

2021/22

DARE

THE PIONEERING COLLABORATION
OPERA NORTH & UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by Fern Pullan
Higher Education Coordinator, Opera North

INTRODUCTION

First created in 2007, the pioneering DARE partnership between Opera North and the University of Leeds has gone from strength to strength. 2022 marks the 15th anniversary of our collaboration, and the DARE 15 Review demonstrates that the partnership still has extensive mutual benefit for our two organisations, creating a strong foundation from which we continue to achieve wide-reaching impact internally, regionally and nationally.

This report summarises DARE activity during the 2021/22 academic year and highlights the partnership's successes as we continue to move forwards post-pandemic.

**Across 22 DARE events
and visits, we engaged
with more than**



**staff and students from
the University of Leeds.**

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: DARE STUDENT INTERNSHIPS



"I've thoroughly enjoyed the time I've spent with Opera North... I've been able to assist at some really exciting events and see some incredible musicians perform while doing so."

DARE student intern Abby Swain joined Opera North's busy Projects department for 20 days across the year, working closely with our Projects Manager to develop skills and experience in arts administration. She learned about contracting artists, booking artist accommodation and travel, programme development and event management. Abby also helped support our animated retelling of Act III of Puccini's *La bohème*, projected onto the walls of the Leeds Playhouse for Valentine's Day.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: PETTMAN DARE FELLOWSHIP



Supported by a generous bursary from Opera North donor Maureen Pettman, Kathy Hart spent two days a week working alongside colleagues in Opera North's Education department as this year's Pettman DARE Fellow, helping support our award-winning In Harmony programme and the series of Big Sing events. As part of her Fellowship, Kathy will also complete the PG Dip Performing Arts Education with the University.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: STUDENT PLACEMENT



"Throughout this placement, I developed myself personally and professionally, and I learned more than I ever expected! Special thanks to ONHE for supporting me and encouraging my growth."

BA Communication and Media student Coco Tong embarked upon a three-week placement with the ONHE team, analysing our social media activity and developing a comprehensive strategy and social media calendar to boost our performance on Twitter. She had one-to-ones with members of our Audiences department to learn about Opera North's social media house style, and attended events including the DARE Art Prize reception and roundtable and the Esther Simpson Memorial Concert.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: COMPANY INSIGHT DAY



We welcomed a group of students taking an Audience Engagement module to the Howard Assembly Room for a Company Insight Day, where Katie Lear (Marketing) discussed audience demographics and engagement post-pandemic, Dominic Gray (Projects) introduced our Community Partnerships work and Kirsty Bullen (Finance) gave an overview of our multi-million pound Music Works project following the recent renovation of the Assembly Room and the opening of our new Howard Opera Centre.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



Three live consultancy briefs in digital content creation, website design and audience development were given to students in LUBS, PCI and AHC.

Opera North's Executive Director David Collins provided **dissertation support** for Arsalaan Qizilbash, whose study explored how UK arts and theatre companies can generate revenue by monetising online video content.



Accompanied by pianists Martin Pickard and Annette Saunders, Opera North Chorus Master Olly Rundell led a **conducting masterclass** for **12** students from the University's student music societies.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



Opera North Projects Director Dominic Gray and Higher Education Coordinator Fern Pullan delivered a workshop on **interview techniques** for careers in the creative industries for Arts, Humanities and Cultures students.

The School of Music String Quartet joined Opera North performers on the bill for the memorial concert marking the opening of the University's new Esther Simpson Building. The students performed pieces which linked to Esther's Jewish heritage. This



special concert celebrates Esther's remarkable life and contribution to refugee welfare as part of Refugee Week 2022. The day also saw the launch of Juanjo Novella's new "curtain" sculpture outside the Esther Simpson Building.

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION: COLLABORATIVE DOCTORAL AWARDS



Kate Cameron seeks to develop and evaluate innovative tools to establish the impact of music tuition upon moods and emotions, social connection and self-efficacy using the In Harmony programme as a case study.

Hope Bachmann looks at building solidarity with refugees & asylum seekers through ON's Theatre of Sanctuary work. Her Best Practices to Working with Refugees & Asylum Seekers were adopted across Opera North and the Arts Together network.



RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION: FEEDBACK

“

A million thanks for your generosity – both for the lovely tour of gorgeous Opera North and thinking through ideas for student engagement in my classes next year. It is such a pleasure and privilege working with Opera North HE!

”

Sarah Feinstein, Deputy Director for Student Education,
School of Performance and Cultural Industries

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION: DARE ART PRIZE



Redell Olsen, winner of the 2020/21 DARE Art Prize, completed her tenure with a residency at The Tetley, Leeds, where she exhibited the artistic elements of her "Weather, Whether Radar: Plume of the Volants" project and launched the accompanying book. Redell worked alongside the University's BioDAR researchers and creatives from Opera North to produce an interspecies opera.

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION: DARE ART PRIZE



RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION: DARE ART PRIZE



Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Redell finished her tenure as prize-winner in the following cycle. Following a period of recruitment, May 2022 saw Essex-based sculptor Katie Surridge announced as the DARE Art Prize recipient for 2022/23 for her e-waste proposal at a celebratory reception in the Howard Assembly Room. Soon after, she held a roundtable discussion to explain her project in more detail to key stakeholders and University of Leeds academics.

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION: ETHER

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Supported by an AHRC network grant, ETHER (Ethics and Aesthetics of Encountering the Other) prompted a rich conversation between researchers, thinkers and practitioners. Over three online seminars, the network shared case studies, best practice and lived experience, exploring how people of conflicting world views encounter each other through arts and education.

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Dominic Gray, Projects Director
Opera North

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION: THINKING WITH OPERA



To coincide with Opera North's epic staging of Wagner's *Parsifal*, we produced **three** episodes of DARE's *Thinking with Opera* podcast series during 2021/22 which explored different aspects of this complex work. In the first episode, conductor Richard Farnes discussed *Parsifal*'s music and narrative with Gillian Moore (Southbank Centre). Áine Sheil (University of York) and *New Yorker* critic Alex Ross discussed Wagner's approach to gender, sexuality and ritual in Episode 2. The trilogy closes with a wide-ranging, unflinching discussion between journalist, writer and filmmaker Paul Mason and Frank Finlay which traces Wagner's changing philosophical viewpoints.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: DARE LIBERTY LECTURES

Two DARE Liberty Lectures took place in the Howard Assembly Room, engaging a combined audience of more than **130** in an exploration of climatology and bee biology with Professor Dave Goulson (University of Sussex) and an eye-opening account of some of the most high-profile legal cases of our time from former Chief Crown Prosecutor for North West England, Nazir Afzal OBE.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: BE CURIOUS



As part of the University's annual Be Curious festival, Opera North showcased its new family-friendly *Carnival of the Animals* project. Our short films were played on loop in a theatre space, creating a "chill out" zone for families to relax in during the day. Elsewhere, more than 140 people took part in three workshops exploring a menagerie of different animals and orchestral instruments through movement and music.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: WHISTLE-STOP OPERA

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During the University's Concert Series Summer Festival, I worked alongside Felicity Dunk to stage the Whistle-Stop Opera production of "A Tale of Orpheus and Eurydice". The adaptation for this prequel was fantastic and very inspirational for me as a budding composer and playwright. Felicity told me about the broad range of interesting work Opera North does away from the mainstage too, and that prompted me to apply for my new role!

”

Ben Adamson, MMus Critical and Experimental
Composition graduate, Howard Assembly Room Stage
Manager and Artist Liaison

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: CARMEN, CARMENCITA!



Professor Ed Venn was joined by creative artists, performers and academics for a public DARE symposium in the Howard Assembly Room, where he chaired a series of conversations discussing the ways in which operatic production and performance recreate *Carmen* in multipole ways, offering new ways of hearing and understanding Bizet's finest score. Topics included tracking the changes in Opera North's different stagings of the opera (Stuart Leeks), public engagement and access (Alice Gilmour), design and meaning-making (Stephen Rodwell), music and directing (Matthew Eberhardt and Garry Walker), and the performer's view (Amy J Payne and Eric Greene).

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: ONE DAY: MUSIC AND THE HOLOCAUST

Opera North and the University joined forces to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day 2022 by staging a special concert celebrating Jewish music and culture, as well as providing a moment to reflect on tragedy and loss. The event focused on composers and artists who were interned at the notorious Theresienstadt concentration camp, together with readings in poetry and prose. Hannah Perowne (violin), Alex Mitchell (viola) and Richard Jenkinson (cello) were joined by singers Katie Bird and Anthony Flaum (accompanied by Philip Voldman) in performances of the beautiful music of Hans Krása, Gideon Klein and Viktor Ullman, who were all murdered at Auschwitz after their transportation from Terezín, while Alice Gilmour and Howard Croft gave readings from the journals and poetry of various Holocaust victims.

SECTOR LEADERSHIP: CULTURE FORUM NORTH

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Opera North and the University of Leeds have continued to provide advisory and administrative support to Culture Forum North in its endeavours to cultivate partnerships between the cultural and HE/FE sectors. This has included the development of a new vision to reinvigorate the forum's future direction and activity as it responds to shifts in sector priorities and societal challenges.

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Becky Smith, Head of Higher Education Partnerships,
Opera North

SECTOR LEADERSHIP: SUPPORTING WEST KOWLOON

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Stretching across 40 hectares of reclaimed land in Hong Kong, the West Kowloon Cultural District is one of the largest cultural quarter regeneration projects in the world, blending art, education and open space. As part of the international activities programme in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, I delivered a talk about Opera North and the way the organisation embraces and leads change in the cultural sector.

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Dominic Gray, Projects Director,
Opera North