding entities and policymakers in the South African context. It aimed to elucidate the intricate dynamics that influence financial decisions regarding opera companies, shedding light on the challenges faced by these entities and the factors that shape their funding approaches. The research findings revealed a compelling narrative of the financial struggles encountered by opera companies not only in South Africa but also across the globe. The overarching challenge has been a result of escalating production costs, diminishing government support, and a decline in ticket sales. These factors have contributed collectively to the financial crisis in which many opera companies find themselves entangled. The participants in the study confirmed the significant implications of reduced state funding in South Africa, recognising its potential to lead to the closure of opera companies.

The study captures the voices of funding entities and policymakers, presenting their perspectives on the financial sustainability of opera companies. It underscores the complexities surrounding funding decisions, which are influenced by historical legacies, societal perceptions, and economic considerations. The dissolution of performing arts councils, changes in funding structures, and misconceptions about

opera within political and community circles emerge as key factors contributing to the funding challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa.

One critical aspect illuminated in this chapter is the divergent perspectives on the role of government support in the opera industry. While opera company managers stress the vital role of government funding, there is a recognition of the ongoing complexities related to post-Apartheid transformation in the performing arts sector. Some express doubts about the current government's capacity to finance opera, hinting at potential constraints on the extent of funding available. Furthermore, the research findings highlight the impact of societal demands on dwindling government support for opera. Economic stagnation is identified as an exacerbating factor, further complicating the financial landscape for opera companies. The lack of support for opera among previously disadvantaged communities, coupled with the perception of opera as an art form catering exclusively to a white minority, adds a layer of complexity to the funding challenges faced by opera companies.

The study also investigated the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the opera industry. The participants acknowledged that the pandemic has significantly worsened the financial woes confronting opera companies in South Africa. This aligns with existing research, emphasising the urgency for comprehensive measures to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic and address pre-existing vulnerabilities within the South African opera landscape.

In essence, this chapter contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa by presenting the perspectives of funding entities and policymakers. It emphasises the need for collaborative efforts, strategic interventions, and a forward-looking approach to ensure the resilience and revitalisation of the opera industry in the face of complex financial and societal dynamics.

The next chapter focuses on the new data and existing literature to answer the sub-questions developed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 8: Literature presentation to answer the sub-questions

Chapter 6 provided a detailed exploration of the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa, analysing the data collected from semi-structured interviews with opera managers. The perspectives gathered offered valuable insights into the internal dynamics, financial struggles, and operational hurdles encountered by these cultural institutions. In Chapter 7, the focus shifted to the other side of the spectrum, delving into the responses and considerations of the funding agencies within the South African context. Through empirical data analysis and interpretation, this chapter examined the viewpoints of those responsible for shaping the financial landscape of the opera industry. By aligning these findings with existing scholarly writings and social constructivism theory, my aim was to unravel the complexities and intricacies of the external factors influencing the financial sustainability of opera companies.

Now, in Chapter 8, I explore the data that was generated, as well as the existing literature, to address the sub-questions formulated in Chapter 1. By juxtaposing the insights gained from opera managers and funding agencies in Chapters 6 and 7, this review aims to offer a holistic perspective on the challenges and opportunities encountered by opera companies, providing a nuanced understanding of the broader ecosystem that contributes to their financial sustainability.

8.1 What are the significant current challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa?

Many participants acknowledge and agree that South African opera companies encounter persistent difficulties, particularly in terms of not receiving financial support from the government. This view is also shared by scholars such as Olivier (2014), Spies (2015), and Van der Hoven (2023) who affirm that the most significant challenge opera companies face in South Africa is the decline of funding from government and the private sector. Opera companies struggle to maintain and increase revenues (Spies, 2015). The financial challenges “have existed in opera houses worldwide for a long time” (Florea, 2014:787). The problem of financial dependence on government funding affects opera company operations predominantly. Severe financial uncertainty pervades the opera industry (Burdukova, 2010; Florea, 2014).

International literature supports the findings that many opera companies, regardless of location, encounter challenges in securing adequate funding to sustain their operations (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Auvinen, 2001; Florea, 2014; Rudland, 2023; Söndermann, 2011). This struggle is well-documented in international literature and is a significant concern within the performing arts industry. Factors such as declining government support, competition for funding, and shifts in cultural priorities have contributed to the financial difficulties faced by opera companies worldwide (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010).

In analysing the data gleaned from the interviews, it becomes evident that the struggle opera companies face in securing funding from state sources is multifaceted. One significant factor contributing to this challenge is the presence of budget constraints within the governmental framework. Participants consistently pointed out the limitations imposed by budgetary considerations, indicating that the allocated financial resources for the arts and culture sector, including opera, may be insufficient to meet the diverse needs and demands of opera companies. Furthermore, the interviews shed light on the impact of competing priorities within the government's agenda. The state, with its myriad responsibilities and obligations, must allocate funds to address various sectors, each vying for financial support. In this context, opera companies find themselves in direct competition with other areas of public interest, and the allocation of funds becomes a complex balancing act influenced by political, social, and economic considerations.

Changes in government policies regarding arts and culture funding emerge as another key element affecting the struggle for financial support. The evolving nature of policies can have direct consequences on the availability and accessibility of funds for opera companies. Participants noted instances where shifts in policy directions had a direct impact on the funding landscape, creating challenges for opera companies to adapt and navigate the evolving terrain. In essence, the data underscores that the difficulties faced by opera companies in securing state funding are not arbitrary but rooted in tangible issues such as budgetary constraints, competing priorities, and policy dynamics.

In terms of social constructivism, this might present a negative spiral as state finances are more impacted and even less money is provided to opera companies, with less performances and social presence, causing society's beliefs and values to gradually grow away from opera.

8.2 What is the level of funding for opera companies in South Africa?

Many of the opera company managers in this study confirm that they receive very little government funding from provincial or national government. This is in line with the report by Cape Town Opera (2022:16):

Funding remains a challenge, but Cape Town Opera remains resolute in pursuing its mission, focusing our efforts on artistic and educational excellence and value for all our stakeholders. Despite the headwinds posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, I am sure you share my admiration for the accomplishments of the company in 2022 – in my view all the more exceptional as we achieved all this on a budget of R24m [US \$1.287m at the time of writing]. Our systematic approach towards greater efficiency has steadily increased the financial stability of the company without compromising the quality or quantity of our output.

While there is an overall decline in funding for opera companies, certain cultural or artistic sectors, including opera, do receive financial support from the state. However, many participants agree that the funding received from the government, both at the provincial and national levels, is limited. The evidence gathered from opera company managers underscores a prevalent trend: a significant number of them report minimal government funding, both at the provincial and national levels. The findings from participants align with existing literature, affirming that government support for the opera sector in South Africa is indeed limited. This convergence between the insights of industry practitioners and documented research solidifies the understanding that government funding is not strong in this context.

Minimal government funding reported by managers is not an isolated perception but aligns with broader industry realities. This collective insight serves as a foundation for advocating for innovative funding models and fostering a more sustainable future for opera in the country.

8.3 What are the factors that affect funding for opera companies?

Several studies, including those by Roos (2010), Spies (2015), Van der Hoven (2023), and Yende & Mugovhani (2021), have investigated the various factors influencing funding for opera companies, particularly in the South African context. Spies (2015) specifically explores challenges within the South African opera market, focusing on the impact of the negative economic climate. Roos (2010) analyses the historical shifts in opera productions staged by South African companies before and after 1994, considering the changing political landscape. Van der Hoven (2023) and Yende and Mugovhani (2021) provide a broader examination of the influence of South Africa's economic landscape on the opera industry.

Despite the diverse contexts in which these studies were conducted, they collectively shed light on the multifaceted factors shaping the funding dynamics of opera companies in South Africa. For instance, Yende and Mugovhani (2021) emphasise the detrimental effects of a stagnant or poor economic landscape, leading to reduced corporate sponsorships, government funding, individual donations, ticket sales, earned revenue, and diminishing endowment returns for many opera companies. This observation aligns with the insights from interviews with opera company managers and state funding agencies, confirming the impact of economic fluctuations and a challenging economy on the overall availability of funding for the arts, including opera companies. Moreover, the study extends the analysis beyond economic considerations to encompass additional dimensions such as public perception, non-education, and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a comprehensive understanding of the funding challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa.

8.4 What are some workable solutions that could be adopted from European opera houses?

Cape Town Opera (CTO) stands as a shining example of operational excellence and financial resilience within the South African opera landscape. Inspired by the practices of European opera houses, particularly those discussed earlier in this research, CTO provides lessons that can be translated into actionable strategies. One crucial lesson is the emphasis on strategic collaborations. European opera houses have long recognised the benefits of forming partnerships to diversify revenue streams and broaden their

audience base (Florea, 2014). South African opera companies, drawing inspiration from CTO, can actively seek out collaborations with cultural institutions, educational entities, and businesses. These partnerships can contribute to the creation of a collaborative ecosystem that fosters financial stability.

A second key takeaway is the concept of shared resources. European opera houses often engage in resource-sharing initiatives, leading to cost efficiencies and improved sustainability (Spies, 2015). South African opera companies can explore similar models, sharing spaces, personnel, and production resources. This approach allows for a more efficient use of limited resources, contributing to financial viability. Community engagement emerges as a third lesson. European opera houses prioritise connecting with local communities, recognising the importance of fostering a dynamic cultural ecosystem (Florea, 2014).

The transformative power of collaboration constitutes another crucial aspect which goes beyond mere financial transactions, reshaping the operational fabric of opera companies (Spies, 2015). South African opera companies need to shift their perspective to view collaboration as a strategic imperative capable of bringing about positive and profound changes. Finally, the resilience fostered through collaboration is a key lesson. European opera houses, while facing their own financial challenges, have demonstrated the importance of embracing collaborative models for sustainability (Florea, 2014). South African opera companies can learn from this resilience, recognising that collaboration is not just a means of financial survival but a pathway to long-term success.

The findings of the study suggest that several workable solutions for the challenges facing the South African opera industry, inspired by practices in European opera houses, have already been effectively implemented by CTO. Drawing lessons from European counterparts, CTO serves as an exemplar in adopting strategies that enhance financial stability.

Firstly, the emphasis on strategic collaborations is noteworthy. European opera houses have long recognised the advantages of forming partnerships with cultural institutions, universities, and businesses to diversify revenue streams and broaden their audience base. CTO actively engages in such collaborations, demonstrating the

positive impact of such partnerships on financial stability. Secondly, the concept of shared resources is prominent. European opera houses often engage in resource-sharing initiatives, leading to cost efficiencies and improved sustainability. CTO follows a similar approach by exploring models that involve sharing spaces, personnel, and production resources, contributing to a more efficient use of limited resources. Community engagement emerges as a third key aspect. European opera houses prioritise connecting with local communities to foster a dynamic cultural ecosystem. CTO actively engages with local communities, ensuring that its productions resonate with a broader audience and maintain relevance within the local context. Finally, the CTO's resilience, even in challenging economic times, underscores the significance of collaboration as a pathway to long-term success.

CTO provides a practical blueprint for South African opera companies seeking financial stability. By drawing inspiration from European opera houses and embracing strategic collaborations, resource-sharing, community engagement, and transformative partnerships, opera companies can navigate the complex financial landscape and emerge stronger and more integrated into the cultural richness of South Africa. This is supported by various scholars who affirm that collaboration has a potential to bring about a range of benefits, including shared resources, diversified revenue streams, and expanded audience reach (Florea, 2014; Spies, 2015). This not only supports the financial sustainability of the opera company, but it also contributes to a vibrant and interconnected cultural ecosystem. This assertion is further corroborated by opera company managers interviewed in this study who affirm that exploring opportunities for international collaborations and touring productions is essential and would expand revenue sources and enhance the companies' global profile.

According to several participants, directly adopting and applying workable solutions from European opera houses to the South African opera industry presents challenges. Participants mention that the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional contexts of each country are distinct, and that these factors greatly influence the availability and stability of funding sources. These findings are in line with the social constructivism theory, which maintains the importance of considering the unique historical, socio-economic, cultural, and institutional contexts when discussing the transferability of

funding models from European opera houses to the South African opera industry. It acknowledges that these factors are not fixed nor universally applicable, but rather socially constructed and subject to interpretation. This implies that what works in one country might not necessarily translate well into another.

Various international opera companies adopted financial autonomy as a workable solution to their financial constraints (Florea, 2014). However, the financial environment in South Africa is fundamentally different from that of European countries because of the country's high level of unemployment and poverty, in addition to the historical context of opera, and cultural dissimilarities. This realisation highlights the necessity of designing innovative funding methods for the South African opera industry using a customised, context-specific approach.

8.5 What approaches could be applied in opera companies to curb the financial challenges in the future?

Many participants in this study agree that South African opera companies, like many arts organisations, face financial challenges due to factors such as rising production costs, fluctuating ticket sales, and evolving audience preferences. Participants further affirm that, to address these challenges and ensure financial sustainability in the future, opera companies need to consider implementing new, diversified, and proactive approaches. These approaches include embracing digital platforms and collaborating and partnering with various organisations such as sports, tourism, and the private sector. I also believe that embracing digital platforms for live streaming, on-demand performances, and virtual events to reach a global audience will change audience sizes and demographics, and that it could provide additional income streams.

Based on this premise, the findings demonstrate that there are approaches that could be applied in South African opera industry to curb the financial challenges in the future. This is consistent with the collaboration concept developed under social constructivism theory, which maintains that collaboration enables a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to artistic production and operation in the opera industry, thereby enhancing the total effectiveness of both of these sectors.

8.6 Interpretation in the context of the literature reviewed

8.6.1 Funding for opera theatres in South Africa

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 agrees that, before the disbandment of the four performing arts councils that were established in 1962, funding for opera companies was accessible in the four provinces at the time (Transvaal, Cape Province, Free State and Natal). With sustainable government support, opera in South Africa was able to provide full-time roles to professional local performers. Spies (2015) asserts that opera companies in South Africa have historically been heavily dependent on state funding made available through the performing arts councils. However, the White Paper on Arts, Culture, and Heritage of 1996 changed this funding system. Due to this change, the four performing arts councils were disbanded. The reduction in government funding for the opera industry caused many opera companies to terminate their operation. With insecure government funding, opera companies in South Africa cannot offer professional and sustainable careers to local artists.

Spies (2015) states that South African opera companies are cutting down on the number of productions because of financial constraints faced by the opera industry. While financial constraints have a negative impact on the production output of South African opera companies, it is important for companies to strategise and find alternative ways to navigate these challenges. This can include seeking alternative funding sources, fostering partnerships, exploring cost-saving measures, and finding innovative approaches to engage audiences. The aim is to strike a balance between financial viability and artistic excellence, while continuing to contribute to a vibrant opera scene in South Africa (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015). For instance, Cape Town Opera has continued to offer professional and sustainable careers to local South African opera singers through various strategies. Cape Town Opera relies very little on government funding. This was substantiated by Burdukova (2010) and Olivier (2014), who suggest that companies that ensure income streams and support from other sources for funding apart from state funding have firm and full control over their funding for the future.

8.6.2 Funding for opera theatres worldwide

The literature review highlighted the global landscape of opera theatre funding. It underscored how opera companies around the world grapple with financial challenges, emphasising the need for sustainable funding models to ensure their survival. Insights from European opera houses and their diverse funding strategies were particularly relevant, providing a comparative lens for understanding the funding dynamics within the South African context (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Auvinen, 2001; Florea, 2014; Rudland, 2023; Söndermann, 2011).

8.6.3 Long-term partnerships between opera companies and stakeholders

Examining the literature revealed the significance of long-term partnerships in the opera ecosystem. European opera houses demonstrated the value of collaborative efforts with cultural institutions, universities, and businesses. These enduring partnerships not only contribute to financial stability but also foster a rich cultural ecosystem. Insights from this literature underscored the importance of South African opera companies cultivating similar relationships to enhance their sustainability.

8.6.4 The necessity for SA opera companies to have a financial management plan

The literature emphasised the necessity for South African opera companies to develop robust financial management plans. Drawing on global examples, it highlighted how effective financial planning is crucial for navigating economic uncertainties. The experiences of opera companies worldwide provided insights into best practices for financial management, offering valuable lessons for enhancing the fiscal resilience of South African opera companies (Olivier, 2014; Spies, 2015).

8.6.5 The role of digital platforms and social media

The transformative role of digital platforms and social media in the opera industry emerged as a key theme. Insights from global opera practices indicated the potential of digital technologies to enhance audience engagement, expand reach, and provide innovative experiences. Understanding the positive impact of digital strategies is

crucial for South African opera companies to navigate the evolving landscape, especially considering the challenges posed by the digital divide and financial constraints.

Incorporating these aspects into the narrative provides a more comprehensive overview, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing South African opera companies within the broader global context.

8.7 Conclusion

The challenges faced by South African opera companies are multifaceted, encompassing issues related to funding, artistic innovation, and overall sustainability. This conclusion draws from both the study's findings and existing literature, highlighting the complex landscape that opera companies navigate in the South African context. The discussion revolves around the struggle with limited government funding, difficulties in securing external support, and the need for strategic measures to enhance financial stability. One of the central issues illuminated by the study is the persistent challenge of limited government funding for South African opera companies. Historically, these companies have heavily relied on government subsidies, and the post-1994 era has seen shifts in funding dynamics. The study's participants and existing literature underscore the consequences of this limited support which impacts on production quality, artistic innovation, and the overall sustainability of opera companies. As government priorities shift and economic constraints persist, the repercussions for the cultural sector are substantial.

Compounding this funding challenge is the difficulty in securing corporate sponsorships and individual donations. South African opera companies face hurdles in attracting external financial support, with economic constraints and shifting corporate priorities playing a role. The study participants emphasise the critical role of diverse funding sources, highlighting the need for a holistic approach that goes beyond reliance on government subsidies. The variability in funding levels emerges as a significant theme, with diverse factors influencing the financial landscape for opera companies. Government support, corporate sponsorships, private donations, and revenue from ticket sales all contribute to the overall funding mix. The dynamic nature of these sources introduces challenges with varying impacts on individual opera

companies over time. Understanding and navigating this complexity is crucial in devising effective strategies for financial sustainability.

Addressing the multifaceted challenges facing South African opera companies requires collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders. Beyond a generic call for 'adequate funding', the study advocates for strategic measures to enhance financial stability. One key recommendation is the fostering of strategic partnerships. Inspired by the practices of European opera houses, particularly those discussed in the literature review, South African opera companies should actively seek collaborations with cultural institutions, educational entities, and businesses. These partnerships have the potential to create a collaborative ecosystem that fosters financial stability. Shared resources emerge as another key aspect of financial sustainability. Drawing from the experiences of European opera houses, South African opera companies can explore resource-sharing initiatives, including shared spaces, personnel, and production resources, to achieve cost efficiency and improved sustainability.

Community engagement stands out as a crucial component of financial sustainability. Inspired by Cape Town Opera's proactive stance, South African opera companies can actively engage with their communities. This engagement ensures that productions resonate with a broader audience and maintain relevance within the local context. Community support can translate into increased ticket sales and potential private donations, contributing to the overall financial health of opera companies. The transformative power of collaboration constitutes another crucial aspect, and this chapter highlighted the role of collaboration in Cape Town Opera's success. Collaboration is a strategic imperative capable of bringing about positive and profound change.

Resilience, fostered through collaboration, emerged as a key lesson from European opera houses in recognising that collaboration is not just a means of financial survival but a pathway to long-term success. Furthermore, investments in education and infrastructure were found to play an important role in the long-term sustainability of opera companies. Educational programmes create a pipeline of future opera enthusiasts and professionals, ensuring the continuation of the art form. Improved

infrastructure enhances the overall operational efficiency of these cultural institutions, contributing to their resilience.

The comparative focus and conclusions drawn in this study are presented in line with European models, specifically the UK model, because of the closer alignment with South Africa's historical and socio-economic context. The analysis did not reference models present in the US for several reasons. Firstly, the US model's heavy reliance on private funding and corporate sponsorships is less applicable to South Africa, where such private sector investment in the arts is not as prevalent or reliable. Secondly, the European models, particularly the UK's, offer a more structured and state-supported approach that is historically resonant with South Africa's pre-1994 arts funding strategies. This similarity makes the UK model more applicable and potentially more effective in the South African context.

In conclusion, the challenges facing South African opera companies demand a nuanced and multifaceted approach. The study's findings emphasise the intricate dynamics of funding sources, the profound impact of financial challenges on artistic endeavours, and the imperative for strategic interventions to ensure the vibrancy and sustainability of the opera industry in South Africa. By drawing inspiration from successful practices, both locally and internationally, opera companies can navigate the complexities of limited financial resources and emerge stronger, more resilient, and deeply integrated into the cultural richness of South Africa.

Chapter 9: Discussions of the findings, recommendations, and conclusions

9.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 provided the findings of this study, using empirical data analysis and interpretation in relation with existing scholarly writings and the social constructivism theory. The study aimed to investigate the current challenges and to discover workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. In this chapter, the conclusions of this study are discussed in relation to the literature and the findings of the research. This chapter enunciates the contribution of this research to the South African opera industry, as well as the limitations of the study.

9.2 Summary of the key findings

The study conducted semi-structured interviews with funding agencies to understand the challenges they face in supporting opera companies in South Africa. The findings from the semi-structured interviews align with existing literature, emphasising the economic constraints, fiscal deficits, and the need for diversified funding sources for opera companies. Opera company managers and government funding agencies in South Africa express mutual concerns regarding the allocation of resources for opera.

According to opera company managers, there has been a discernible shift in government funding priorities. Previously, funding agencies predominantly supported opera companies directly, but there has been a noticeable pivot towards favouring individual projects. This change in approach has raised concerns among opera company managers, as they contend that this shift is not conducive to the sustained promotion and development of opera as an art form.

One of the primary grievances voiced by opera company managers is the inadequacy of funding levels. They argue that the financial support provided for opera projects is insufficient to meet the substantial demands of sustaining a thriving opera industry. This insufficiency places opera companies in a precarious position, impeding their ability to maintain high-quality productions and to offer enriching experiences to audiences. The managers believe that without more substantial financial backing, opera in South Africa may struggle to maintain its cultural significance and relevance.

On the other hand, government funding agencies acknowledge the limitations they face in disbursing financial support for opera. They attribute this limitation to the broader economic challenges confronting the country. The agencies point to financial constraints and an overall decrease in available funds as significant factors contributing to the constrained financial support for opera projects. This admission sheds light on the broader economic context that affects not only the arts sector but the country as a whole.

The convergence of perspectives from both opera company managers and government funding agencies underscores a shared concern for the state of opera funding in South Africa. Opera company managers argue that the shift towards project-based funding has left them grappling with inadequate resources. This, in turn, jeopardises their ability to maintain the quality of opera productions. Meanwhile, government funding agencies recognise the constraints they face in providing financial support, given the prevailing economic challenges.

In essence, the consensus among both parties highlights a critical need for a re-evaluation of funding priorities and strategies. Opera company managers advocate for a recommitment to sustained support for opera, asserting that this art form holds cultural and historical significance that should not be overlooked. Government funding agencies, cognisant of financial constraints, recommend that opera companies should start acting as businesses and, therefore, find ways to self-fund through innovative collaborations and business strategies to explore secure and allocate resources more effectively. Ultimately, these discussions reflect a broader dialogue about the role of the arts in a nation's cultural landscape and the importance of fostering creativity and artistic expression.

The study offers key recommendations to address the funding challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa. It suggests a targeted approach, focusing on specific segments within the industry as a potential strategy. This involves identifying areas of high impact or those with significant potential for growth, and channelling resources towards them. Additionally, the study advocates for the exploration of innovative funding approaches. This includes forging partnerships with the private sector and philanthropic organisations, as well as leveraging digital platforms for crowdfunding

or sponsorship. These recommendations serve as valuable insights to guide efforts in enhancing the financial sustainability and growth of opera in South Africa, ultimately contributing to the enrichment of the cultural landscape.

9.3 Principal findings

The main purpose of this section is to discuss the results of the study based on the aims and objectives set out in the first chapter. The overriding objective of the study has been to investigate the current challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa and to discover workable solutions and possible approaches that could be applied to ensure the future of these companies in South Africa.

9.3.1 Significant changes leading to opera company closures

In this study, many participants expressed concerns about the closing of opera companies in South Africa. In their interviews many of the opera company managers agreed with these observations, pointing out various factors that have contributed to the challenges and subsequent closures faced by opera companies in the country. These factors include financial constraints, the impact of the decline of government funding, limited collaboration and partnerships, and the changing artistic landscape among others. These elements reflect the intricate and varied difficulties that opera companies in South Africa encounter. The government, arts organisations, artists, and local communities need to collaborate together to devise a comprehensive and cooperative strategy to address these problems. In order to preserve opera as a cultural expression in the country and to support diversity, accessibility, and long-term profitability, it is critical to establish long-term solutions.

Funding agencies' perceptions of opera have undergone a significant shift, influenced by the political changes that characterised the South African landscape after 1994. These shifts have contributed to misconceptions about opera, particularly regarding its assumed exclusivity and relevance within the evolving political ideologies and priorities. The study found that funding agencies, responding to changing political tides, began to view opera through a lens that portrayed it as a niche, elitist and exclusive art form. As political changes unfolded, opera companies found themselves grappling with the challenge of aligning their artistic endeavours with the shifting

priorities of the funding agencies. The misconception that opera exclusively caters to affluent or privileged audiences gained traction, has led to a decline in financial support. The struggle to redefine the narrative of opera and to emphasise its inclusivity and cultural relevance has become paramount.

The findings underscore the intricate relationship between relying on the government of the day for funding as this becomes subject to political changes and orientations, funding agency perceptions, and the subsequent impact on the financial support for the opera sector. As mentioned in Chapter 6, financial constraints experienced by government and the subsequent cuts in funding of the arts has limited collaboration or alternative funding strategies applied by the opera companies. The changing funding criteria, combined with rising costs, were identified as key factors contributing to the closure of opera companies in South Africa. The study emphasises the need for comprehensive and cooperative strategies involving government and its funding agencies, arts organisations, artists, and local communities to address these challenges and to ensure the long-term sustainability of opera in the country.

9.3.2 Level of funding of opera companies in South Africa

The study delved into the poor economic climate characterised by downturns and uncertainty, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and its after-effects, and the direct impact on the funding agencies' budget allocations.

Opera, considered by some as a non-essential expense, faced the brunt of budget cuts amid the overarching economic challenges. The findings emphasise that the financial struggles experienced by opera companies were not isolated; they were intricately connected to the broader economic context within South Africa.

As economic uncertainties persisted, funding agencies were compelled to make tough decisions, prioritising essential services over cultural endeavours such as the arts or opera. The perception of opera as an expendable luxury in times of economic hardship, poverty, and unemployment contributed to the cuts in funding for it. This study reveals how economic downturns create systemic challenges for opera companies in securing the necessary financial backing to sustain their operations. This also highlights the importance of a re-focusing and repositioning mindset by opera companies to view

themselves as businesses that need business plans, strategies, and assessments in order to survive as they are no longer an extension of the state's secure funding structure.

9.3.3 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on funding challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic brought additional and unprecedented challenges to the opera industry after the financial crisis already experienced in 2008. This exacerbated the existing funding issues. As resources were swiftly redirected to address immediate health and economic crises, the arts, including opera, faced acute funding cuts. The pandemic's far-reaching impact on public health and economies forced funding agencies to reprioritise, diverting attention and financial support away from the arts.

Moreover, the restrictions imposed on public gatherings, as a preventive measure against the spread of the virus, severely limited opera performances. The inability to host live events not only curtailed artistic expression, but also severed crucial revenue streams for opera companies. Ticket sales, a significant source of income, were abruptly halted, blocking the financial income stream of the sector. The study reveals the profound and multifaceted challenges posed by the pandemic, which has affected both the immediate viability and long-term sustainability of opera in South Africa.

9.3.4 Factors affecting funding for opera companies

The current funding landscape for opera companies in South Africa has existed for the past 30 years and is still significantly affected by a confluence of factors, creating a complex environment that negatively affects the industry's sustainability. One of the prominent challenges is the absence of distinct cultural policies tailored to support opera companies. Without dedicated policies, opera companies struggle to secure the necessary financial backing and strategic support from government initiatives, limiting the ability of opera to flourish in the cultural landscape. The funding dynamics are further complicated by shifts in the socioeconomic and political landscape, and the concomitant regard or disregard for the arts as a priority. The evolving economic conditions and changing political priorities create an uncertain terrain for opera companies, making it difficult to predict and secure consistent financial support.

The lack of well-established mechanisms or policy structures designed to support opera within the broader arts and culture sector critically affects funding. The absence of dedicated frameworks makes it challenging for opera companies to access reliable and consistent financial assistance from the state. Unlike other art forms with more defined support structures, opera struggles to find its place in the funding ecosystem, which hinders its growth and development. The centralisation of funding under the National Arts Council (NAC) represents a significant turning point in the financial landscape for opera companies. While the intention behind centralisation may have been to streamline management and resource allocation, the resultant drop in funding for opera has posed a severe challenge.

The reduction in financial support has direct implications for the quality and scale of opera productions in South Africa. Opera companies, now operating with constrained resources, face limitations in their production expenditures, which impacts on set design, costuming, technical capabilities, and the hiring of skilled performers and production staff. This, in turn, may force opera companies to scale down their number and level of shows, limit the range of performances, or explore alternative, less expensive options that may not fully align with their artistic goals.

In navigating these challenges, opera companies in South Africa must advocate for the development of dedicated cultural policies; they need to respond dynamically to shifting socioeconomic and political landscapes; and they must actively participate in the establishment of support mechanisms that recognise and address the unique needs of the opera sector. This may involve collaborative efforts with policymakers, cultural institutions, and funding bodies to create a more robust and supportive framework to sustain the vibrance and cultural significance of opera in the country.

9.3.5 Workable solutions from European and US opera houses

Perhaps, it is prudent to foreground this section by acknowledging that, while the US funding model for the arts analysed in this study has certain merits, its direct application and transfer to the South African context presents considerable challenges. The US model relies heavily on private donations, sponsorships, and a diverse array of financial sources, which contribute significantly to the sustainability of its performing

arts sector, including opera. However, this approach is deeply rooted in the socio-economic structures and wealth distribution characteristic of the United States.

In contrast, I chose to focus on the European funding model, which often includes substantial government support and public funding alongside private contributions, appears to be more adoptable to the South African context. European systems tend to integrate state funding more comprehensively, reflecting a different approach to cultural investment that may align better with South Africa's current socio-economic conditions. Given that South Africa has a different set of economic and social dynamics, the European model, with its emphasis on government funding and structured support for the arts, offers a more viable and contextually relevant framework for addressing the challenges faced by South African opera companies. Adopting aspects of the European funding model could provide a more feasible path towards creating a sustainable and supportive environment for the performing arts in South Africa, taking into account local economic realities and institutional capacities. Thus, while the US model offers valuable insights, the European approach is more likely to be effective in addressing the specific needs and constraints of the South African opera sector.

The pursuit of sustainable financial models for opera companies in South Africa has led participants to consider the adoption of successful strategies from European opera houses. The acknowledgment of the potential benefits derived from European models encompassing partnerships, collaborations, and diversified funding sources, underlines a critical shift in perspective. This chapter delves into the rationale behind looking to European counterparts, the specific elements of their models that hold promise for South African opera, and the challenges inherent in applying these strategies to a distinctly different cultural and economic context.

European opera houses have long been regarded as the bastions of artistic excellence and financial stability. Their success is often attributed to a multifaceted approach that incorporates a range of funding streams. Partnerships and collaborations emerge as key components of this approach, fostering cross-cultural exchanges, enhancing artistic quality, and creating opportunities for joint productions. By fostering collaborations with European opera houses, South African companies would be able

to tap into a wealth of experience, artistic innovation, and potential financial support. This interchange would not only enrich the cultural fabric, but also provide a platform for sharing resources, expertise, and experiences.

Diversifying funding sources stands as a cornerstone of the European model, offering a promising avenue to address the financial challenges encountered by South African opera companies. European opera houses frequently benefit from a combination of substantial public and private funding, contributing significantly to their financial resilience. Extracting lessons from these models, South African companies can strategically explore innovative approaches to diversify their revenue streams.

This exploration may involve actively seeking support from governmental bodies, private corporations, philanthropic organisations, and individual donors. The pursuit of a diversified funding portfolio not only helps mitigate the risks associated with dependency on a single source but also establishes a more robust and stable financial foundation. This stability is crucial for the sustained longevity of opera in South Africa, ensuring its enduring presence in the cultural landscape.

However, this diversification process should be undertaken in a business-like manner, guided by clear strategies and long-term plans. One viable avenue is for opera companies to consider registering as non-profit organisations, professionally managed to ensure optimal efficiency. Alternatively, they could opt for official registration as Pty Ltd companies, strategically inviting directors who possess the necessary financial connections to the board to secure and enhance the company's success. It's imperative to note that, akin to Pty Ltd companies, non-profit organisations also maintain a board structure, reinforcing the significance of strategic governance in both models.

The implementation of European solutions in the South African context is not without its challenges. South Africa possesses a unique cultural landscape, a weak economic climate, and a historical context that must be considered when adapting these strategies. The dynamics of audience engagement, the current limited role of opera in society, and the broader arts ecosystem differ significantly. Thus, a nuanced and culturally sensitive approach is imperative to ensure the successful integration of these European-inspired strategies.

The comparison between the European and South African economic landscapes introduces additional complexities that cannot be overlooked. While European opera houses benefit from a long-standing tradition of public funding and philanthropy deeply ingrained in cultural policy, South Africa's economic conditions may present barriers to the replication of such models. Addressing these challenges will require a delicate balancing act where opera companies will have to tailor their approaches, leveraging the strengths of European models with adapting them to suit the local context.

The potential benefits, nonetheless, are substantial. It is evident that by embracing partnerships and collaborations with European counterparts, South African opera companies can elevate their artistic standards, broaden their repertoire, and establish a global presence. Diversifying funding sources, inspired by the European funding models, can provide a lifeline for companies struggling with financial constraints. The exploration of these strategies reflects a forward-looking approach, positioning South African opera on a trajectory towards resilience, innovation, and sustained cultural significance. In conclusion, while the US model's reliance on private funding sources poses challenges in the South African context due to its heavy dependence on corporate sponsorships and philanthropic contributions, the UK's model offers a more feasible and historically resonant framework. The UK's approach, characterised by substantial state support and structured funding through organisations like the ACE, aligns more closely with the historical precedents of South African arts funding before 1994. By adapting elements of the UK's funding strategy, South African opera companies can potentially secure more stable funding streams. This adaptation could involve government grants, increased public investment, and strategic partnerships with local cultural institutions, ensuring a more reliable financial base for the performing arts sector.

Additionally, the UK model emphasises community engagement and broad accessibility to the arts, which are crucial for cultivating a diverse and loyal audience base. By implementing similar strategies, South African opera companies can enhance their community outreach, build stronger connections with local audiences, and foster a culture of arts appreciation that spans different demographics. This not only helps in audience development but also in garnering public and governmental support.

Adopting European-inspired solutions offers a promising avenue for enhancing the development and sustainability of opera in South Africa. However, careful consideration of unique contextual factors is essential. South Africa's diverse cultural landscape and socio-economic conditions necessitate a balanced and culturally sensitive approach. Implementing partnerships with local artists, schools, and community organisations can help tailor these models to fit the South African context better.

Diversified funding sources, including public-private partnerships and regional sponsorships, can provide additional financial stability. Encouraging local businesses and philanthropists to support opera through tax incentives or recognition programs can help diversify income streams. Furthermore, leveraging digital platforms for fundraising and audience engagement can expand the reach of opera companies beyond traditional boundaries, tapping into a global audience and potential donors.

A balanced and culturally sensitive implementation of partnerships, collaborations, and diversified funding sources can reshape the financial landscape for South African opera. This approach ensures its continued vibrancy and contribution to the rich tapestry of the nation's cultural heritage, preserving and promoting the arts in a way that reflects South Africa's unique identity and history. By learning from and adapting the UK model, South African opera companies can build a sustainable future, fostering a thriving operatic scene that enriches the country's cultural life.

9.3.6 Approaches to curb financial challenges

In recognising the imperative for opera companies to chart a resilient financial course, it is noteworthy that some entities, such as Cape Town Opera, have already embarked on a strategic journey to diversify revenue streams. This proactive approach underscores a commitment to financial sustainability by expanding beyond the conventional reliance on ticket sales. By venturing into various alternative funding avenues, these opera companies not only demonstrate adaptability, but they also position themselves as pioneers in navigating the complex landscape of arts financing.

Fundraising events have emerged as a dynamic strategy, where opera companies orchestrate special occasions to connect with their audience on a more intimate level.

Galas, benefit concerts, and exclusive performances become not only avenues for financial support, but also opportunities for patrons to engage directly with the art form. Such events foster a sense of community and shared ownership, encouraging philanthropic contributions that extend beyond the ticket purchase and into a more profound commitment to the cultural enrichment that opera provides.

Corporate sponsorships form a strategic alliance between the corporate sector and the arts, where businesses contribute not only financially, but also become advocates for cultural development. By aligning their brand with the opera, corporations gain exposure and recognition, contributing to a mutually beneficial relationship that transcends traditional funding. This collaborative approach enables opera companies to tap into the resources and networks of the business world, fostering sustainability through diversified support.

Individual donations, another critical facet of this multifaceted approach, leverage the goodwill of philanthropists and dedicated opera enthusiasts. Donor campaigns and membership programmes are designed not only to secure financial contributions, but to cultivate a community of individuals who are emotionally invested in the success of opera. This personalised engagement transforms supporters into ambassadors, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for the preservation and advancement of the art form.

Embracing the digital age, opera companies are exploring online platforms for streaming and on-demand content. This not only opens avenues for reaching global audiences, but it also diversifies revenue sources. Subscription models, pay-per-view options, and digital access packages provide innovative ways to engage with audiences in an era of evolving cultural consumption.

In tandem with these revenue-focused strategies, robust financial planning and forecasting become linchpins of long-term sustainability. Setting realistic goals, monitoring financial performance, and adapting strategies to address potential risks and challenges are essential elements of a sound financial framework. Furthermore, the cultivation of strong relationships with donors and businesses involves consistent communication, acknowledgement of contributions, and a shared commitment to the enduring success of opera companies.

9.4 Implications for, and contribution of the study to theory, research, and practice

The research delved into the substantial financial shifts observed in South African opera companies post-1994, influenced by the new government's White Paper policy. It emphasises the necessity for revisions to this policy to be undertaken in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including opera companies, artists, cultural institutions, and local community representatives. This collaborative approach should ensure that any updates accurately reflect the aspirations, demands, and realities of the South African opera industry. Ultimately, the recommendation is to revise the government's White Paper policy to encompass all cultural genres, including opera, as a pivotal step towards establishing an open, diversified, and culturally democratic arts scene in South Africa. This would foster the growth, accessibility, and sustainability of opera as a significant cultural expression within the nation.

Beyond financial concerns, the study underscores that opera in South Africa has often been viewed through the lens of Eurocentric "high art". This perspective has historically favoured Western classical operatic repertoire and traditions, sometimes overlooking the rich cultural diversity and artistic expressions that exist within the country. South Africa, a nation characterised by cultural diversity, linguistic variety, and a rich tapestry of traditions, stands to benefit from recognising and celebrating various cultural genres that have been integrated into its cultural landscape, including opera. The study argues that opera should not be confined to the domain of European classical opera, but that it should be recognised as one of many art forms contributing to South Africa's vibrant cultural diversity.

The study also advocates for a multifaceted approach by opera companies in South Africa to engage audiences and government funders. This approach includes presenting data on the social, cultural, and economic impact of their activities, such as contributions to education, tourism, job creation, and community development. Moreover, the suggestion is made to explore new performance formats, such as outdoor opera events or multimedia presentations, to attract diverse audiences. The study also emphasises the importance of showcasing operas that reflect South Africa's cultural diversity and history, as this is more likely to resonate with local audiences.

Financial challenges are identified as a common hurdle faced by South African opera companies. The study contends that finding innovative approaches to increase revenue is crucial for their sustainability and growth. By adopting a multifaceted business approach and embracing creative ideas, opera companies can potentially enhance their financial stability, while continuing to bring the beauty of opera to audiences worldwide. A key strategy suggested is to focus on audience growth, particularly targeting younger audiences through initiatives such as student ticket discounts, special deals for first-time attendees, and outreach programmes aimed at colleges and institutions. Collaborations and initiatives that are culturally appropriate are also recommended for engaging with diverse communities.

The research offers an important contribution to the South African opera industry and performing arts scholarship at large. It presents empirical evidence highlighting the need for a shift in mentality towards opera to further diversity and representation within South Africa's cultural landscape. By inclusively incorporating the skills, voices, and narratives that constitute the country's adopted culture of opera, South African performers, composers, and librettists have greater opportunities to actively participate in and influence the art form. The study argues that treating opera solely as Eurocentric art may limit its accessibility and relevance to a broader audience in South Africa.

The study also acknowledges the scholarly position that government funding will not rescue opera companies within the South African context. This is attributed to the government prioritising pressing health and economic demands in its budget and resource reallocation, which may overshadow support for opera. However, the study advocates for the consideration of the value and importance of the arts, including opera, within the broader societal context. Despite not being the top priority in terms of urgent health and financial issues, opera plays a vital role in cultural development, social cohesion, and the general wellbeing of communities. Therefore, the study argues that opera companies need to develop alternative business models to enhance their financial stability and for them not to rely on state funding.

The research offers a distinctive contribution to the discourse on opera funding in South Africa by uncovering nuanced perspectives that extend beyond the prevailing

narratives in existing literature. While some participants attribute funding challenges to racial or “upper class/elitist” perceptions, others recognise the transformative potential of opera. This nuanced view introduces a more complex interplay of factors that influence funding decisions, providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play within the opera sector. Moreover, the research delves into the specifics of funding distribution post-1994, shedding light on the critical shifts that took place during a pivotal period in South Africa’s history. This detailed analysis adds a unique temporal dimension, offering insights into the evolving landscape of opera funding in a post-Apartheid era.

Furthermore, the research brings to light the substantial potential impact of technology on opera management, as articulated by opera managers themselves. This contemporary perspective underscores the need for opera companies to adapt to evolving technological trends, reflecting a dynamic approach to navigating funding challenges in a rapidly changing world. Additionally, the study recognises that one-size-fits-all funding models from Europe and the US may not be directly transferable to the South African context. This insight highlights the importance of context-specific approaches in devising funding strategies, offering a practical and actionable recommendation for opera companies and funding agencies alike.

Notably, the research celebrates success stories within the South African opera community, exemplified by the achievements of Cape Town Opera (CTO). This acknowledgment serves as a powerful reminder that effective strategies and best practices already exist within the local opera landscape. By spotlighting these successes, the research provides tangible examples that can inform and inspire other opera companies facing similar funding challenges, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and vibrancy of the opera industry in South Africa.

The research highlights the function of opera as a dynamic cultural force that shapes and reflects the nation’s identity. The government’s past funding of diverse opera productions is recognised as a deliberate effort to preserve and showcase the rich tapestry of cultures that make up South Africa. Such investments should not only be an acknowledgement of artistic traditions, but also a strategic move to strengthen the cultural cohesion of society. By celebrating this diversity, opera becomes a powerful

tool for fostering a collective sense of pride and ownership in the nation's artistic heritage. The study's emphasis on the government's role in funding opera productions underscores the significance of state support for the cultural sector.

Therefore, by prioritising funding for a wide range of opera performances, government could actively participate in the preservation and promotion of the nation's cultural heritage. This investment is not merely a financial contribution, but also a symbolic gesture that signals the importance of the arts in shaping and representing the South African identity. It also reflects a commitment to inclusivity and recognition of the various cultural communities that form the country's social fabric. This study illuminates the pivotal role of opera in South Africa's cultural landscape. It underscores the government's role and active engagement in funding diverse opera productions as a means to celebrate the nation's cultural heritage and foster a shared sense of national identity. This approach will not only acknowledge the artistic traditions of various communities, but it will also contribute to the broader cultural enrichment and collective pride of South African society.

In conclusion, the study contends that a thriving and enduring opera industry can have a positive economic impact. A vibrant and sustainable opera industry generates employment opportunities for a wide range of professionals, including singers, musicians, directors, designers, technicians, and administrative staff. The industry's economic contributions can extend beyond the artistic sphere as it supports related sectors such as tourism, hospitality, and local businesses. Thus, the study contributes meaningfully to theory, research and the current literature and provides guidelines for practice in the opera sector.

9.5 New insights from the study

The thesis illuminates a fresh perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing opera companies in South Africa, offering insights that extend beyond the traditional realms of artistic and cultural discourse. One notable aspect is the exploration of the intricate relationship between financial sustainability and the cultural landscape. The study delved into the multifaceted challenges that opera companies encounter, ranging from financial constraints and shifting audience preferences, the impact of

misperceptions, assumptions, and political stances, as well as the impact of external factors such as the global financial crisis in 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic.

A noteworthy contribution lies in the recognition of the interconnectedness of financial challenges with broader socio-political and economic contexts. The acknowledgment that opera companies operate within a dynamic ecosystem shaped by historical legacies, socioeconomic disparities, and political dynamics enriches the narrative. It positions opera not only as an artistic endeavour, but also as a cultural entity intricately woven into the fabric of South African society. This holistic understanding fosters a nuanced approach to problem-solving and emphasises the importance of adapting opera to align with contemporary societal dynamics and economic realities.

The findings of this study introduce a comparative lens by drawing on insights from European and US opera houses. The consideration of these models as potential solutions infuses a global dimension into the discourse, transcending geographical boundaries. By exploring partnerships, collaborations, and diversified funding sources inspired by European and US practices, the study invites a cross-cultural dialogue that seeks to enhance the development and sustainability of opera in South Africa. This comparative perspective contributes a layer of richness to the discourse, offering valuable lessons and potential pathways for innovation.

The emphasis on diversifying revenue streams beyond traditional ticket sales is a strategic insight that aligns with contemporary trends in arts management. The exploration of fundraising events, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, grants, merchandise sales, licensing agreements, and digital platforms as viable sources of income reflects a pragmatic and forward-looking approach. This insight underscores the need for opera companies to adopt a business mindset, strategically leveraging various funding avenues to ensure financial resilience and long-term viability.

Additionally, the thesis advocates for a nuanced understanding of the cultural policy landscape. The recognition that South Africa lacks distinct cultural policies tailored to support opera companies sheds light on an essential aspect of the challenges faced. This insight prompts a call for advocacy and engagement with policymakers to

establish frameworks that recognise and address the unique needs of the opera sector. It positions the cultural policy discourse as a critical element in shaping the future trajectory of opera in South Africa.

In conclusion, this study transcends the conventional boundaries of opera scholarship by intertwining artistic, financial, and sociocultural dimensions. It provides a fresh lens through which to view the challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa, offering innovative solutions inspired by global practices. The exploration of these insights not only enriches the academic discourse, but it also contributes practical and actionable strategies to sustain opera as a vibrant and relevant art form in the South African cultural landscape.

9.6 Limitations of the study

It is essential to acknowledge that the study had some limitations. However, these limitations did not jeopardise the findings of this study. The following noteworthy limitations were experienced in this study:

- a) While the research approach used in the study successfully achieved the study's objectives and research questions, there are areas that future studies may expand on as this was an exploratory study.
- b) The study's triangulation methodologies for data collecting and analysis did not involve document analysis. New information might be included in the existing policy documents.
- c) The purposive probability sampling was effective in this study. However, sequential mixed methods sampling may allow future studies to acquire qualitative data which could then be utilised to build quantitative assessments.
- d) Since the data was collected during the COVID-19 restrictions, some interviews were conducted telephonically, or via Zoom and Teams Meeting, and some in-person interviews were conducted using mask-to-mask procedures.
- e) This study received funding from various stakeholders. However, there were limitations due to time and budgetary constraints resulting in some participants not being interviewed as planned. As a result, future studies should

be conducted to contribute to the literature on challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa post the COVID-19 pandemic.

- f) Another limitation was the limited setting with only two provinces being covered: Western Cape and Gauteng Province.
- g) Since there are limited opera companies in South Africa, the sample of this study was small, so no generalisations can be achieved for other provinces or countries.

9.7 Vision and recommendations of study

In this section, the focus is on presenting a vision for government funding agencies, while providing specific recommendations for opera companies. The vision outlines the ideal state of support from government funding agencies, and the recommendations offer actionable steps for opera companies to enhance their sustainability and impact.

9.7.1 Vision for government funding entities

This section should be viewed as a vision rather than as recommendations as it outlines an aspirational and transformative view of what the ideal state of the South African opera industry could be. Instead of offering specific steps or actions for immediate implementation, it presents an idealised picture of how the opera landscape would function in a perfect scenario. In this context, the vision outlines the ideal characteristics and conditions that, if realised, would signify a flourishing and sustainable opera industry in South Africa. It encapsulates the overarching goals and outcomes that stakeholders might aspire to achieve over the long term, envisioning a transformed and thriving landscape. In this ideal world, the South African opera industry would experience a transformative shift from its current challenges to a thriving and sustainable state. The following vision outlines the ideal scenario, contrasting it with the current conditions:

a) Financial support and recognition

Ideal vision: Opera companies receive ample financial support and recognition from government and the private sector, acknowledging their cultural and economic contributions.

Current conditions: Opera companies face a constant struggle due to dwindling government and private funding, limiting their capacity to operate effectively.

b) Comprehensive funding models

Ideal vision: A comprehensive funding model tailored to the performing arts sector, particularly opera, to ensure stability and growth.

Current conditions: Lack of a tailored funding model results in financial instability and the closure of many opera companies.

c) Collaborative partnerships

Ideal vision: Collaborative partnerships between opera companies and governmental bodies, such as the National Arts Council and BASA, actively shaping policies and resource allocation.

Current conditions: Limited collaboration hinders effective policymaking and resource allocation for the growth of the opera industry.

d) Addressing contemporary issues

Ideal vision: Opera actively engages with contemporary societal challenges, fostering inclusivity and relevance.

Current conditions: The perception persists that opera is outdated, despite its potential to address relevant issues and connect with a broader audience.

e) Flourishing opera landscape

Ideal vision: Opera companies not only survive but flourish, contributing significantly to South Africa's cultural identity and economic landscape.

Current conditions: Many opera companies struggle for survival, facing closures and limited impact due to funding constraints.

f) Artistic and economic impact

Ideal vision: Opera's impact extends beyond the artistic realm, contributing significantly to the nation's economic development through job creation and cultural enrichment.

Current conditions: The economic and cultural impact of opera is constrained by financial challenges, limiting its potential contribution.

In summary, the current conditions in the South African opera industry highlight financial constraints, limited collaboration, a lacking business positioning and strategic focus, and persistent misconceptions by government and communities. The ideal scenario envisions a paradigm shift towards comprehensive support, active

collaboration, and a flourishing opera landscape that transcends current challenges, contributing robustly to both culture and economy.

9.7.2 Recommendations for opera companies

It is crucial to foreground this section by acknowledging that some successful and surviving opera companies, such as Cape Town Opera, are already implementing some of the recommended strategies to a large extent. These recommendations are intended to further enhance and refine their operations, recognising that even thriving companies can benefit from ongoing efforts to strengthen their financial stability and community connections. By building upon their existing strengths and proactively embracing these strategies, opera companies can continue to thrive and contribute to the cultural landscape of South Africa. These findings are also intended to assist opera companies that are battling to achieve financially stable operations by indicating to them how they can change their current state to one of sustainability. The following recommendations present a robust and multifaceted strategy for opera companies in South Africa to secure their financial stability and deepen their connections with communities. Emphasising the importance of proactive engagement, the study underscores the potential for opera companies to forge valuable partnerships with potential sponsors, funders, and philanthropic foundations. By actively participating in networks and establishing strong relationships, opera companies can enhance their chances of securing essential funding for their operations. While some companies may already be engaged in these practices, the study suggests a concerted effort to further strengthen these connections.

Furthermore, the study emphasises the imperative for opera companies to diversify their sources of support. While accessing government funding remains an important strategy, the reliance on government funding is risky, and instead, alternative financial sources for operations is deemed a key factor in ensuring a stable future for these companies. The recommendation to engage actively with local communities through outreach programmes and educational initiatives aligns with social constructivist principles. By involving the community in the creative process, opera companies can foster a sense of ownership and garner increased attendance and financial backing from philanthropic organisations.

Collaboration emerges as a central theme in the recommendations, emphasising the need for opera companies to forge alliances with other arts organisations, community groups, and local businesses. This collaborative approach can provide additional financial support and resources, bolstering the overall resilience of opera companies. Moreover, the cultivation of a culture of philanthropy is highlighted as a means to strengthen relationships with donors and supporters. Through special events and personalised experiences, opera companies can create a sense of belonging and appreciation among their supporters.

Adaptability in financial methods is also underscored, accenting the need for opera companies to explore alternate funding sources and implement sound financial management strategies. This includes considerations such as corporate sponsorships, product sales, and digital content monetisation. By embracing these practices in tandem with social constructivist principles, opera companies can establish a sustainable financial framework that enhances their connection with audiences and communities.

Lastly, the recommendation to pursue collaborative productions with other companies is put forth as a means to share costs and mitigate financial uncertainty. This approach not only eases the financial burden but also fosters a spirit of cooperation within the opera community.

In summary, these recommendations offer a comprehensive roadmap for South African opera companies to navigate the challenges of financial sustainability. By leveraging social constructivist principles and embracing proactive, collaborative, and adaptable business approaches to funding, opera companies will not only secure their financial stability but also deepen their engagement with their communities and audiences.

9.8 Future research

This research was extensively conducted, and the study is conclusive. However, challenges were identified, and recommendations offered for overcoming them. Therefore, this research should be treated as a stepping stone to investigating the vast

subject matter of the challenges faced by South African opera companies. It is recommended that further research should include some of the following topics:

a) Investigating transformation of the opera industry in post-Apartheid South Africa

Delve into the changes and developments that have occurred in the opera industry since the end of Apartheid. It may encompass shifts in audience demographics, artistic themes, production styles, and the emergence of new voices and perspectives.

b) Exploring contributions to opera in South African culture

This topic would examine the broader cultural significance of opera in South Africa. It could encompass how opera reflects and influences cultural identity, its role in fostering cross-cultural understanding, and its integration with other forms of artistic expression.

c) Exploring funding opera companies as an approach to job creation

This topic would specifically investigate the potential for job creation within and beyond the opera companies. It could encompass employment opportunities for artists, technicians, administrators, and the potential ripple effects on related industries.

d) Exploring funding for opera companies from business and private entities

This research could seek to understand what motivates business and private entities to support opera and what opera companies can do to attract donations and sponsorship. This could encompass business owners, private entities, and opera companies.

e) Assessing the choice of opera themes and productions among current supporters and potential audiences

This would identify what type of productions would be most likely to grow audiences and which ones would alienate them. It can also be combined with an assessment of optimal ticket pricing, venues, times, and days of optimal attendance.

These suggested future research directions hold great promise in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the opera industry in South Africa and its

multifaceted impact on society, culture, and the economy. They would also serve to inform policies and strategies for the sustainable growth of the opera sector in the country.

9.9 Overall conclusion of the study

Upon reflection on the study results, I conclude that, despite the gloomy picture portrayed by the interviews with some opera company managers, with the increasing diversification of funding sources, there is light at the end of the funding tunnel, particularly when the strategies are implemented which entails forging collaborations with various industries, including Tourism, Hospitality, Sports, and Entertainment, thereby ensuring a more robust and sustainable financial foundation. Diversifying funding sources stands as a crucial pillar in addressing the formidable financial challenges with which South African opera companies grapple. In the intricate world of performing arts, where financial stability often wavers, embracing a multifaceted approach to funding becomes paramount for sustained growth and artistic continuity.

South African opera companies, in their quest for financial resilience, find themselves at a crossroads where collaboration with different industries emerges as a strategic imperative. Among the diverse sectors offering potential partnerships, Tourism and Hospitality, Sports, and Entertainment stand out as key players in this intricate symphony of financial sustainability. Through the symbiotic relationship between opera and Tourism and Hospitality, opportunities unfold that extend beyond the stage. Opera, with its cultural richness, has the potential to become a magnet for tourists seeking immersive and unique experiences. Collaborations with hotels, restaurants, and tourism agencies can lead to curated packages that blend the enchantment of opera performances with the allure of local hospitality, creating a win-win scenario for both sectors.

Sports and Entertainment also offer an untapped reservoir of possibilities for opera companies seeking to broaden their financial base. Shared events, joint marketing initiatives, and collaborative sponsorships can weave the worlds of opera and sports into a harmonious tapestry, captivating diverse audiences and unlocking new revenue streams. This synergy not only diversifies funding but also introduces opera to audiences that may not traditionally engage with the art form. The essence of

collaboration extends beyond financial gains; it fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility. Engaging with different industries not only secures monetary support but also cultivates a network of advocates who recognise the intrinsic value of opera in the cultural landscape. This collective backing serves as a powerful buffer against the unpredictable tides of economic challenges.

However, the path to diversification is not without its challenges. Opera companies must navigate the delicate balance between preserving artistic integrity and meeting the expectations of diverse collaborators. Finding alignment between the cultural nuances of opera and the commercial objectives of partner industries requires adept negotiation and a shared vision for mutual success. Moreover, building sustainable partnerships necessitates a strategic approach to audience development. Opera companies must tailor their outreach efforts to resonate with the diverse demographics of potential collaborators. Educational programs, community engagement initiatives, and innovative marketing campaigns become instrumental tools in broadening the appeal of opera beyond its traditional audience base. The journey toward financial stability for South African opera companies entails a symphony of collaboration with Tourism and Hospitality, Sports, and Entertainment. Diversifying funding sources is not merely a financial strategy; it is a transformative process that interlaces the world of opera with diverse industries, creating a resilient ecosystem where art flourishes, and financial challenges find harmonious solutions.

In essence, this study uncovers a compelling narrative that transcends the immediate challenges faced by opera companies in South Africa. It serves as a clarion call for a profound re-evaluation of the societal significance of opera, urging informed, sustained support from government and a diverse array of stakeholders. The future of opera in South Africa hinges on a collective commitment to dispel misconceptions, forge strategic partnerships, and recognise the profound impact of opera on the nation's cultural and economic fabric. This research serves as both a documentation of challenges and a roadmap for creating a vibrant and enduring opera landscape in South Africa. It highlights the need for a sustainable and supportive environment for the arts, emphasising funding diversification, strategic planning, cultural inclusivity, adaptability, and community engagement. Additionally, it underscores the potential for international contributions through partnerships, suggesting that fostering

collaborations and leveraging private sector support can secure the necessary financial backing for long-term sustainability. The study aims to revitalise the local cultural landscape and position South African opera as a significant player on the global stage.

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Appendix 1: Ethical clearance letter of approval



South African College of Music

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29 April 2021

HDC REF: 04/2021

Dear Mr Sakhiseni Joseph Yende

Project title for PhD: Investigating the current challenges and workable solutions for the future of the opera companies in South Africa.

Thank you for your ethics application dated 14 April 2021. It is my pleasure to inform you that the above-mentioned study has been formally approved.

The completed forms should be submitted to Sheila Taylor for record keeping.

Approval is granted for 4 years.

Please submit a brief progress report if the study continues beyond the approval time frame.

The on-going ethical conduct remains the responsibility of the principal investigator (the supervisor).

Please quote the reference number in all your ethics related correspondences.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Herbst'.

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor Anri Herbst

Ethics representative
Higher Degrees Committee
Faculty Ethics Research Committee

Appendix 2: Informed consent form



Consent Form

University of Cape Town

Faculty of Humanities

South African College of Music

Title of research project:

Investigating the current challenges and discovering workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa

Names of principal researchers:

Sakhiseni Joseph Yende

Department/research group address:

South African College of Music

Telephone:

067 401 0311

Email:

YNDSAK001@myuct.ac.za / sakhiseniyende@gmail.com

Name of participant:

Nature of the research:

Participant's involvement:

What's involved:

You will be requested to answer the questionnaires or participate in the interviews regarding your perceptions of the current challenges and ideas for workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. The interviews will take place, either by video call, or at a venue agreed upon by you, the participant and myself as the primary investigator. The duration of the interview process will not exceed one hour. The data will be recorded by using an audio recorder and writing notes.

Risks:

The study and the procedure involve no foreseeable discomfort or inconvenience to you or your family.

Benefits:

The benefits of participating in this study are: You will be able to discuss your perspective, which will be applied to improve the challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa concerning funding. Your opinions will also be informative to the funding agency under the Department of Arts and Culture.

Costs:

Please note that you will not be compensated to contribute to this study. Your participation will be on a purely voluntary basis.

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on condition my privacy is respected, subject to the following:
- I understand that my personal details may be included in the research / will be used in aggregate form only so that I will not be personally identifiable (delete as applicable.)
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.
- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.
- I understand that this research might be published in a research journal or book. In the case of dissertation research, the document will be available to readers in a university library in printed form, and possibly in electronic form as well.

Signature of Participant _____

Name of Participant _____

Signature of person who sought consent:

Name of person who sought consent:

Signature of principal researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: COVID-19 researcher's protocol

COVID-19 researcher's protocol

The following coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic protocol was adapted from the University of Cape Town research protocol developed by the researcher and adapted from the University of Cape Town guidelines for COVID-19 meeting protocols (University of Cape Town 2021).

Dear Participant,

Kindly note that since data will be collected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, I will undertake the following steps and procedures to ensure our safety. I will ensure the following:

- Before entering the interview room, personal protective equipment (PPE) and a tracing register will be completed and kept on record.
- Participants were screened before the interview to check their temperature. Their temperature will then be recorded on the PPE and tracing register.
- Hands were sanitised before entering the interview room.
- All the participants and I wore masks that were kept on for the meeting duration.
- I frequently disinfected touched objects, such as laptops, pens, chairs, and tables.
- Seating arrangements ensured proper physical distancing rules, specifically 1.5 meters between the participants and me, with stickers indicating the flow.
- The number of people in the interview room did not exceed the required number.

The following is an example of the COVID-19 PPE tracing register:

Activity: _____

Date: _____

Number: _____

Name and surname: _____

Mask-screened temperature: _____

Sanitiser: _____

Contact details: _____

Source: Developed by the Researcher adopting from University of Cape Town guidelines for COVID-19 meeting protocols.

Appendix 4: List of questions to the participants

Addendum A: A guideline to semi-structured interview questions for opera practitioners, companies/ managers

Purpose: The main purpose of this study is to investigate the current challenges and discovering workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. It is also significant to identify possible solutions that can be implemented to improve the funding for opera companies. Sharing your understanding will help the researcher make trustworthy recommendations that will improve the funding of opera companies in South Africa. You are part of a carefully selected sample of opera managers asked to assist with this study. The researcher values and appreciates your contribution to the success of the study.

How long will it take: The interview will take approximately **30–50 minutes** to complete.

1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.

2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?

4. What are misunderstanding and misperception of government towards the opera industry?

5. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?

6. What is your short- range collaboration for opera companies?

7. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?

8. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

9. What are some of the issues your company face with regards to funding?

10. What is the level of funding of opera companies in South Africa?

11. What are some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera houses to enhance funding for opera companies in South Africa?

...Thank you for your time...

...END...

Addendum B: Guideline to semi-structured interview questions for funding entities

Dear Participant,

Purpose: The main purpose of this study is to investigate the current challenges and discovering workable solutions for the future of opera companies in South Africa. It is also significant to identify possible solutions that can be implemented to improve the funding for opera companies. Sharing your understanding will help the researcher make trustworthy recommendations that will improve the funding of opera companies in South Africa. You are part of a carefully selected sample of opera managers who have been asked to assist with this study. The researcher values and appreciates your contribution to the success of the study.

How long will it take: The interview will take approximately **30–50 minutes** to complete.

1. What challenges have you experienced when it comes to funding opera companies?

2. What is your perception with regards to the closure of opera companies?

3. In your view, what are the significant causes of the decline of state funding for opera companies in South Africa?

4. How did economic stagnancy have affected funding for opera companies in South Africa?

5. In your opinion, what could be done to increase the funding for opera companies in South Africa?

6. In your experience, is it important for opera companies to invent other methods to fund their operations?

...Thank you for your time...

...END...

Appendix 5: Raw data from the opera company managers

TRANSCRIPT 1

Interviewee: Opera company manager (Participant 1)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 7, June 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 1= P1; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 1 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	My general perception about the funding of opera companies from the state is that it plays a significant role in the stability of opera companies in South Africa. It is important to note that opera productions can be expensive to stage due to the costs associated with hiring talented singers, musicians, production teams, and securing suitable venues. Thus, state funding provide the necessary financial support to cover these expenses, ensuring that opera companies can continue to produce high-quality performances. I also believe that state funding contributes to the long-term planning and strategic initiatives for us as opera companies in South Africa. With consistent financial support, we as opera companies can plan ahead, invest in talent development, and undertake projects that might not be feasible without steady funding.

2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?

I think, one of the big challenges facing opera companies now is the decline of the state funding for the opera industry while opera companies do not, and never have, sustained themselves through ticket sales, and the funding decline for the opera industry has contributed to the closure of many opera companies in South Africa. In South Africa, opera companies rely on patronage donations to cover their expenses and unfortunately, not all of us [opera companies] receive such generosity from individuals. Hence, many opera companies have terminated their operations. As state funding decreases, some opera companies may face financial distress and may be forced to suspend or terminate their operations. This not only affects artists and employees but also impacts the cultural landscape of South Africa.

Talents, creativity, and skills set

In terms of talent, creativity, and skills set, we do not have a problem at all, this country is full of talented opera singers. South Africa is abundant with talented opera singers and possesses a pool of creative and skilled individuals in the opera industry. Having such a wealth of talent is undoubtedly a significant asset for the country's cultural scene. However, as you pointed out, the primary challenge is almost like we do not have enough money to employ them all. That is the sadness of it.

Value chain

Also, opera companies in South Africa are struggling with value chain. We as company managers need to develop pipelines for in terms of the whole value chain of an opera company. I believe that the value chain of an opera company encompasses all the stages

involved in producing and presenting an opera, from talent development and production to audience engagement and financial management. Building a strong value chain ensures efficiency, creativity, and long-term growth. As company managers, it's vital to address each stage of the opera company's value chain and implement strategies to strengthen the overall pipeline. Collaborating with a South African university to develop a language expert and vocal coach is an excellent initiative to strengthen your opera company's value chain. Having someone with expertise in languages and vocal technique can have a significant impact on the talent development and production aspects of your opera company.

Funding pipelines

Also, we need to have funding pipelines so that we can have interns and all of that, to develop the next generation marking of these gators. Creating funding pipelines to support interns and nurture the next generation of opera professionals is a critical challenge for opera companies. Establishing sustainable funding sources for internship programs and talent development initiatives can have numerous benefits for the opera community and the broader cultural landscape. Opera companies may acquire the resources needed to provide significant learning opportunities for young performers by building specific funding pipelines for internships and talent development. Empowering the next generation of opera singers, musicians, and arts workers not only ensures the art form's survival but also enhances South Africa's cultural fabric.

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?

Well, it is important to note that there are reasons for the closure of opera companies, and these are often influenced by a combination of factors. For instance, before 1994 South African opera companies were funded through four state-funded performing arts councils. However, a sad occurrence that took place in 1994, contributed to the closure of opera companies in South Africa was when the previous state-funded performing arts councils were disbanded. During this time, funding of the opera companies was reduced and unfortunately, opera companies could not sustain themselves. As a result, some opera companies faced financial difficulties and struggled to secure alternative sources of funding to make up for the loss of state support. The lack of sufficient financial resources led to the closure of some opera companies in South Africa.

Historical events and changes in government

It is important to recognise that historical events and changes in government policies can have long-lasting effects on the arts and cultural sector. Understanding the context of these changes is crucial in assessing their impact on opera companies and the broader arts community in South Africa. South Africa's history of Apartheid, which ended in 1994, had profound effects on the arts and cultural sector. During Apartheid, certain art forms, including opera, were often associated with colonial and elitist culture, limiting accessibility and inclusivity. After Apartheid, the arts sector faced the challenge of becoming more representative and inclusive of the country's diverse population. Sadly, opera is still perceived as an elitist culture affected government funding.

4. What are misunderstanding and misperception of government towards the opera industry?

I think, one of the most prevalent misperceptions about opera is that it caters only to the elite or upper class. Some policymakers may view opera as an exclusive art form enjoyed by a small, privileged segment of society. This perception led to reduced funding and support for opera companies. Also, I do not believe that the decline of state funding for the opera industry has anything to do with the economy of the country only. It is just the wrong perception of the government towards opera. For instance, the perception of opera as an elitist or exclusive art form has led to its lower prioritisation in government funding compared to other genres that are perceived as more accessible or popular among the general population. Genres like Hip-hop or other African genres are seen as having broader appeal, particularly among younger and more diverse audiences, which could influence funding decisions.

Cultural biases or preferences

In South Africa, government funding decisions is mainly influenced by cultural biases or preferences, where certain art forms are perceived as more representative of the nation's identity or heritage than opera, leading to disproportionate funding for specific genres at the expense of others. South Africa is a country rich in cultural diversity, with a vibrant and multifaceted arts scene. Different art forms, including traditional music, dance, visual arts, and contemporary genres, are all part of the nation's cultural fabric. The government's funding decisions are often guided by the desire to preserve and promote the country's diverse cultural heritage.

Historically, certain art forms have been associated with specific cultural communities or historical narratives, and as a result, they might receive more support in terms of funding and cultural recognition. Genres that have played a significant role in the struggle against Apartheid, for instance, might be perceived as especially representative of the nation's identity and, therefore, receive more attention. Opera, like any art form, has the capacity to transcend cultural boundaries and be appreciated and adapted in diverse contexts. It is not inherently tied to a specific cultural or geographic origin.

5. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?

It is hard to say that for opera companies to survive in the country needs to almost start again, given the fact that COVID-19 has brutally affected the traditional method of performance in theatres. The COVID-19 pandemic has had severe economic repercussions worldwide, and South Africa was not immune to its effects. The traditional method of performance in theatres, which heavily relies on live audiences and gatherings, was severely disrupted by lockdowns, social distancing measures, and restrictions on public gatherings. As a result, many opera companies faced significant financial challenges, with reduced revenue from ticket sales, cancelled performances, and limited opportunities for fundraising. The decline in economic activity during the pandemic likely led to reduced government revenue in South Africa, making it more difficult for the state to allocate funds to support various opera industry.

Impact of digital technologies on the opera industry

The impact of digital technologies on the opera industry has been significant to the advancement of the industry globally. Over the past few years of COVID-19, digital advancements have transformed various aspects of the opera world, affecting how opera is created, produced, distributed, and experienced. As we are the season of the pandemic, I think it is clear that online performance has become a key driver for the growth of the industry of performing arts, in the particular opera industry. I would say, for me digital technologies have brought both opportunities and challenges to the opera industry, especially in South Africa. While they have expanded access and engagement, they have also raised questions about the balance between digital and live experiences, the impact on traditional revenue models, and the need to maintain the essence of opera as a live performing art form. As technology continues to evolve, the opera industry will need to adapt and find innovative ways to leverage digital advancements while preserving its artistic integrity and historical significance.

Advantage of audiences

We have also embraced digital platforms which I believe it have many benefits. For instance, it enables our performances to be accessed from anywhere in the world with an internet connection. This breaks down geographical barriers, allowing our company to connect with audiences in diverse regions and countries.

Disadvantages in the opera industry

Some of the disadvantages about digital technologies in South African opera industry is that digital

technology requires extensive digital skills from managers to performers and due to the lack of these digital skills. This means that South African opera companies could battle to function successfully. South Africa, like many developing countries, have disparities in access to digital technologies and the internet. The digital divide has limited the reach of online performances and educational initiatives to specific urban areas or regions with better internet infrastructure. I believe that while digital technologies offer great potential, it is essential to balance their implementation with the specific needs and constraints of the local opera industry in South Africa to ensure a successful and sustainable transition to a more digitally integrated landscape.

Disadvantages in audiences

While in recent years, digital technologies have been recognised as a powerful tool for expanding audience reach and engagement in the opera industry, In South Africa there are significant challenges that need to be addressed to fully harness their potential in the opera industry. The limitations related to data restrictions and internet connectivity are particularly noteworthy in South Africa and other similar contexts.

6. What is your short- range collaboration for opera companies?

In our company, we have developed short-term financial planning for surviving and this involves exploring various revenue-generating opportunities and adapting to new circumstances. We are currently, collaborating, and diversifying performance venues as our strategy to help our company address financial challenges and expand their reach. We have also considered touring to other cities or regions to

perform in different venues and attract new audiences. Outreach performances in schools, community centres, and public spaces can also help raise awareness and generate goodwill.

7. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?

Long-term planning is essential for us as it helps our company to remain relevant in the opera industry. This has also help us to foresee the future and prepare for it in a practical approach as opposed to being reactive. Also, planning for the long-term ensures financial stability by creating realistic budget projections, diversifying revenue sources, and identifying potential cost-saving measures. This has helped us to create a solid foundation for their financial stability and resilience. These strategies allow them to navigate financial challenges, adapt to changing market conditions, and continue fulfilling their artistic mission for years to come.

8. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

In our company, we believe that community engagement in the opera industry is a powerful strategy for increasing funding. For instance, when an opera company is actively involved and connect with the local community, it leads to various benefits that directly or indirectly contribute to securing financial support. Another benefit for engaging with the community allows opera companies to build strong relationships with potential donors and patrons. Donors who feel connected to the company's mission and impact are more likely to contribute financially. This helps us to identify and cultivate major donors who are passionate about the arts and willing to make significant contributions to support the opera

company's activities. Engaging previously disadvantaged communities has helped us to promote cultural equity by breaking down barriers and providing equal access to cultural experiences. We also acknowledge the rich cultural heritage, and we seek to contribute to the diverse communities through opera. We believe that this can expand the opera audience, creating a more inclusive and representative space for people from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures.

9. What are some of the issues your company face with regards to funding?

The issue we face is getting funding. The main issue is just finding a foundation or a government or whatever entity to find us, and then putting your message out in such a way that they buy into it and fund you it has been difficult. Like I said, in previous answers, it is essential to engage community and sell your product to a potential funder and hope that they buy into that.

Once-off funding

Also, receiving once-off funding from the state is difficult because we cannot plan effectively. Reliance on one-time or irregular funding from the state or other sources can create uncertainty and challenges in effective long-term planning for opera companies. Funding cycles with fixed durations can significantly improve financial stability, strategic decision-making, and the ability to plan for the future. Hence, I believe that fixed funding cycles allow opera companies to engage in more robust long-term planning. They can plan multi-year artistic projects, educational initiatives, and community outreach programs with a clear understanding of available financial resources. For instance, knowing the funding is available for a

fixed duration allows opera companies to develop a strategic vision that aligns with their long-term goals. They can set ambitious objectives and work towards achieving them over the funding cycle. Also, fixed funding cycles can encourage us as opera companies to incorporate sustainability planning into our strategies. We can consider long-term financial sustainability and plan for potential funding gaps beyond the current cycle.

10. What is the level of funding of opera companies in South Africa?

The level of funding for opera companies in South Africa has been drastically declining, and this has significant implications for the opera industry in the country. Funding for the arts, including opera, can be influenced by economic conditions, government policies, and the prioritisation of cultural development. In South Africa, economic fluctuations and downturns have affected the availability of funds for the opera industry. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on economies worldwide, and many governments and donors have faced difficult decisions when allocating funds. During periods of economic hardship, such as the pandemic, the limited availability of financial resources has led to competing priorities, and cultural initiatives, including opera companies, have often experienced reductions in funding.

What are some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera houses to enhance funding for opera companies in South Africa?

Most of opera companies in South Africa have a completely different funding model. They are far more reliant on government funding, which is not sustainable and reliable for the future. Before thinking about adopting the European funding model,

it is important to note that European opera houses often rely on a mix of funding sources, including government support, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, and ticket sales. I believe that adapting workable solutions from successful European opera houses can be extremely advantageous for increasing funding and sustainability for South African opera companies. European opera houses have extensive experience navigating the challenges of arts funding and creating viable funding structures. South African opera companies can strengthen their financial stability, artistic achievements, and community influence by learning from their techniques and experiences. South African opera companies can explore similar diversification to reduce dependence on one source and increase financial stability.

TRANSCRIPT 2

Interviewee: Previous opera company manager (Participant 2)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 19, July 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 2= P2; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 2 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	My perception about the funding is that the insufficient state funding for opera companies in South Africa to cover all their monthly expenses is a significant challenge faced by opera industry. The limited funding has had a negative impact in opera company's ability to sustain its operations, support artistic productions, maintain staff, and engage in community outreach and educational programmes. For instance, the lack of adequate funding has resulted in financial instability in our company, making it difficult for us to manage cash flow and plan. This uncertainty has hindered the company's ability to take on long-term projects and invest in growth. We ended up closing the company because we were losing, instead of making profit. Facing financial difficulties and closure can be disheartening, especially for passionate artists and staff who have dedicated their time and efforts to the company's artistic mission. It's essential to acknowledge the complexities of funding in the arts sector, which often faces unique challenges compared to other industries.
2. In your view, what are the significant challenges	We as opera companies in South Africa experience limited availability of funding, particularly from the

experienced by opera companies in South Africa?

government and this is one of the most pressing challenges we face in our country. The lack of adequate financial support has had a far-reaching implication for the sustainability and growth of opera in South Africa. As I highlighted earlier, with insufficient funding, opera companies may find it challenging to cover day-to-day operational expenses, including staff salaries, venue rentals, administrative costs, and marketing efforts.

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?

The closure of opera companies in South Africa can result from a combination of factors and changes in the operating environment. The insufficient financial support is obvious, especially from the government and other funding sources. The changes in audience demographics and preferences have led to a decrease in interest in traditional opera performances and this has impacted ticket sales and overall revenue. Also, it is essential to state that South Africa's diverse entertainment landscape offers various cultural and leisure activities, which compete for audience attention and discretionary spending. Opera companies face challenges in standing out amid the array of entertainment options.

4. What are misunderstanding and misperception of government towards the opera industry?

Well, apart from funding, is the misunderstanding of government towards opera. The misunderstanding and lack of government interest in the country's opera industry, as well as other performing arts sectors like orchestra and ballet, contribute significantly to the current challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa. When the government fails to recognize and prioritise the arts as an essential part of the

5. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?

country's cultural heritage and development, it can lead to a range of negative consequences for opera companies and the performing arts in general.

Honestly, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about unprecedented challenges for governments worldwide, including South Africa, which had to prioritise public health and emergency response measures to combat the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact on the population. As a result, funding allocations were redirected towards healthcare systems, vaccination programs, and economic stimulus packages to support businesses and individuals affected by lockdowns and restrictions. The shift in priorities towards immediate health and economic needs meant that arts and culture funding, including support for opera companies, took a backseat. It is sad that arts were considered non-essential during the acute phase of the pandemic, and the limited financial resources were primarily directed towards urgent health measures and economic recovery initiatives. One would agree with me that during such crises, as South African opera companies we faced a double blow. First, the closure of performance venues and suspension of events due to lockdowns resulted in significant revenue losses for opera companies. Second, the decline in state funding and public support further exacerbated financial challenges and uncertainty for the survival of these organisations. For me, it is essential to recognise that the arts play a vital role in society, contributing to well-being, creativity, cultural identity, and social cohesion.

Impact of digital technologies on the opera industry

During this time, we are forced to use digital technology and I think it will have a good and bad impact in our operation. Digital platforms provide opportunities for us to increase audience engagement and interaction. For instance, through digital technology we can host virtual backstage tours and engage in social media interactions to foster a closer relationship with their audience. However, some of the challenges we experience is that the shift to digital operations requires staff with digital skills, which is currently lacking in some opera companies. I believe that inadequate digital infrastructure can hinder the smooth adoption of digital technology in the opera industry. Also, we should keep in mind that while digital technology opens new revenue streams for opera companies, not all potential audience members have access to reliable internet connections or digital devices, leading to a digital divide in access to online performances.

Advantage of audiences

I think digital platforms have revolutionised audience engagement and interaction for opera companies and the performing arts in general. For instance, digital platforms allow us to live-stream performances to audiences worldwide. This enables people from different locations to experience the opera in real-time, broadening the company's reach. For this this was advantageous for audience building.

Disadvantages in the opera industry

Digital technologies have disadvantages in opera industry for countries such as South Africa. Some of the disadvantages of digital technology in the opera

industry innovating is very costly and most of us as opera companies cannot afford. Therefore, we are extremely cautious about investing in digital technology. In South African context, not all opera companies, especially those in remote or economically challenged regions, may have access to reliable and high-speed internet connections or the latest digital tools. While embracing digital technology, opera companies should stay true to their artistic vision and core values. The use of digital tools should enhance and complement the artistic expression rather than overshadow it. Digital elements should be integrated thoughtfully to enrich the storytelling and emotional impact of the performance.

Disadvantages in finances

For me, the rapid development of digital technologies in many performing arts sectors, including opera, has caused a severe change in the economic structure. The impact of the increase of digital technologies in the opera industry has pushed the industry to move into digital performance.

6. What is your short-range collaboration for opera companies?

I would say, it is essential for opera companies to carefully select collaborations that align with their mission and goals, and to communicate effectively to maximise the benefits of these short-term partnerships. These collaborations have helped our opera company before to expand our audience base, increase community engagement, and strengthen our financial resources, contributing to our long-term sustainability and growth. Also, collaborating with restaurants, hotels, or cafes to host opera-themed

dinners or performances can create a captivating and memorable experience for guests. This collaboration brings together the pleasures of fine dining with the enchantment of live opera, appealing to both seasoned opera enthusiasts and newcomers to the art form.

7. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?

For me, long-range financial planning is essential as this involves creating a comprehensive financial strategy that extends beyond the immediate year and looks several years into the future. Long-range financial planning assists opera companies with cash flow by securing funds before the season of the production starts and allow the artistic team more flexibility in selecting repertory. Also, Opera companies can become more proactive, strategic, and financially resilient by incorporating long-term financial planning into their operations. Opera companies may focus on their artistic vision, prepare ambitious shows, and create unforgettable experiences for their audiences while preserving a healthy cash flow and financial sustainability by securing funding in advance.

8. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

Well to be honest, without community, there is not opera. Community engagement in the opera industry offers numerous benefits as a strategic approach to increasing funding and support. When opera companies actively engage with their local communities, they build meaningful relationships that go beyond ticket sales and create a positive impact on the community. Hence, I believe that reaching out to black communities and expanding

opera's appeal among diverse audiences is crucial for promoting inclusivity and ensuring the art form's continued relevance and growth. Opera music has a universal appeal, and there are many black opera enthusiasts and potential fans who may not have had sufficient exposure to the genre. In the black communities, there is an audience that needs to be reached out to as many black communities enjoy opera music. The benefit of community engagement initiative is that it attracts new and diverse audiences, increasing attendance at opera performances. This expansion of the audience base can lead to higher ticket sales and revenue.

9. What is the level of funding of opera companies in South Africa?

Generally speaking, opera companies in South Africa are faced with funding challenges. Government funding for arts and culture in South Africa has historically been limited, and arts organisations, including opera companies, often rely on a combination of funding sources such as individual donations, corporate sponsorships, grants, and ticket sales to support their operations. A worst scenario was the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in early 2020, that has also severely impacted the financial situation of many opera companies. I would say it's essential to note that the funding landscape for opera companies in South Africa is dynamic, and it is subject to change over time based on economic conditions, government policies, and other factors.

10. What are some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European

Well, before I say anything, let me highlight that given the dynamic nature of South African opera companies' financial situation, it is essential for us to

opera come ordnance you know, to enhance the situation at hand?

conduct a thorough assessment of our funding model, financial sustainability, and opportunities for diversification. Engaging in strategic planning, seeking professional financial advice, and exploring new funding avenues could help us navigate challenges and build a more stable and sustainable financial future. As highlighted earlier, as opera companies we can collaborate with industry experts, arts advocacy organisations, and peers to share best practices and exchange insights on successful funding strategies. Each company may need to tailor their approach to fundraising based on their specific circumstances and long-term goals. Ultimately, a multifaceted approach that considers both traditional and innovative funding sources can provide opera companies with the resilience and adaptability needed to thrive in the ever-changing arts funding landscape in South Africa.

TRANSCRIPT 3

Interviewee: Previous opera company manager (Participant 3)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 10, August 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 3= P3; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 3 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	Let me start by highlighting that opera industry often faces challenges related to funding, and when government support diminishes, it can have a significant impact on the sustainability of opera companies. For instance, Gauteng Province used to have lovely opera companies that absorbed young opera graduates into the industry. However, due to the decline of government funding, the companies were unable to cover their expenses, and this led to the closure of these companies. Government funding is essential for supporting the arts, as it allows opera companies to cover their expenses, provide opportunities for young opera graduates, and continue their cultural contributions to society. When funding declines, our companies struggled to maintain operations, pay performers and staff, stage productions, and promote events. We ended up closing and this meant job losses for artists, musicians, administrative staff, and other professionals involved in the industry. It can also

limit the prospects for young opera graduates who were previously absorbed into the industry.

2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?

In my view, the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa are the changes that took place in 1994. After the democratic elections in 1994 and the end of Apartheid, the government sought to transform the cultural landscape of the country to promote inclusivity, diversity, and equitable access to the arts, including opera. The financial structures that were previously in place, such as the PACs, were subject to change as part of this process.

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?

In 1996, it was announced that the existing PACs would be replaced by a new funding body called the National Arts Council (NAC). The NAC was established to be a more inclusive, representative, and nationally focused organisation responsible for supporting various arts and culture projects across South Africa. It aimed to provide funding and resources to a broader range of art forms, artists, and regions of the country. The establishment of the NAC aimed to break away from the inequalities and exclusivity that characterised the arts funding landscape during the Apartheid era. It sought to create a more democratic and equitable system that could accommodate a diverse array of artistic expressions, including opera. While this transition brought about positive changes in the arts sector, it also presented challenges for some traditional art forms, including opera. Opera companies and artists had to navigate the new funding processes and

compete for resources within the expanded arts community.

4. What are misunderstandings and misperceptions of government towards the opera industry?

I will tell you why opera companies are struggling with government funding. One of the significant challenges we are currently facing is the perception of the government toward opera. Most politicians do not see opera as an art form that is worthy of state funding because they have believed for many years that opera is for the white class population. I think opera in South Africa has been historically associated with European cultural traditions, and many early opera productions were imported from Europe. This Eurocentric influence has created a perception that opera does not adequately represent the diverse cultural heritage of South Africa, leading some politicians and policymakers to view it as disconnected from much of the population.

The perception of opera as an elitist art form has been reinforced by factors such as high production costs, expensive tickets, and performances held in prestigious venues. This has led some politicians to question the justification of providing state funding for an art form that appears to cater to a limited, privileged audience. It is sad because, after 1994 a lot of opera were staged in indigenous languages and setting. For instance, Princess Magogo, Winnie: The Opera and Mandela Opera among many others. Yet opera is still misunderstood in government. Hence, we experience funding challenges in the industry. Despite efforts to stage operas in indigenous languages and settings, opera in South Africa continues to face misunderstandings and funding

challenges within the government. The shift towards producing operas that reflect the country's diverse culture and history demonstrates the industry's commitment to inclusivity and relevance. However, changing long-standing perceptions and securing adequate funding can be a complex and ongoing process.

5. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?

[S]ince the COVID-19 pandemic it was confirmed that there was a significant decrease of sponsorships to the opera industry, which affected opera artists and ancillary workers ranging from those in charge of lighting, sound engineering, and ticket sales, among others. With opera companies facing closures or limited operations due to restrictions and safety measures, many companies had to cancel or postpone performances, resulting in substantial financial losses.

Impact of digital technologies on the opera industry

I believe that digital technology plays a crucial role in the modern opera industry especially now that we are experiencing COVID-19 pandemic when in-person performances may not be possible. Embracing digital platforms and developing digital skills are essential for opera companies to continue engaging with audiences, showcasing performances, and generating income. However, as you mentioned, this can require a significant investment, which can be challenging for a developing country like South Africa. I believe that the long-term benefits of expanding opera's reach and attracting new audiences may outweigh the drawbacks. Even in the face of economic constraints, the South African opera business may harness digital

technology to sustain and enhance its creative greatness. The industry may thrive and contribute to the cultural fabric of the country by embracing the digital revolution.

Advantage of audiences

As opera companies we must know that digital platforms provide several advantages to the opera industry, particularly during periods of closure and restrictions on live performances. Adopting digital technology can save opera businesses by allowing them to continue engaging with fans and reaching new viewers in different locales. I also believe that recognising and adapting to new audience expectations in the digital age is critical for opera companies to stay relevant and engage a larger and younger audience. Digital technological innovation has changed how people consume content, especially performing arts such as opera. Embracing digital streaming and online engagement opens several possibilities for reaching out to new and future audiences.

Disadvantages in the opera industry

For opera industry like us in South Africa, adopting and maintaining digital technology can be costly, especially for us as we have limited resources. High-quality digital productions require investments in equipment, platforms, and skilled personnel. To be honest with you, in our country not all audience members have access to reliable internet or digital devices, this limits their ability to participate in digital opera experiences.

Disadvantages financially

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching financial repercussions around the world, with the arts and cultural sector, especially opera companies, particularly heavily hit. Many companies in South Africa have encountered serious financial issues because of the crisis, and government support for the arts has been reduced or reallocated to address other pressing priorities. We are currently experiencing a massive financial support decline from the government.

6. What is your short-range collaboration for opera companies?

As part of our short-term strategy, we are developing short-term collaboration with sports organisations is a very important strategy for increasing resources for opera companies in South Africa.

7. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?

I also believe that, as opera industry, we must build a long-term relationship with prestigious private funders such as the ABSA, SASOL, and National Lotteries Commission among others organisation, with this kind of relationship and exposure will help us to have a long financial stability while gaining further visibility and business opportunities for years to come.

8. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

Absolutely, in our company we understand that community engagement plays a crucial role in the success and sustainability of the opera industry. Hence, we actively engaging disadvantaged communities in our area, through this we create a positive impact on various levels, leading to increased audiences in theatres and fostering a deeper connection with the public. This has helped us to

promote cultural inclusivity by offering opportunities for marginalised South Africans from different backgrounds to experience and appreciate the art form. This helps us to break down barriers and make opera more accessible and relevant to a broader spectrum of society.

9. What are some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera come ordnance you know, to enhance the situation at hand?

There are several workable solutions that South African opera companies could consider adapting from successful European opera models to enhance their situation and address various challenges they face. For instance, European opera houses have been expanding their repertory to include works by living composers and opera productions that reflect a greater range of cultural experiences. Adopting this technique has the potential to attract a younger, more varied audience while also enriching the cultural environment.

TRANSCRIPT 4

Interviewee: Previous opera company manager (Participant 4)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 19, July 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 4= P4; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 4 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	My general perception is that there the decline in state funding since 1994 has had significant consequences for opera companies, leading to closures of prominent opera companies such as Gauteng Opera, Opera Africa, and Opera South Africa. The closures of opera companies represent a severe loss to the industry, impacting not only the artists and performers but also the broader cultural landscape. Young opera artists, in particular, face difficulties in finding sufficient employment opportunities after their studies to support their livelihoods and pursue their careers in the field. This has led many brilliant South African young opera singers to relocate to Europe for greener pastures.
2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?	Well, we all know that the consistent decline of funding for opera companies in South Africa is a significant challenge that poses threats to the sustainability and growth of the opera industry. This disparity in funding, where other activities receive state support while opera companies struggle, is a

complex issue with various factors contributing to the situation. Another challenge is that opera in South Africa has a complex history, and there are perceptions that it was used to suppress the arts of marginalised communities during certain periods. But we all forget that opera, like many other art forms, was influenced by historical contexts, including the Apartheid era, which had a significant impact on the development and accessibility of the arts in the country.

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?

Well, it is important to note that there are reasons for the closure of opera companies, and these are often influenced by a combination of factors. For instance, before 1994 South African opera companies were funded through four state-funded performing arts councils. However, a sad occurrence that took place in 1994, contributed to the closure of opera companies in South Africa was when the previous state-funded performing arts councils were disbanded. During this time, funding of the opera companies was reduced and unfortunately, opera companies could not sustain themselves and had to shut down. We fail to understand that, since the end of Apartheid in 1994, as opera companies, we have made serious effort to promote inclusivity and diversity in the country. For instance, we and other opera companies have made strides in representing and showcasing the artistic talents of all South Africans, regardless of their background. We have staged several South African opera productions that promote and preserve our unique culture as the country. We have staged opera productions in indigenous languages, and themes

reflecting the country's diverse cultural heritage have been explored.

4. What are misunderstanding and misperception of government towards the opera industry?

The misunderstanding and misperception of opera can be attributed to various factors, including historical stereotypes, misconceptions about its accessibility and relevance to broader audiences, and the perception of elitism associated with the art form. As a result, government support for opera is not prioritised compared to other genres or art forms that are perceived to have a broader appeal. It is challenging for us as opera companies to secure adequate funding when there is a misunderstanding or lack of appreciation for opera as an art form among policymakers and government officials.

5. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?

The reallocation of funding during the COVID-19 pandemic to address immediate public health and economic issues has had a negative influence on the provision of resources to the opera business and other creative sectors. The epidemic presented unprecedented problems, and governments around the world were forced to prioritise resources to address urgent healthcare demands, give economic assistance to individuals and businesses, and support key services. In such critical times, support for the arts, including opera, may have been prioritised by governments concerned with addressing the public health issue and reducing the economic repercussions. While allocating cash to vital sectors was necessary to preserve lives and protect livelihoods, it also emphasised the arts sector's weakness and reliance on government help. When

this happened, we had to cancel performances, revenue losses, and increased operational challenges due to restrictions on gatherings and closures of venues. This made it more difficult for them to generate income and secure alternative funding sources during the pandemic. The termination of opera performances represents a loss of state funding for the opera industry too. For us, live performances are a crucial source of revenue for opera companies, as ticket sales, sponsorships, and other related income streams play a vital role in supporting their operations and artistic endeavours.

Impact of digital technologies on the opera industry

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to the opera industry, forcing us as opera companies worldwide to adapt quickly and embrace digital technologies to continue engaging with audiences and artists. With gathering limits and venue closures, we have turned to virtual performances and live-streaming to reach audiences. Although it was difficult, digital channels enabled us to deliver opera productions online, allowing audiences to experience performances from the safety and comfort of their own homes.

Advantage of audiences

As I mentioned earlier, using digital platforms have played a crucial role for us in enhancing audience engagement within the opera industry, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. These platforms have allowed us to foster meaningful connections with their audiences, create immersive experiences, and encourage active participation. We also allow our audiences to share their experiences through user-

generated content, such as reviews, videos, and artwork inspired by opera performances. This involvement creates a sense of ownership and empowerment among the audience.

Disadvantages in the opera industry

Well, digital technology has brought significant advantages to the opera industry, especially now where there is total closure of live performances. However, this comes with certain disadvantages, particularly related to cost and expertise. Adopting and maintaining digital technologies have been expensive for South African opera companies, especially for those with limited financial resources. I believe that investments are needed in acquiring hardware, software, and infrastructure to support digital initiatives.

Disadvantages in finances

I believe that securing funding and sponsorships for digital initiatives have been more challenging, especially for us as opera companies with limited financial resources, particularly in these times of economic uncertainty. Many businesses and organisations have been facing their financial constraints, leading to a more competitive funding landscape.

5. What is your short-range collaboration for opera companies?

This is a crucial question, for us opera companies in South Africa. To generate more revenue and engage with audience, we have opted for collaboration and hosting events in alternative venues like restaurants and other public spaces can be effective ways to achieve these goals. In our company we believe that performing in alternative venues like restaurants and

public spaces opens opportunities to reach audiences who may not typically attend traditional opera performances. This can lead to increased ticket sales and expanded audience engagement. Also, as part of our short-range collaboration, we have decided that after the pandemic we will have events hosted in alternative venues can offer unique and intimate experiences for the audience, creating memorable moments that encourage repeat attendance and word-of-mouth promotion.

6. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?

To be honest with you, in this era where opera companies are financially crushed, it is important for us [opera companies] to have a solid plan to ensure that we survive. The harsh truth is that the industry is changing every day. Therefore, opera companies need to have long-term financial planning, and this will determine whether we will survive in the future or not. For instance, we can better position ourselves to weather financial challenges, capitalise on opportunities, and succeed in a dynamically changing market by establishing a thorough long-term financial plan. Adaptability, creativity, and a commitment to artistic excellence are critical components of a long-term plan that ensures opera companies continue to enhance the cultural landscape and deliver the wonder of opera to audiences for future generations. This can possibly enhance our financial revenues.

7. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

I believe that it is important for us as opera companies to engage the marginalised communities in opera. Since many of these black communities, including our government, believes that opera is for

the old white population. Community involvement in the opera industry is a significant and effective technique for expanding fundraising and financial support. The advantages of community involvement are numerous, and they lead to the development of a thriving opera environment. Engaging with the community, for example, promotes great public relations, boosts the opera company's image, and dispels the myth that opera is only for white people. Being viewed as an important member of the community might result in increased media coverage, public interest, and support. In addition, by cultivating community relationships, we may provide the groundwork for long-term sustainability. A devoted and supportive community provides a consistent source of revenue and patronage that can survive economic ups and downs.

8. What are some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera come ordnance you know, to enhance the situation at hand?

It is important to first understand that every country and opera company's situation is unique, adopting successful strategies from European opera models can provide valuable insights and inspiration.

Adaptability, innovation, and community engagement are essential characteristics that can enable South African opera enterprises to overcome problems and achieve a sustainable future. Opera companies can establish a devoted and supportive patron base by actively listening to their audiences' needs and tastes, reaching out to diverse areas, and fostering genuine connections. Embracing innovation, particularly in the digital realm, has the potential to broaden the scope of audience involvement and accessibility, allowing opera companies to expand beyond physical

venues and connect with audiences in new ways. Furthermore, encouraging collaborations, partnerships, and sponsorships can help to leverage resources, increase networks, and improve financial sustainability.

TRANSCRIPT 5

Interviewee: Previous opera company manager (Participant 5)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 10, September 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 5= P5; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 5 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	My perception is that funding plays an essential role in opera industry. Honestly, it is disheartening that most of (the opera companies) had to terminate ... operations due to lack of funding, leaving many young opera artists unemployed. Hence, we do not have stable opera companies around Gauteng Province. The struggle to secure stable funding for opera companies in South Africa is a significant challenge faced by many companies. The lack of financial support from the government has hinder the growth and sustainability of opera as an art form. Hence, I believe that there a strong relationship between the government funding and the success of opera companies in any country. For instance, in Germany opera companies are fully supported by their government. This support enables German opera companies to invest in artistic excellence, produce high-quality performances, engage in community outreach, and develop talent without being solely reliant on ticket sales or private sponsorships. If we can receive such support from our government, we can succeed as opera industry in our country.

2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?
- Perhaps, it is important to state that the post-Apartheid era brought with it economic challenges, including high levels of unemployment and income inequality. This economic context has made it challenging for the government and other funding bodies to allocate sufficient resources to support the opera industry adequately.
3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?
- Also, with the change of political dispensation in 1994, the survival of the opera industry in South Africa during and after the extensive political changes has been extremely difficult due to various reasons. The early years succeeding the political transition were marked by uncertainty and changes in governmental leadership, which harmed the opera industry's funding stability. The change in government resulted in changes in spending priorities. Because the new government had to deal with important social and economic challenges, financial support for the arts, including opera, was often limited. While problems remained, the commitment of post-Apartheid opera companies, performers, and arts advocates to exhibiting the beauty and cultural depth of opera led to its continuing presence and expansion in the country's artistic landscape.
4. What are misunderstandings and misperceptions of government towards the opera industry?
- Sadly, in post-Apartheid South Africa, opera, as an art form with historical connections of elitism and Eurocentrism, faced hurdles in showing its relevance and accessibility to a broader, varied audience. The notion of opera as primarily catering to a wealthy minority hampered efforts to gain popular acceptance. Most of our politicians in parliament see opera as an

art form that belongs to the Apartheid period rather than the art form. This notion is completely wrong as we have staged various South African opera in our native languages.

5. What are the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the decline of state funding?

Well, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative implication on the state funding for us as opera companies. The COVID-19 pandemic in the opera industry has changed many things and worsened the financial challenges that have been already affecting the opera industry in South Africa. This means that there have been increasing job losses in the opera industry, especially freelancing artists who have lost their income due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impact of digital technologies on the opera industry

When COVID-19 pandemic hit the country, we as opera companies had to immediately explore alternative revenue streams, such as online ticketing for virtual performances, digital subscription models, and crowdfunding campaigns.

Advantage of audiences

I believe that digital technology has completely transformed the theatre to the current technological revolution. Therefore, competition for leisure time has also increased, demanding us as opera companies to find new approaches for engagement and creativity in theatrical productions to make connections with digitally saturated audiences. Digital technology has enabled opera companies to reach audiences beyond physical theatre spaces through online streaming and virtual performances. Live-streamed or pre-recorded opera productions can be accessed by audiences

Disadvantages in the opera industry

worldwide, expanding the reach and accessibility of the art form.

In the context of South Africa, embracing digital technology requires opera companies to acquire new skills and expertise, both among the artists and the administrative staff. This skills gap has been challenging to bridge, especially for traditional opera companies like us in South Africa due to the shortage of necessary resources or experience in utilising digital tools effectively. Also, developing and maintaining digital initiatives can be costly for opera companies, and the return on investment may be impacted if the target audience faces internet connectivity and data restrictions.

Disadvantages in audience

In some areas of South Africa, access to reliable and high-speed internet is limited or unavailable. This can hinder audiences from accessing digital opera content, live streams, or online ticketing platforms, thereby limiting the reach of opera companies.

6. What is your short-range collaboration for opera companies?

Let me point out that sports organisations in our country have strong connections with sponsors, which can open new sponsorship opportunities for opera companies. This can provide additional financial support for the production. This is one of the valuable short-term collaborations to co-productions with sports organisations. This can be a valuable short-term strategy for opera companies, especially in attracting new and diverse audiences to the theatre. For me, this collaboration is essential in creating a unique and innovative experience that blends the worlds of sports

and opera, breaking traditional barriers and attracting a broader audience base.

7. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?

We believe that long-term financial planning is critical for the opera industry's sustainability and resilience, especially during difficult times in the country. Opera firms may better navigate economic changes and unforeseen catastrophes by implementing appropriate financial strategies and establishing a sound financial basis. Long-term financial planning, we feel, aids opera companies in establishing and maintaining a healthy financial position. Opera firms can reduce financial risks and preserve financial stability even during periods of economic instability by successfully managing resources. Opera organisations can anticipate and prepare for anticipated obstacles and catastrophes by developing a long-term financial plan. Contingency plans can be put in place to deal with unexpected circumstances, ensuring that the company's operations and mission are not jeopardised.

8. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

I think we have undermined the benefits of community engagement in the industry. Yet, there are numerous advantages to using community participation as a funding approach in the opera industry. Community involvement for us is about creating ties with potential funders and supporters who believe in the opera company's mission and impact as well as interacting with various audiences. Opera companies establish opportunity for personal connections and shared ideals by actively engaging with the community, which

are critical aspects in sustaining long-term financial support.

9. What are some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera come ordnance you know, to enhance the situation at hand?

For me, the success of South African opera companies resides in their ability to embrace their various audiences' distinct cultural history, promote inclusivity, and build a sense of ownership and pride as is the case in Europe. Opera companies can establish a dynamic and relevant opera industry that resonates with the nation's people by recognising South Africa's diversity and reflecting it in their creative programming and community engagement. South African opera companies can pave the road for a bright and sustainable future by being forward-thinking and adaptive, ensuring that the art form continues to enhance the cultural landscape and inspire audiences for future generations.

TRANSCRIPT 6

Interviewee: Previous opera company manager (Participant 6)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 16, September 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 6= P6; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 6 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	In my perception there is a strong relationship between government funding and the success of opera companies in South Africa. I think I should say that opera is one of the most complex art forms worldwide and requires great state funding. Unfortunately, a sad difficulty is that the government has not seen fit to sustain funding for opera companies in a proper way. To work properly, opera companies need to be funded on an ongoing basis. Hence, I think the biggest challenge for opera is to get some sustainable government funding.
2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?	The finance and support from the state are significant challenges we experience as opera companies in South Africa. The lack of adequate funding and support from the government have had profound implications for the sustainability and growth of the opera industry in the country.

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?
- For me, the changes that took place in 1994 in the arts sector contributed to the closure of the opera companies in South Africa. The post-Apartheid era called for greater representation and diversity in all aspects of South African society, including the arts. While this was a positive development, it also meant that we as opera companies had to adapt and respond to new expectations and demands, which we did. However, these changes do not help us. Instead, we are struggling more than before.
4. What are misunderstandings and misperceptions of government towards the opera industry?
- In any country, the perception of the government towards opera plays a crucial role in determining the level of funding and support opera companies receive. When the government recognises the cultural, social, and educational value of opera and its contributions to the artistic landscape, it becomes more likely to allocate sufficient funding to sustain and promote the opera industry. This is not the case in our country, government perceive opera as an art form for high class selected individuals. If government was to change their perception towards opera, I am convinced that funding for opera companies would improve. You cannot expect private or external stakeholders to fund opera companies if the government does not fund it.
5. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge detrimental influence on the South African opera industry, increasing existing financial issues and contributing to significant employment losses, particularly for freelance artists. Opera companies, like many other arts organisations, faced a multitude of financial

challenges during the pandemic, including cancelled performances, reduced ticket sales, increased operational costs related to safety measures, and loss of revenue from ancillary activities. These challenges were exacerbated by the uncertainty surrounding the duration of the pandemic and the timeline for resuming live performances. This affected our funding as we could not plan appropriately.

Impact of digital technologies on the opera industry

During the COVID-19 epidemic, using digital media and online activities was a critical and innovative move for us, as well as many other companies in the opera industry. Despite the pandemic's challenges, we were able to adapt and maintain relationships with our audiences through virtual performances, online showcases, and digital engagement. Shifting to digital platforms allowed us to continue engaging with our audiences. As we move beyond the pandemic, integrating digital elements into traditional opera performances and exploring hybrid formats could further enrich the opera-going experience and attract diverse audiences.

Advantage of audiences

In the South African context, digital initiatives have played a vital role for us to make opera more inclusive and accessible to a wider range of audiences, especially those from marginalised communities. Opera companies have been able to create a more accessible and engaging experience for all by leveraging internet platforms and digital technology.

Disadvantages in the opera industry

This was just expensive in our company. Generally, implementing digital initiatives and expanding

accessibility can be expensive, especially for developing opera companies that do not receive sufficient funding from the state. The costs associated with adopting digital technology, creating accessible content, and maintaining online platforms have posed financial challenges for us, especially now in the times of COVID-19 where there is limited financial support from the government.

Disadvantages for audience

There are many disadvantages for audience in our country to access opera online, for instance, technical issues, such as internet connectivity problems, buffering, or glitches in online performances, have frustrated audiences and deter them from engaging with digital opera content. Also, marginalised communities, especially in underprivileged urban areas have limited access to digital devices, internet connectivity, or the necessary infrastructure to participate in online opera initiatives. This lack of access has created a digital divide, excluding these communities from engaging with digital opera content. Data costs has been a significant barrier for individuals in marginalised communities who may not have access to affordable or unlimited internet packages. Streaming or downloading digital opera performances can consume a large amount of data, making it cost-prohibitive for some audiences.

6. What is your short-range collaboration for opera companies?

Each opera company's short-range collaboration will depend on its unique goals, resources, and audience demographics. For us, we seek out creative and strategic collaborations, this has helped us to enhance our outreach, build meaningful relationships with

	<p>audiences online, and ultimately contribute to the sustainability and growth of the opera company.</p>
<p>7. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?</p>	<p>We are a small opera company performing seasonally, for us long-term financial planning is essential, as it provides us with the foundation for financial stability and consistent artistic achievement. We should not ignore that opera in its nature is a complex and resource-intensive art form because it involves not only talented opera singers but also intricate sets, costumes, and orchestral accompaniment. As such, it requires careful and strategic financial management to sustain and flourish over time.</p>
<p>8. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?</p>	<p>I always say that without an audience, there will be no performance and subsequently there will be no income. Thus, engaging communities in opera can give us the reason for the performance and private sectors to fund us. Hence, we believe that engaging communities in opera is crucial not only for fostering a deeper connection with audiences but also for attracting financial support from various stakeholders, including the private sector. Also, community engagement is a strategic and rewarding approach for opera companies to secure funding, broaden their reach, and ensure their relevance and sustainability in the ever-changing arts landscape. Opera companies can establish a stronger future for the art form and continue to enrich society's cultural fabric by investing in community relations.</p>
<p>9. What are some workable solutions that could be</p>	<p>Adapting successful European opera company tactics can provide significant insights and viable answers for</p>

adapted from the European opera come ordinance you know, to enhance the situation at hand?

improving the position of South African opera companies. For instance, European opera companies, frequently receive financial help from business partners and sponsors. South African enterprises can acquire private sector funding to augment government subsidies by cultivating ties with businesses and demonstrating the good social impact of opera. In South Africa, opera companies can find business companies and sponsors whose values coincide with their artistic goals and community impact. Look for companies that have a history of supporting the arts, cultural enrichment, or social growth.

TRANSCRIPT 7

Interviewee: Previous opera company manager (Participant 7)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 11, October 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 7= P7; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 7 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	My general perception about funding, is that funding plays an essential role in the success of opera worldwide. Funding is a critical factor in supporting the production and presentation of opera performances, as well as nurturing talent, creating new works, and engaging with audiences. Without adequate funding, opera companies may struggle to maintain their operations, attract talented artists, and provide enriching experiences for audiences. Additionally, staging operatic productions often requires significant investments in rehearsal time, venue rentals, marketing, and technical resources. Furthermore, as for us in South Africa, we always strive to make opera accessible to a diverse audience by offering affordable ticket prices, educational programmes, outreach initiatives, and community engagement activities. However, state funding, private sponsorships, and donations from philanthropic individuals and organisations are essential for sustaining us as opera companies in South Africa to

ensure that we continue to contribute to the cultural enrichment of society. It is unfortunate because this is not a case currently. There is a relationship between the decline of state funding and the closures of opera companies because South African opera companies have been significantly bedridden as government and private donations dry up. When government funding and private donations decrease, opera companies may find it increasingly difficult to cover their operating costs, invest in new productions, support artists, and carry out community engagement programs.

2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?

The financial challenges we experience are that opera companies in South Africa we struggle to secure adequate state funding due to shifting government priorities, economic challenges, or a perception of opera as an elitist art form. This has resulted in financial difficulties for many of us leading to reduced production budgets, limited outreach programmes, and potential closures.

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?

I think the political changes in 1994 brought about a new era of promises and hopes for the arts in South Africa, including opera. The government pledged to support various art forms and cultural expressions to promote diversity, inclusivity, and national identity. However, the actual implementation of these promises and the level of support provided to opera companies did not always match the expectations. I would say that for South African opera companies, the post-Apartheid era also brought economic challenges and a need for financial restraint. This could have impacted the

amount of funding available for arts and culture initiatives, including opera.

4. What are misunderstanding and misperception of government towards the opera industry?

I believe that the reason why the opera industry is struggling financially is because of the government perception towards opera. Most of them do not like opera as they have a wrong understanding of it. Hence, they will never come to theatres, but they do support other genres and even go to their concerts. I will never expect funding for opera companies to increase until I see the government being at the forefront towards supporting the success of opera. It is essential to recognise that changing government perceptions and securing increased funding for opera require patience, persistence, and collaboration within the opera industry and with government bodies, especially in South Africa. Making a compelling case for the relevance of opera as a cultural and aesthetic asset will help to build a more receptive climate for future support and funding.

5. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?

The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation of opera productions, concerts, and tours that indicates a loss of income, revenue from ticket sales and decrease in sponsorships. The economic uncertainties caused by the pandemic have also led to a decrease in corporate sponsorships and individual donations to the arts, including opera. Many businesses and individuals are facing financial challenges, making it difficult for them to provide the same level of support they may have offered before the pandemic.

Impact of digital technologies on the opera industry

Well, one cannot doubt the essential impact of digital technologies on the opera industry we both positive and negative. The digital technologies have had a transformative impact on the opera industry, both before and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. These technologies have opened new opportunities, expanded access to opera, and enhanced audience engagement in various ways. In South Africa, digital technologies have undeniably brought significant opportunities and challenges to the opera industry.

Advantage of audiences

It is critical to acknowledge that internet platforms have made opera performances more accessible to a wider audience. Audiences from across the world might enjoy opera shows without having to travel to actual venues. Another advantage is that fans can attend opera performances from the comfort of their own homes or on the road, avoiding time-consuming travel and making it easier to incorporate opera into their busy schedules. For me, digital platforms provide on-demand viewing choices, allowing spectators to see opera performances at their leisure, which is very beneficial for individuals with hectic or unexpected schedules.

Disadvantages in the opera industry

It is critical to note that expenses and internet connectivity are key barriers for opera companies in embracing digital platforms. These issues can have an impact on the accessibility and effectiveness of digital efforts, particularly in countries such as South Africa, where internet infrastructure and pricing may be limited for some sectors of the population.

Disadvantages in finances

Firstly, it is important to state that opera industry is the most vulnerable sector in the country. The financial challenges faced by the opera industry has posed serious challenges in adoption of digital platforms. Also, implementing digital initiatives requires investments in technology, software, hardware, and skilled personnel to manage and maintain the platforms and all these things missing. For opera companies with limited funding like us, it has been difficult to allocate resources to digital transformation.

6. What is your short-range collaboration for opera companies?

As for us, short-range collaborations are valuable strategies that help us to ensure success and prepare for the future. We have decided to collaborate with local businesses, such as restaurants, cafes, and hotels, to host joint events or performances. This has assisted us to attract new audiences to the opera and promote the business's services. In addition to attracting new audiences, this collaboration helped us in building stronger ties with the local community and foster a sense of cultural exchange. We are hoping that this will lead to potential sponsorship opportunities or partnerships for future performances.

7. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?

In the current economic market and funding decline for opera companies, we must understand and embrace long-term planning to ensure that we have a successful artistic integrity and financial improvement. For me, long-range financial planning is crucial for the sustainability and success of South African opera companies, especially in the face of declining government funding. We are now attempting to build a strong relationship with major donors who

are passionate about the arts and have the capacity to make significant contributions. I believe that cultivating strong connections with these individuals will lead to substantial financial support over the long term.

8. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

It goes without saying that opera companies that actively connect with their communities have a beneficial impact on society and generate a sense of ownership and pride in the public. Individual donations, business sponsorships, and charity grants may increase because of this. Building relationships at the grassroots level is critical for us because it leads to positive word-of-mouth marketing and referrals. When members of the community feel connected to the opera company, they are more likely to advocate for its importance and contribute to its financial viability. We have been doing community engagement as the company, and we have been progressing very well.

9. What are some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera come ordnance you know, to enhance the situation at hand?

South African opera companies can learn a lot from the experiences of successful European opera houses in various ways and this include diversifying their repertoire, engaging with the community, seeking private sector partnerships, embracing digital initiatives, nurturing talent, and pursuing philanthropic support and grant funding. I believe that if we adapt these workable solutions, opera industry in South Africa secures the financial support necessary for long-term sustainability.

TRANSCRIPT 8

Interviewee: Previous opera company manager (Participant 8)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 27 October 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 8= P8; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 8 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	This just a difficult one or difficult topic and I also think it is a sensitive issue. The issue of funding for opera industry is becoming more sensitive in South Africa. It is one of those things that you do not want to touch because if you talk about the state, and financial issues, then you are a bad person. But these are the things that we face as opera companies in South Africa. So, the truth of the matter is, the government is not making it easy for opera companies to access funding. Presently, they say you can go to the NAC, and it is not sustainable. The government gives funding that is only for project based and opera is not a project-based industry. I will just give you an example from a company, before it closed, the company had about 10 students, and had six soloists in the company and it was not sustainable to run a company with so many people due to the lack of funding. When you done with the production, you have sent a report and everything, then you are back to square one. for me it is not sustainable. You keep searching for money.

Follow up question: What should government do?

2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?

In my view, the government could be saying, for all the opera companies to survive, we are going to give you this much per year ZAR 2 000 000.00. Then for them to renew the contract they have to say need to show that us that you are compliant in terms of SARS. I think that can be sustainable for us as small opera companies but for Cape Town Opera which has a lot of things just for operational costs, government can say we give you 5 million just for operations and not project. The we can apply to the lottery to be able to do projects.

If our government when the ANC government took over, they were not very clever, whoever advise them misled them, they could have kept the funding of theatres as it was, we would not be experience the challenges we are facing now. But had they kept those theatres running as they were, in terms of giving them funding to be able to do projects, and to be able to have artists in the company and in the theatres. It would have been more sustainable than what we have now.

Changing the PACs was unnecessary for me because a lot changed leading to many opera companies closing after 1994. It is true that when ANC came to power, aimed to address historical inequalities, and prioritise certain areas that they believe need immediate attention. While these intentions are important for social and economic development, opera was seen as least of them all, especially when it comes to funding and support.

Another change which is a concern for me is that the focus of universities on research and academic aspects,

rather than providing comprehensive training in various aspects of opera performance. As a result, students may graduate without having the necessary language skills, dramatic abilities, and understanding of their roles, leading to a diluted product.

As opera company we started our operation in 2019, however, when COVID-19 came in 2020, a lot stopped as we had to cancel our performances and even now in 2021, we are hit hard by COVID. This is very challenging because if we operate that means we must buy sanitisers and to buy mics, which is impossible with our current budget.

4. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?

We aim to collaborate with local composers, because the truth of the matter is, we know what's out there, the more than we know our own. That's true. Also, having said that, in the collaboration, we also need access to music, we need access to this music. Yes, there's rules there's, there's ways to go about it in terms of the rights and all those abilities not there. Collaboration with local composers not only enriches the opera repertory but also strengthens the link between the opera industry and South Africa's cultural heritage. It provides an opportunity to develop significant and relevant musical expressions that resonate with local audiences while promoting South African composers' skills on the international arena.

5. What is your short-range collaboration for opera companies?

Also, we have started doing concerts in gardens, people's houses, and restaurants as part of our excellent initiatives for audience development in the opera industry. We believe that embracing alternative

6. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?

and intimate performance spaces allows opera companies to reach new and diverse audiences and foster a deeper connection with the community. Performing in smaller venues like gardens and houses creates an intimate and immersive experience for the audience, enhancing their connection with the music and performers. While funding remains an important part of supporting opera companies, audience development activities such as performances in gardens, houses, and restaurants can help to recruit new sponsors, build a dedicated community of opera aficionados, and ensure long-term financial stability. Opera companies may thrive and evolve in an ever-changing cultural milieu by establishing a balance between financial efforts and audience participation.

As our long-range financial planning we want create multi-year financial plans and budgets that align with their artistic and organisational goals. This will also provide us with a clear roadmap for financial sustainability and helps in identifying potential challenges in advance.

7. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

We also want to educate rural and underprivileged communities about opera, and this is the vehicle that we have for community engagement. Community participation in educating rural and poor areas about opera is a praiseworthy project that can benefit both the opera industry and the people themselves. By introducing these communities to the beauty and richness of opera, you not only introduce them to a unique art form, but you also promote cultural diversity and inclusivity in the arts.

8. What are some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European

opera come ordnance you know, to enhance the situation at hand?

There some European successful strategies can be adapted. For instance, South African opera companies can explore grant funding and philanthropic partnerships to bolster their financial resources. Also, partnering with sports organisations or other industries can create unique and innovative performances, attracting new audiences and generating interest in opera. As opera companies in the country, I believe that we can broaden our reach, improve our financial stability, and develop a lively and sustainable opera sector that resonates with audiences and stakeholders alike by implementing these techniques. Opera companies must be adaptable, creative, and flexible to succeed in today's dynamic and competitive arts world.

TRANSCRIPT 9

Interviewee: Opera company manager (Participant 9)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 17 October 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 9= P9; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 9 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	My general perception and feeling are that opera in South Africa is no longer attractive for corporates because it is still seen as an elite pastime. Somehow, we must change the perception of opera being something for elites to watch. In a way it is an elite activity, but it is not exclusive in the sense of that word. I mean, opera could be for everyone to watch. And we must make it so that it's popular for everyone to watch. Also, the other difficulty is that without regular corporate contributions, the government has not seen fit to sustain funding for opera companies in a proper way.
2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?	I think one of the big challenges facing opera companies now is that all the best and most experienced singers are leaving South Africa. Now, this is a very big challenge due to the lack of opera companies. Although they may come back from time to time, what you need for an opera company to survive is a core of good singers, who can produce the

parts that are needed for an opera. And part of the reason for this is that there is no sustainability in opera companies in South Africa. I mean, basically, we are reduced to one opera company now in Cape Town.

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?

I think the government must change their perception about opera as see opera as a means to attract European audiences and tourists to our country. I am saying this because South Africa is source of opera singers. Currently, there is hardly an opera company in Europe that does not have a South African opera singer. I think the government should view opera as a form of cultural diplomacy, showcasing South Africa's artistic excellence and cultural diversity to the world. By supporting opera, the government can strengthen international ties and promote the country's positive image on the global stage. For us as opera companies to have sustainable funding, the attitude of government is crucial to this.

4. What are misunderstandings and misperceptions of government towards the opera industry?

I think the perception that opera is seen as a very Western pastime needs to change as well. Opera is for the people, and it has always been in many countries despite its past. Most countries' economies are sustained by arts, especially opera. It is, therefore, crucial to emphasise the potential economic impact of opera on the tourism industry in South Africa. For instance, I believe that opera events and performances can attract tourists all over the world to experience the country's vibrant arts scene and contribute to local economies.

Solution for South African opera

I also think that concert versions of opera, are something which has not really happened in South Africa. I think we need more concert performances of opera, which are much cheaper than full productions. And I think that is something we need to do explore on that we are not always having to rehearse for six or eight weeks before we put on a production. You can do a concert by an orchestra in one week if you want. And without, you know, without expensive costumes and scenery and all that stuff. So, and I think that would help to keep opera alive and I have been exploring that with someone not now obviously, because of COVID. But we are exploring, putting on a concert production of an opera and you do not necessarily have to do the complete opera, you can do the highlights with narration in between to fill in the story. And I think this is something we need to look at on a serious level to popularise opera more.

5. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?

COVID has changed a lot of things in the opera industry worldwide. Many opera performances, tours, and events had to be cancelled or postponed due to restrictions on public gatherings and travel during the pandemic. I would say that opera companies faced financial difficulties as ticket sales and revenue from performances were severely impacted by closures and restrictions. Public funding and private donations, which are crucial for opera companies, faced uncertainty due to economic challenges brought on by the pandemic.

6. What is your short-range collaboration for opera companies?

As I mentioned earlier, our short-term collaboration is to start touring and offering opera performances in various community setups. I think taking opera to humbly communities where most of our opera stars come from can have a profound impact on broadening access to the art form and fostering cultural appreciation. Touring in humble communities will allow us to reach audiences who may not have had previous exposure to opera. Introducing them to this art form can enrich their cultural experiences and broaden their understanding of diverse art forms. I think touring in humbly communities to offer opera presents a unique opportunity to enrich lives through the arts and promote cultural exchange. By sharing the beauty of opera with diverse audiences, you contribute to the growth and preservation of this remarkable art form while fostering a stronger and more inclusive arts community. We are planning to have concert performances as we believe it is more efficient and less expensive than setup an opera production from scratch.

7. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

Before the PACs were disbanded, Performing Arts in South Africa used to put on opera, musicals, and ballet because they had the funding to do it and those Arts Councils were well funded by the government. But it was, it was because of political will. The government of those days thought that funding Arts Councils was important. So, they put money into Arts Councils. And I have to say that in in those days, there were groups of singers, certainly in the Cape, who travelled in the Transvaal, it was them that travelled

around the province, going to schools and small communities, performing excerpts from opera. So, building up a following, for opera. And I think we need to get back to that where people could travel around, it does not have to be expensive. You can put, you know, a combi load of people, a taxi loads of people who can travel around with an electric keyboard, performing in schools, performing in small community halls, performing in both school halls at weekends, and taking opera out of the cities to people who might not otherwise hear opera. And I think we have lost that political will to bring that sort of activity to the country at large. It has to go out into the rural communities, so that everyone understands what it is, and it would be so much more meaningful now. When people from patriotism, for example, have reached the highest level of opera in the world, to come back and say, this is what I have done.

TRANSCRIPT 10

Interviewee: Opera company manager (Participant 10)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 7, November 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 10= P10; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 10 response
1. Kindly share your general perceptions about the funding of opera companies from the state.	My general perception is that state funding is critical to the stability and long-term planning of South African opera companies. The government's financial support ensures that as opera companies we continue to create high-quality performances and sustain their artistic aspirations. State funding, together with commercial sponsorships and individual donations, is critical for developing a sustainable and vibrant opera industry in South Africa. The government could help contribute to a prosperous and culturally enriched society while assuring the continuity of this treasured art form by recognising the importance of the arts and providing constant financial support.
2. In your view, what are the significant challenges experienced by opera companies in South Africa?	Well, this goes back to my previous answer, the significant challenges we experience as opera companies is the decline of state funding. If I were to be honest with you, the government of our country

does not value opera as it is in our countries, hence they receive full support financially.

3. What are changes that contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa?

I think, one of the changes that may contribute to the closure of opera companies in South Africa is the challenging economic climate and financial constraints. As I previously stated, a decline in state funding, as well as reductions in corporate sponsorships or individual donations, can have a substantial impact on the financial viability of opera companies. Without proper funding, opera companies are struggling. Changes in governmental priorities and policies have had an influence on arts funding allocations, especially for the opera industry. The government's concentration on various industries may have influenced the level of support offered to opera companies in various eras.

4. What are misunderstandings and misperceptions of government towards the opera industry?

Well, the misunderstanding and misperception of government are that opera is for Apartheid community of whites and for high-class South Africans. It is unfortunate that such a misunderstanding and misperception exist regarding opera even though currently where most of opera singers are young Black South African. This misconception reflects a historical association of opera with a particular demographic during the Apartheid era. However, it is essential for government to recognise that opera as an art form and not limited to any specific community or race. Therefore, changing the misunderstanding and misperception of the government towards the opera industry is crucial for its success and growth in South Africa.

5. What are the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the decline of state funding?

I think the COVID-19 pandemic came in the worst time in the South African opera industry where there was already a decline of state funding. This has exacerbated the ongoing financial challenges in the industry. With restrictions on public gatherings and theatre closures, we have faced a severe decline in ticket sales and revenue from live performances. This loss of income has further strained our financial resources forcing us to minimise the employability of young opera singers. For us, the financial impact of the pandemic, coupled with the existing decline in state funding, has led to financial instability making it challenging to cover operational costs and sustain artistic activities.

Impact of digital technologies on the opera industry

I would say, digital technologies in South African opera industry have both positive and negative impact. Now because we are experience COVID-19 pandemic, digital technology is good as we can showcase our productions. The negative side of this is that digital technologies is expensive for both opera companies and audience. In South Africa, we do not have stable internet connection and data is expensive for marginalised communities.

Disadvantages for audiences

I think digital technologies causes digital divide that poses significant challenges in ensuring equal access to opera content and cultural experiences. The inequalities in access to technology and digital resources has a potential to further widen existing inequalities in society, limiting opportunities for

marginalised communities to engage with opera and other cultural offerings.

6. What is your short-range collaboration for opera companies?

Our short-term collaboration has already started where we are working with different industries such as hospitality and we want to expand this by working with sports to create an attractive sponsorship package, enticing businesses and corporations to support the event financially.

7. What is your long-range financial planning for opera companies?

Our long-range financial planning for our company is to keep strong relationships with different industries to ensure that we have a sustainable industry in our country. We would further engage retailing sports stores for long-term financial support. I believe that the opera industry can build a strong financial basis for the future by taking a deliberate and diverse approach to finance and cultivating long-term ties with many industries. Collaboration with retailing sports stores and other businesses will not only provide financial support but will also improve links between the artistic community and the corporate sector, fostering a sustainable and dynamic cultural landscape in South Africa.

8. What are the benefits of community engagement in the opera industry as a strategy for increasing funding?

Well, we all know that community engagement in the opera industry offers numerous benefits, and it is a powerful strategy for increasing funding and support for opera companies in South Africa. I believe that engaging with the local community allow us to connect on a deeper level with their audience and build a sense of trust to our audience. Generally,

community engagement initiatives are essential because they attract new and diverse audiences.

9. What are some workable solutions that could be adapted from the European opera houses to enhance funding for opera companies in South Africa?

This is a difficult question to answer but I would say In Europe, most opera houses have strategic collaborations with local businesses, corporations, and philanthropic organisations and I believe that we can do that to create a successful opera industry in our country. However, this will mean that we must provide appealing sponsorship packages that provide commercial benefits as well as evidence of the opera company's social effect. This can encourage long-term financial viability by establishing an endowment fund that can offer a consistent income stream for South African opera companies. Through targeted fundraising activities and donations, this fund can be created over time. Extend opera performances beyond big cities by travelling to smaller towns and regions to broaden the fan base and obtain local sponsorship and support.

Appendix 6: Raw data from the South African Funding agencies

TRANSCRIPT 1

Interviewee: Funding agency (Participant 1)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 22, August 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 1= P1; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 1 response
1. What challenges have you experienced when it comes to funding opera companies?	<p>Well, there many challenges that we experience as funding agency, and these are economic challenges, fiscal deficits, and competing priorities which have led to limited resources for state funding. In times of financial strain, governments always reduce funding for various sectors, including arts and culture. These are some of the factors that contribute towards the decline of state funding for the opera industry.</p> <p>However, as funding agencies, we have been able to fund projects partially and have never been able to fund the whole opera since funding the full opera requires much funding.</p>
2. What is your perception with regards to the closure of opera companies?	<p>My perception is that funding opera in the present time has completely changes from the funding of the1980s and early 1990s in South Africa. As South Africa transitioned to a democratic society after 1994, efforts were made to address historical imbalances</p>

and promote inclusivity in the arts. However, the legacy of Apartheid still lingers, and the consequences of past funding practices can continue to affect the opera industry and other art forms today. Even though the financial crisis is the fundamental issue in the opera industry worldwide, the situation has been exacerbated by the social demands. During the Apartheid era, the government was not responsible for all citizens but only a few minorities of the white population.

3. In your view, what are the significant causes of the decline of state funding for opera companies in South Africa?

Currently, we are receiving limited funding. As the effect of COVID-19 pandemic hit, we received minimal funding from the government, and we had to start a relief fund to assist many artists. This affected many companies that rely on us for funding. However, as the COVID continues, there was a shift of resources, and the relief fund was affected causing negative for opera companies. It is a common challenge for any funding agency in the country to balance immediate relief efforts with the ongoing support of established opera companies and other arts entities.

4. How did economic stagnancy have affected funding for opera companies in South Africa?

I think the economic stagnancy has led to financial difficulties for opera companies in South Africa, making it challenging for them to maintain their operations, plan, and continue providing quality performances. In such circumstances, it becomes crucial for opera companies to seek creative solutions, explore alternative funding sources, and engage in cost-saving measures to ensure their sustainability during difficult economic times.

5. In your opinion, what could be done to increase the funding for opera companies in South Africa?

I would say, opera is a significant cultural art form just like any other that represents the artistic expression of a nation's heritage. Government must see the value of arts, especially opera and increase funding. Supporting opera help us as a country to preserve and celebrate cultural traditions, fostering a sense of pride and identity among citizens.

Governments can demonstrate their commitment to promote and encourage cultural diversity, supporting creative businesses, and enriching citizens' lives through expanding arts funding. A thriving cultural industry, including opera, is fundamental to a healthy and functioning society, and increased government financing may assist assure its long-term expansion and vibrancy.

6. In your experience, is it important for opera companies to invent other methods to fund their operations?

In my personal experience, I think it is important for opera companies and other arts organisations in South Africa to explore and invent other methods to fund their operations. I am saying this because traditional funding sources is always subject to fluctuations, changes in government priorities, or economic downturns. Exploring alternative funding methods creates a buffer against funding uncertainties.

TRANSCRIPT 2

Interviewee: Funding agency (Participant 2)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 22, July 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 2= P2; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 2 response
1. What challenges have you experienced when it comes to funding opera companies?	I think the main challenge we experience when it comes to funding opera is the decline of funding caused by various factors such as changes in government leadership or political ideologies can impact funding priorities. Different administrations may have varying views on the importance of supporting the arts and culture. Some policymakers and government officials may not fully appreciate the significance of opera as an art form and its broader contributions to society, leading to reduced funding. For me, I would say that it is not necessarily true that opera companies are not fundable. It is just that the amount of money that opera companies require in most cases is more than what we have available to give out. As government agencies that provide funding and support to the opera industry have faced budget cuts due to the economic impact of the pandemic. Governments have had to allocate resources to address urgent health and economic needs, resulting in reduced funding for arts and

culture, including opera. This has limited the ability of government agencies to provide financial support to opera companies and artists, resulting in decreased production budgets, staff reductions, and programming limitations.

2. In your view, what are the significant causes of the decline of state funding for opera companies in South Africa?

My perception with regards to the closure of opera companies is that one of the significant factors that contribute towards a financial decline in the performing arts, in general, is that we have 80% of the population living in poverty. The current democratic government money had to be now spread to the 100% of the population instead of the 8% of the population as before. This meant that the budget will be drastically reduced to cater for the social needs, especially those of previously marginalised communities. For example, if you had let us say you had 100 million rands to spend on arts during the Apartheid government [era], it was easy to split it in four ways into the four provinces where all the performing arts councils existed. So, I think it is a matter of priority for the government. It is a matter of priority for the survival of the country. And the needs are not the same. Currently, more costs need to go to the community rather than entertainment.

3. How did economic stagnancy have affected funding for opera companies in South Africa?

I think one of the major contributors to the decline of state funding in the country is the social demands. For an example, if I were to compare funding in 1980s to early 1990s the government could afford to give opera companies sufficient funding. During the 1980s to early 1990s opera companies were able even to import everything such as costumes, they would have

conductors, they will have four or five soloists imported from outside and pay them all very well because they had full government support. In 1980s to early 1990s, the South African government (Apartheid government) was only catering mainly for white population. They did not care about black people so much. It was more just the small group of white people; you need to make them happy. So, they did not have high costs for the country as it is today. However, after 1994, the current government had to cater for all the people of colour. One of the major factors that contribute towards financial decline in the performing arts in general is that in South Africa we have 80% of the population living under the poverty. The current democratic government money had to be now spread to the 100% of the population instead of the 8% of the population. This meant that the budget will be drastically reduced to cater for social needs for all South Africans, especially those of previously marginalised communities. For an example, if you had let us say you had 100 million rands to spend on Arts in South Africa during the Apartheid government, it was easy to split it in four ways in the four provinces where all the performing arts councils existed. So, I think it is a matter of priority for the government, it is a matter of priority for survival of the country and the needs are not the same. Currently, there are more costs that needs to go to the community rather than entertainment.

4. In your opinion, what could be done to increase

I think what needs to happen in terms of the opera companies themselves is that they must create their

the funding for opera companies in South Africa?

funding strategies is less dependence on state funding. For instance, if you look at an example, if you look at how Europe funds, opera houses, what they do is that they say to the opera house, you have a you have 100%, let's say 100% of your budget is a million, we as the city, state, whatever will give you 70% you need to raise the other 30% through ticket sales through other means of creating revenue for yourself. So, I think for South Africa, opera companies need to start looking at that model. I think it may ultimately succeed, ultimately, the idea that opera is an elitist art form that does not necessarily have to make money and is an antiquated idea, it is completely out of the picture. Now, opera companies must start developing models that are business oriented entrepreneurial in nature, so that if a company requires a certain amount of money for either operations, or for a production, you need to find different means of, of developing those revenues. Without having to ask for money from government. Opera companies must be like businesses because if you do not have the money, you cannot do the work. My main concern is that opera companies just want to depend on governmental funding only, which is not sufficient to fund opera industry due to the expenses of opera.

5. In your experience, is it important for opera companies to invent other methods to fund their operations?

Yes, it is essential for opera companies to be innovative, like any arts organisation, to explore and invent alternative methods to fund their operations is crucial. Relying solely on government funding or traditional sources of income is not always

6. Do you have any think to share?

sustainable or sufficient to meet their financial needs of opera companies.

Well, I think ... is the actual budget is ... determines that an opera company should have a production. As mentioned to you earlier on, there is a way that if you as an organisation do not have any of your artistic expertise in-house, that you will have to bring them all in and there is one where you have everyone in-house and you must create the production itself. The costs then become quite different. So, there is no steadfast amount of money. That ... because I believe that if you have, for instance, R500, 000 [27459, 35 USD], you can put on a production, if you have all your singers, most of your creative in terms of your designers and, and, and technicians working for the organisation on a full-time basis, you could put on a production for around R500, 000 [27459, 35 USD]. But if you need to have to import ... and this is on a very minimum scale. If you need to bring all those expertise together from designers, conductor, director, all soloist, and chorus, if you have to incorporate those into the production and they are not full-time members of your organisation, then it could range from 1.5 million rands [82367, 40 USD] to 2.5 million rands [137279, 00 USD], depending on who you want, and how much they cost. For instance, if you do the first option, which is the R500,000 [27459, 35 USD] you want to have the likes of Pumeza Matshikiza, Pretty Yende, Sunny Dladla, then you must understand that they cost a lot more. But you also have other costs, which are transport and accommodation and all those other

things. But if you do a production and you want those kinds of names to come and perform, then the R2.5 million [137279, 00 USD] budgets would be the one to use, because in that case, you will be able to afford almost everything that they asked for.

TRANSCRIPT 3

Interviewee: Funding agency (Participant 3)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 22, August 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 3= P3; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 3 response
1. What challenges have you experienced when it comes to funding opera companies?	<p>I would say funding for the arts generally by government at provincial and national level is limited, even when the funding is granted, the disbursement process which pay in instalments or tranches works against the whole intent to support as in some instances the funding comes too late. There is not a dedicated fund set up by government to address the needs of this sector. I think what should happen is that the sector must apply or respond to application calls or invitations which are over-subscribed as they cater for all arts forms. These are the factors that contribute towards the decline of state funding for the opera industry.</p> <p>Also, SA is blessed with enormous talent in his field but has two universities that specialise in the music, the Tshwane University of Technology and the UCT Opera School, however, universities also struggle to raise funding for productions and practical recitals. Postgraduate student in this field face challenges</p>

when raising funding for recitals to support their studies. Another challenge I think is that lack of paying audiences. SA is country characterised by high levels of unemployment and performing artists struggle to generate money through ticket sales.

2. What is your perception with regards to the closure of opera companies?

Now, the closure of opera companies was inevitable. I understand that in pre-1994 opera companies were allocated substantial amount of funding to run their programmes and activities. Substantial funding was provided for travel/touring and through touring the companies could raise more funds to sustain their own activities. However, in the post-1994 no such funding is provided by government, in fact funding is withdrawn and reduced. It is true that the impact of the closure of opera companies has had a negative impact into the growth and development of talent in this area. In South Africa, young opera singers and graduates do not have places of performances or funding to do performances. Also, before 1994, the [Apartheid government catered] for a certain number of art forms such as ballet, orchestra, and opera, or as much more reduced number of people. The subsidy was available for only a certain group of population and also geographic areas.

3. In your view, what are the significant causes of the decline of state funding for opera companies in South Africa?

Government has not put the art form on the priority list. Government's lack of thinking around incentives such as rebates i.e., tax rebates has affected opera companies. Lack of broad advertising and promotion of the art form and lack of National Audience Development Plan. Also, one should not overlook that COVID-19 came in a season where South Africa was

already battling economically. I am aware that the reduced government funding for opera companies during the pandemic may have had long-term effects that will likely affect the opera industry's survival and sustainability in the post-pandemic age.

4. How did economic stagnancy have affected funding for opera companies in South Africa?

The success of opera companies is reliant on funding and paying audience. Also, economic status of individual and orientation in terms of the art form itself has an impact. South Africans spent money on products that are broadly advertised such a liquor etc.

5. In your opinion, what could be done to increase the funding for opera companies in South Africa?

I think what should happen is that the government should finance a recovery plan which could be some kind of stimulus package. The Presidential Stimulus Employment Package should cater for this and provide substantial amount of money. Businesses were funding opera companies; government can collaborate and match these grants through Business Arts South Africa (BASA)

6. In your experience, is it important for opera companies to invent other methods to fund their operations?

I believe opera companies have been innovative enough. The innovation that some opera companies have already demonstrated, such as Cape Town Opera's efforts to adapt to the digital landscape and explore new marketing strategies. Innovation is crucial for the survival and growth of any artistic organisation, especially in a rapidly changing world.

TRANSCRIPT 4

Interviewee: Funding agency (Participant 4)

Interviewer: Sakhiseni J Yende

Date of the interview: 14, November 2021

Location of the interview: Zoom (Online)

List of Acronyms: Participant 4= P4; Sakhiseni J Yende- Interviewer= IN

Questions from the interviewer	Participant 4 response
1. What challenges have you experienced when it comes to funding opera companies?	Since there are many factors that contribute to the decline of state funding for the opera industry, I believe opera companies could improve how they apply for funding and find a new method of sourcing resources and not be limited to just government or a few companies for grants.
2. What is your perception with regards to the closure of opera companies?	My perception is that in the 1980s to early 1990s, the [Apartheid government catered] mainly for the white population. They did not care about black people so much. It was more just a small group of white people. You need to make them happy. So, they did not have high costs for the country as it is today. However, after 1994, the current government had to cater for all the people of colour. Hence, there is so much closure of opera companies in South Africa. It is important to note that the closure of some opera companies in South Africa could be attributed to a combination of factors, including financial constraints, changing audience preferences, and operational challenges. Additionally, the broader economic and social

context, along with historical disparities, played a role in shaping the landscape of arts and culture in the country.

3. In your view, what are the significant causes of the decline of state funding for opera companies in South Africa?

I will talk about the current situation that contributes to the significant causes of the decline of state funding for opera companies in South Africa. In South Africa, it is unfortunate that opera companies rely on us as government agencies for funding and as a significant source of revenue. However, now in the height of COVID-19, as government agencies we have faced challenges in securing enough funding to support opera companies and this has led to many challenges in the industry of arts.

4. How did economic stagnancy have affected funding for opera companies in South Africa?

The economic stagnancy resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic had significant implications for funding opera companies in South Africa. As the pandemic forced the country into lockdowns and social distancing measures, economic activities slowed down, leading to reduced government revenues and financial constraints. It is true that with lockdowns and restrictions on gatherings, opera companies are forced to cancel live performances, which are a significant source of revenue. The loss of ticket sales revenue further strained their financial stability.

5. In your opinion, what could be done to increase the funding for opera companies in South Africa?

In my opinion, to increase funding for opera companies in South Africa, various approaches are needed that involves collaboration between the government, private sector, philanthropic organizations, and the arts community. It is also important to encourage the government to recognise

the value of opera as an essential cultural asset and invest in the arts sector through increased funding and subsidies. Advocate for specific allocations in the national and provincial budgets dedicated to supporting opera companies.

6. In your experience, is it important for opera companies to invent other methods to fund their operations?

Yes, it is important for opera companies, like any arts organisations, to explore and invent alternative methods to fund their operations. Relying solely on government funding or traditional sources of income can sometimes be unsustainable or insufficient to meet the financial needs of opera companies. The arts landscape and audience preferences evolve over time. Opera companies that rely heavily on traditional revenue sources might struggle to adapt to changing trends. Diversified funding can provide the flexibility needed to experiment with new ideas and engage with different audience segments.