1 Expanding professionalism in and through Finnish local opera

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Opera has the potential to be a vital cultural force in contemporary societies, rather than the shadow of a former glorious art form. Realising this, however, may require greater local thinking and boundary crossing in place of preserving established traditions, state institutions, and professional boundaries. This chapter illustrates, through one case study and a musician's oral history, what the phenomenon of local opera may afford for its participants, and what it means for a church musician in Finland to cross professional boundaries in and through local opera in order to serve the community responsibly.

Opera as an art form for contemporary times is highly contested, and occasionally faces harsh criticism. The most common accusations that clearly impact professionals working in the field are its expense and elitist audiences. Issues of cost are frequently raised in the press, particularly in light of the fact that opera as an institution is often state-funded and audiences may be small. The point about audiences stems in part from the fact that opera houses have usually been located in the capital city or a metropolis, and thus are available only to a part of the population. In addition, the cost of tickets and unspoken conventions and practices, such as dress codes or sophisticated drinking manners, have been questioned. The content and repertoire of opera have also been criticised, leading to a point where opera has indeed been declared dead several times in the 20th century. The most famous of such statements put forth by philosophers Žižek and Dolar suggests that opera, "a huge relic, an enormous anachronism" (2002, p. 3), died when it became commonplace for most of the established opera houses to focus more or less exclusively on just a few classical-romantic works, portraying meanings and political contexts that appeared alien to contemporary audiences. As Till (2012, p. 18) has stated, opera has not been "a vital or culturally central art form during most of the twentieth century, let alone today". Opera houses commission only a tiny number of new works, and few of these obtain any permanent place in the repertory. In essence, then, the position and perceived values of opera as an art form in societies are far from stable.

In Finland, however, opera is not a fading or dying art form. On the contrary, a notable number of about 300 new stage works identified as operas have been commissioned, composed, and premiered since 2000, reaching a peak in 2017 when 28 new operatic works were performed. This peak is only one amongst

many, and since the 2010s an average of 12 to 27 operas have been composed each year; it is safe to conclude that opera in Finland is alive and well.¹

The situation is even more remarkable considering that Finland is both a relatively small country in terms of population, and equally has not traditionally been considered an “opera country” (prior to 1911 there was no institutional infrastructure to support cultural enterprises such as opera, and even now, in the 21st century, the Finnish National Opera (FNO) is the only permanent opera house in the country). Finland’s rich opera output is also significantly diverse in terms of scale, subject matter, and the contexts in which it is developed and performed. New opera has clearly been made with a range of different purposes. Among the multiple works composed during the first decades of the millennium there are several subgenres, styles, and forms of opera, from monumental music dramas to experimental small-scale works and children’s operas. Some of the new works have been written for huge orchestras with choir and several soloists, and others for tiny chamber ensembles with one or two singers. In addition, there are operatic hybrids, which refer more to music theatre than traditional opera but have been labelled as operas. Subject matter is also varied, ranging from traditional hero operas about brave soldiers or righteous farmers to works with more current themes, such as climate change, animal rights, human trafficking, gene manipulation, suicide, or depression. Even ordinary everyday issues, such as plumbing renovation, municipality mergers, football, dieting, one-night stands, or camping have been embraced.

It is noteworthy that most of the new operas have been composed and performed outside of the FNO and the couple of established summer festivals, and have been associated with venues and locations not typical for opera at all. Opera has been performed in churches, schools, museums, shopping malls, boat harbours, old cow barns, ice stadiums, or pop-up stages in the wild—and, importantly, all over the country. Furthermore, several operas have been written for non-professional performers, and by music professionals not necessarily formally qualified as composers. Often these operas, performed in small rural settings such as in villages or towns, deal with local, historical topics. Thus, in the Finnish context, opera spreads far beyond the institutional boundaries of the national opera, or even the regional opera foundations, and the productions vary vastly in terms of styles, topics, performance sites, and even composing practices. All in all, if the criteria for a living and even flourishing operatic culture are its topicality, locality, everydayness, familiarity, earthliness, and popularity, which can all be seen as characteristics of recent Finnish opera, most of the accusations mentioned at the beginning of this chapter can be refuted.

This chapter argues that opera can indeed be a meaningful and relevant art form in contemporary societies, and one that challenges modernist institutions (Luhmann, 1995) such as prestigious opera houses through requiring local thinking and professional boundary crossing beyond the established traditional state institutions. Focusing on one case study and a professional church musician’s oral history, the chapter illustrates what it means for a church musician in Finland to cross professional boundaries in and through *local opera*—a type of opera

composed and performed in rural communities for non-professionals—in order to serve the community responsibly, and what the phenomenon of local opera (Hautsalo, 2018) might afford for its participants in those areas. Through Mr Pentti Tynkkynen's (b. 1943) oral history, I explore the *multiple professional dimensions in the context of expanding professionalism* that lie at the heart of this field, and show that local opera work *expands the professional service* of a Lutheran church musician beyond the church music context. Furthermore, through creating an opera production, this expanded service supports the local community in terms of local identity, community spirit, and collaborative activities. The chapter is organised as follows: first, I examine Finnish local opera as a particular genre of community opera, and place it in context with European traditions. Second, I introduce the key concepts of the study, including *expanding professional service* and local opera as *affordance*. After introducing oral history as a methodology for exploring the manifestations of expanding professionalism, the four affordances of Tynkkynen's local opera work are explored. The chapter makes the case that opera can indeed be a vivid practice in contemporary societies. To achieve this, however, may require local thinking and the ability to cross professional boundaries related to established, traditional state institutions.

Finnish local opera work in the European context

The concept of *local opera* connects to wider formulations of *community opera*. Central to community opera is a movement in some shape or form towards social purpose and the engagement of particular groups within communities. In other words, it expands what in other contexts may be purely artistic motivations and objectives in creating opera for the stage, with explicit and proactive social concerns. In general, among the European countries, Great Britain has had the leading edge in community opera from the beginning of the 20th century. In *Beyond Britten: The Composer and the Community* (2015), edited by Wiegold and Kenyon, Moore (2015, pp. 45–73) gives an overview of British composers' relationships with communities, starting with eminent composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) and Gustav Holst (1874–1934), who “shared an explicit commitment to invigorating music-making and dance among communities beyond the middle-class drawing rooms and choral societies of the nineteenth century” (Moore, 2015, p. 47). Influential in the beginning of the 20th century, both composers saw their work “as a social, cultural project”, and were committed to community music among, for instance, workers and women (Moore, 2015, p. 47). According to Moore (2015, p. 46), leading British contemporary composers have also been active in “creative learning programmes developed by musical institutions, including orchestras, conservatories, and concert halls”. Opera has also been used as a tool for community productions. There have been several fundamentally amateur opera societies in Great Britain (see e.g. Finnegan, 1989), and the Aldeburgh Festival, founded by Benjamin Britten (1913–1976), has been an important centre for community opera. More recently the Glyndebourne Festival has taken a most important role in community opera in Britain (see Tearle, 2015).

One particular case was a community opera called *Dreamdragons*, created by the people of the town of Ashford under the leadership of a composer and a librettist, to explore and express their opinions about the tunnel under the English Channel that was about to be built in their backyard (Finnegan, 1989; Barber, 2015; Tearle, 2015). Importantly, as pointed out by Tearle (2015, p. 139), *Dreamdragons* actually made a difference to the socio-political situation, and the exit of the Channel Tunnel was not built in Ashford.

According to the literature mentioned earlier, in Great Britain “community opera” can refer to several types of operatic work (see Finnegan, 1989; Barber, 2015; Moore, 2015; Tearle, 2015): (1) non-professional, ordinary productions of the “easier” classics; (2) arranged and “lightened” “community versions” of operatic classics for non-professionals; (3) a new opera composed by a professional composer for children or non-professionals; (4) a new opera by a professional composer based on workshopped ideas of a special non-professional group; (5) a new opera composed by a composer or other music professional (with or without workshops), connected directly to local people’s lives, local places and events, and performed by non-professionals in that location. In Finland, this last form of community opera aligns with the concept of local opera. Local opera is

a type of opera performed in communities in the countryside mostly by non-professional performers, is tightly connected to history and people of those communities, and usually, local opera productions do not have any established institutions or societies supporting them; instead, many of the new operas have been produced by certain “pop-up” organizations which have been built up just for one opera production at a time.

(Hautsalo, 2018, p. 31)

Moreover, it is typical for this popular operatic genre to coordinate and facilitate its productions through one single active and multi-tasking individual, a so-called “composer–producer”, who as a local school music teacher or a church musician will often then also work as an organiser, producer, PR-manager, accompanist, vocal trainer, and conductor. Hence, local opera requires multiple boundary crossings in terms of discipline, expertise, and collaboration beyond the usual professional tasks.

One example of such a multi-tasking professional is Pentti Tynkkynen, a Lutheran church musician and cantor–organist who has, alongside his decade’s work in parishes, also composed and organised 11 opera productions. Since Tynkkynen’s works deal with local topics and histories, I have classified his opera compositions as *local operas*, and refer to his work overall with opera as *local opera work*. To illuminate local opera work from the perspective of a composer–producer, I will present an oral history of Tynkkynen, who has been one of the key figures working in the genre. All of his operas have been created for a specific local community, in the same way as *Dreamdragons* in Ashford, and have been performed by local participants, sometimes with the assistance of a few professionals who tend to have their roots in the same locality.

Furthermore, some of his work also clearly addresses particular contemporary political, social, and ethical dimensions, as with the work in Ashford. In general, Tynkkynen's local operas have connected people to local history and helped them to understand their roots. They have commented on the absurdity of war through the voices of ancient local war heroes, and shown through local historical events the negative impacts of poverty. In addition, by doing opera work in schools Tynkkynen has educated children on environmental topics. Thus, Tynkkynen's operas not only impact the participants through the making of the pieces, and the audiences through their enjoyment of performances, but also have wider potential to impact political and social spheres, ethical practice, and to develop activism through opera.

Key concepts: Expanding the professional service and affordances of local opera

Tynkkynen's local opera work involves him in taking a wide-ranging role as a composer–producer. He acts in *multiple professional dimensions*, not only in his official capacity as a cantor–organist. According to Sugrue and Solbrekke (2011, p. 12), the term professionalism “includes those who have completed programmes of professional preparation in higher education (or equivalent) as an entry requirement of a profession”. This applies to Tynkkynen: he is a qualified church musician who has completed programmes of professional preparation in higher music education at the music academy, where the training of a cantor includes playing the organ and piano, improvising, and singing, as well as conducting choirs.

Normally, with this education, a church musician works at a parish as the leader of a church's musical activities, mostly by accompanying hymns in services and conducting choirs. However, Tynkkynen's opera work as a composer–producer has required him to develop skills over and above the traditional training of a church musician. Without the formal education of a composer, Tynkkynen has risen to the compositional challenge and has developed a range of other skills through “learning by doing”. He has not only composed the actual operas, but has also trained local musicians and choirs, negotiated with supporting professional singers, arranged parts, accompanied on the organ or the piano, and conducted rehearsals and performances. In addition to the musical activities, he has taken care of financing the projects, writing articles for newspapers, and hiring professional stage directors, as well as organising volunteers to handle transportation, build the scenery, and sell coffee during the breaks in the performances. Tynkkynen has thus *expanded his professional boundaries* as a church musician far beyond the parish context, towards the entire local community, demonstrating a clear form of *expanding professionalism*.

As a Lutheran church musician, Tynkkynen also shows a strong sense of service. According to Sugrue and Solbrekke (2011, p. 13), professional responsibility “includes a sense of calling to provide service for the benefit of others, to take care of individuals as well as cater for the public welfare”. Tynkkynen's

religious calling suggests that even though his local opera work is not directly connected to the church, he has brought into it some of the core values and aims of his work as a church musician—for example in wanting to serve the community, to enable people to engage with each other and work through key issues in their lives. Thus, Tynkkynen’s work as a church musician connects to a concept of *expanding professional service*, which also belongs to the field of professional responsibility. In his local opera work, Tynkkynen, a man with a calling, has provided expanding professional service to his community. Or, to put it another way, by composing local opera for local people, Tynkkynen, the cantor–organist, has exceeded the traditional institutional frames of his profession and adopted the idea of professional service towards his community, which Minnameier (2014, p. 58) refers to as “the social responsibility of a profession”. This crossing of professional borders is reciprocal: on the one hand, in his local opera work Tynkkynen has gone beyond the professional boundaries of a church musician, embracing multiple professional dimensions; and on the other hand, he has incorporated the Christian ideal of service into his local opera work. Such reciprocity indeed has game-changing potential.

Pursuing professional service through local opera work in ways that clearly demonstrate “taking care of individuals as well as catering for the public welfare” (Sugrue & Solbrekke, 2011, p. 13), can also be understood as what DeNora (2002, pp. 19–20) refers to as an *affordance*, originally used by psychologist James J. Gibson (2015). According to DeNora (2002), affordance is something that has been made possible for other people. Exploring affordance in the context of music (DeNora, 2002, 2011), she suggests that musical products should be viewed as “resources for producing things other than music” (DeNora, 2011, p. 50). In Tynkkynen’s case, this constitutes what his local opera work makes possible—or *affords*—for the local community and its people. Thus, based on my study of Tynkkynen’s oral history (Hautsalo, 2018), I will present the four affordances that his local opera work has generated: *the affordance of community spirit and collaboration*; *the affordance of building self-esteem*; *the affordance of a shared grieving process*; and *the affordance of changing perceptions of opera*.

Oral history as a methodology

The narrative approach of this study (Hautsalo, 2018) is based on research interviews with Tynkkynen, from which I constructed an *oral history* (Atkinson, 1998; Leavy, 2011); the research method is one often used in folkloristics, ethnography, and anthroposophy (see Leavy, 2011). The theoretical background for this study is found in new opera studies (see Johnson, 2007; Levin, 2007; Till, 2012; Novak, 2015), which underlines theoretical and methodological interdisciplinarity, and follows Till’s perspective (2012, p. 2): “To study opera we have to study more than opera”. Having interdisciplinarity as my *Leitmotiv*, I will utilise three theoretical approaches: narrative research (Atkinson, 1998; Leavy, 2011; Westerlund & Partti, 2018), professionalism studies (Sugrue & Solbrekke, 2011; Minnameier, 2014), and sociology of music (DeNora, 2002, 2011).

According to Leavy (2011, p. 4), oral history is a method of collecting narratives from individuals for the purpose of research. It is an open-ended form of interview in which the participant and the researcher collaborate, as the participant shares his or her story (Leavy, 2011, p. 13). Feminist researchers have made particular use of oral history “as a way of accessing subjugated voices” (Leavy, 2011, p. 5). In this study, I understand Tynkkynen’s local opera work as “subjugated” in the context of Finnish music history and its opera narratives, as well as in the national media since his work as a composer has generally been ignored for decades. It is notable that there is plenty of research on community music (see e.g. Veblen et al., 2013), but only a little dealing with opera in communities (see, however, Finnegan, 1989; Wiegold & Kenyon, 2015; in Finland, Hannula, 2012; Hautsalo, 2018). However, it seems that there is no research at all about the significance and meanings of these community opera productions for the individuals or communities involved. This study is based on interviews approached by the method of *close reading*, used in literature and cultural studies as well as in folkloristics, in which a text will be read several times and details will be analysed in relation to the whole (see e.g. Pöysä, 2015).

The affordances of Pentti Tynkkynen’s local opera work

As Tynkkynen states, his opera work has given the participants of the project opportunities to learn new musical skills (January 23, 2018): “Doing opera like this naturally includes an educational aspect” (January 23, 2018). However, in addition to musical skills, his local opera work has also become, as DeNora (2002, p. 25) puts it, a “resource for doing, thinking, and feeling ‘other things’” for the participants. The four affordances he has given to his communities can thus also be understood as social and ethical dimensions of his opera work, and of his expanding professionalism and professional service.

Community spirit and collaboration

Pentti Tynkkynen’s local opera work has involved many people over the years, giving them the opportunity to work together in a shared experience. Since his opera productions have sometimes involved almost all of the inhabitants of a village or a small town, his local opera work has given the affordance of solidarity and community spirit to the participants. In addition, it has taught the participants how to work together and, importantly, between generations. Choirs in particular have been the bedrock of Tynkkynen’s opera work. Tynkkynen has conducted several choirs, and through this has got to know local singers well. According to Tynkkynen, the local choir singers have felt that being involved in an opera production is something meaningful:

They are [usually] motivated to sing typical choir repertoire and perform in the church Christmas service, and birthday parties. But to be performing in an opera is a challenge, ah, we will be in an opera!

(January 23, 2018)

His choir work in the parish also made it possible for him to know several generations of people. In addition to the adult choirs, he also conducted child and teenager choirs. Moreover, he has composed several roles for child singers and children's choirs. In particular, he has been thrilled by the children's capacity to learn, and also by the way the children and adults hold together.

According to Tynkkynen, taking part in a local opera production connects generations, including grandparents, parents, and children, and also supports the sense of solidarity between neighbours. In his opera productions, everything is done together:

My point of departure when I'm making an opera, is that it is not just for grown-ups. Children and young people need to be involved. When we are learning, the children have been so excited. This is also an amazing experience for me because there has been no gap between the young and the old. It has been a positive experience, because often young people are said to walk around in torn clothes laughing at old people ... There I didn't come across any [such] age gap. Elderly, middle-aged and young people, and children. And everybody participated as equal and motivated members. This has been such a positive and encouraging factor, you can't really describe it with just a few words. Superb feeling.

(January 23, 2018)

His opera work thus connects the participants within productions, but equally, it also brings the audience together:

I think one of the most significant things about the opera projects has been the way they connect people who perceive the arts differently, people of all ages. When older and younger family members have participated, it has been meaningful to all of them. It has changed attitudes, and this has even reached the neighbours. The neighbours have thought "Almighty, they all really are in the opera tonight, we should go and see how they are doing", and so forth.

(January 23, 2018)

Except for certain key soloists and stage directors who have been paid, all of the others have undertaken their parts as voluntary work. Instrumentalists have worked without payment; choirs have participated for free, and also in ways other than singing, including building stages, scenery, preparing dresses, and taking care of parking (January 23, 2018).

It is not only artistic resources that have been involved: societies, associations, and local cultural authorities have also taken part. Since financial resources available have been minimal, Tynkkynen has also asked for help from such local societies and associations, often where he himself has been a member. Military garrisons have also loaned material for the productions, such as uniforms and

weapons for staging, when needed (January 23, 2018). According to him, whenever he has asked, the answers have always been positive:

I have been a member of the Lions club and the Rotary club. Being a member [has enabled] me to present my ideas and ask if they would like to participate. And the answer has always been positive. I am also a member of the Martha organisation [Finnish home economics organisation], and I have collaborated with them because through them it has been so easy to organise the catering. I have told the Marthas² about the productions, and said I need some help. [The answer has been] just tell us what you need.

(January 22, 2018)

Local authorities in municipalities and their culture offices have also been supportive when the topics have related to local history. Moreover, they have been attracted by the participation of famous professional soloists from the Finnish National Opera (January 23, 2018).

With local elements so present, the municipality authorities have been supportive in organising a performance venue and taking on related administration. There has been no difficulty there.

(April 24, 2018)

Tynkkynen also needed publicity to get an audience for the projects. People who have been involved in opera productions have spread the word, and the choir and other performers have likewise contributed to communications and marketing:

In the preparation for [the opera productions] all the participants, choir, musicians, and soloists have actively communicated through their own channels that the opera is on its way.

(April 24, 2018)

Other support has become from the local press. Tynkkynen has created relationships with the local newspapers by writing reviews and other texts on a regular basis (January 22, 2018), and also reporting on ongoing production efforts. As he puts it: “The media also helps. The local paper writes stories about the rehearsal process, which is central in the marketing” (April 24, 2018). When a premiere was approaching, he used to ask a simple question of local newspaper journalists: “Would you mind coming and experiencing the opera?” (January 22, 2018). According to Tynkkynen, they always said “yes” (January 22, 2018). Thus, by his local opera work Tynkkynen has made affordances for his community—for several generations of singers, players, families, friends, neighbours, audience members, members of various associations and societies, local cultural authorities, and the press—shared experiences and community spirit.

Building self-esteem

In Tynkkynen's oral history, one theme constantly returns: self-esteem. Tynkkynen underlines the significance of his opera work in nurturing the confidence of the participants. To put this into DeNora's terminology; Tynkkynen's opera work has given the participants *the affordance of improving their self-esteem*. According to Tynkkynen, participating in an opera has helped in shyness (January 23, 2018), and been seen as a prestigious enterprise as such:

Imagine a folk fiddle player in a remote village, a fiddler sometimes playing for folk dance events, but he is [insecure] and thinks he can't really do it. I have spoken to him and said there is a part for you [to play], because you are needed in the orchestra. He wonders if he can do anything. I have then explained it to him. And he has joined the production, and after that he is no longer a fiddle player from the distant village, because he has played in an opera orchestra. And he realises, he played there just like everybody else.

(January 23, 2018)

Thus, by creating a safe and supportive atmosphere for the participants in which to perform, Tynkkynen has expanded his professional service and afforded possibilities to succeed and grow spiritually for the members of his community.

The shared grieving process

According to Tynkkynen, in the small towns in which he has preferred to work, the local people have a shared history and memories that powerfully connect them (January 22, 2018). Two of his operas, *The Sinking of the Kuru* and *Huutolaistytön laulu* [*The Waif's Song*], relate the local history of two such small towns, Kuru and Hämeenkyrö. They describe tragedies local people have met with. The steamboat called Kuru sank in 1929, and almost 140 passengers were drowned (see e.g. Jutikkala, 1979). *The Sinking of the Kuru* tells about this accident. Tynkkynen defines *The Sinking of the Kuru* as "a merciful closure" for a tragic event (January 22, 2018).

Tynkkynen describes the performances of *The Sinking of the Kuru*:

[The opera performance of the Kuru ship sinking] was very realistic. The audience was shocked, because everyone had a family member that had been lost in the disaster. I experienced it as a kind of an epiphany of the grieving process. And I can also say that it was a merciful closure, because it hasn't happened again for two to three generations. Those who knew of it, could bring their grieving to an end when they witnessed the insane forces of nature on the stage.

(January 22, 2018)

When the Kuru ship sank, with it went 138 people from Kuru. The topic was constantly present, because every household had lost a family member. Cherishing the memory increased the willingness to participate.

(November 23, 2017)

According to Tynkkynen, his operas have offered a forum for shared emotions between the community members (April 24, 2018). The opera work has consoled people and offered them tools to deal with painful memories and experiences, such as sorrow. Tynkkynen has thus *afforded people a safe place to grieve*.

The other opera that has afforded consolation for a community is *The Waif's Song*, which was performed in Hämeenkyrö in 2016, and which likewise deals with its history and people. During the famine in the 1860s and a little after, orphans were sold at countryside auctions to farmers to work for their food. This has been a great source of embarrassment and shame for many generations (see Halmekoski, 2011).

The Waif's Song was received excruciatingly well. Because many people were aware of their own destiny, or that their parents, or somebody else they knew had been an auction child. Growing up as an auction child was such a devastating experience already at the time, and it has never left those people. It has shaken the whole being of that person, it is possible to understand.

(January 22, 2018)

And then the issue of auction children. *The Waif's Song* has been popular in the Tampere area, and particularly in Hämeenkyrö, because there are many people who have been able to process the grief in their own life. In a way, they have managed to let go of the sorrow now that this topic has been brought up.

(November 23, 2017)

Community spirit is embodied through a local topic that people have a connection with in their memories, and through the memory or other knowledge emotions are evoked. These emotions function as a shared community experience.

(April 24, 2018)

Instead of feeling grief for their beloved in isolation and alone, Tynkkynen has afforded people the possibility to share their loss, and feel the consolation of the collective.

Changing perceptions of opera

One of the main goals of Tynkkynen's opera work has been to bring opera nearer to so-called ordinary people. He has followed the principles of locality, such as composing for local amateurs and choirs, and has engaged community members outside normal musical circles. His work has changed attitudes towards opera as an art form, as well as expanding the practices of opera in general, and in this way one can say that his local opera work contributes to keeping the art form alive and flourishing. In his dedication to opera, one can even think that Tynkkynen

has extended his professional responsibility, performing a service for the art form itself:

I believe I have made an impact that I can be proud of in the right kind of way. I have changed people's perspectives, based on the feedback I have received from these operas, and based on the enthusiasm the operas have evoked. If the word opera is mentioned in the towns I have worked in as a church musician, people don't think about a woman screaming she is dying, or she is not dying. Instead, people remember we had an opera right here.

(January 22, 2018)

He has seen people's pride in their performances, and only very rarely have there been negative attitudes (November 23, 2017):

And then there is the cottage of Vänrikki Stool (Ensign Stål), which we all care about. Visitors are taken to see it: this is where Runeberg's *Vänrikki Stool* poetry was created! Like in Laukaa and Hämeenkyrö; the community spirit is embodied in that people come to see the opera performances.

(January 23, 2018)

Conclusions

In this chapter I have analysed Pentti Tynkkynen's local opera work from the perspectives of expanding professionalism and expanding professional service. I have also constructed the affordances of his local opera work for his community, through an oral history. As I have shown, the expanding professional service Tynkkynen has practised through his local opera work has also had other important effects beyond the church and parish contexts. In addition to the musical activities, it has mobilised and organised volunteers, and has involved associations, local authorities, the press, and even military garrisons. At the same time, Tynkkynen has given—or *afforded*—people positive experiences, as well as opportunities to increase their self-esteem, to be included in a community, and to grieve. Tynkkynen's local opera work offers opportunities that differ from the usual practices of opera, by affording ordinary people opportunities to do something meaningful and special together via opera, an art form that has not been seen as easily approachable or enjoyable. In addition, the local opera work has also changed attitudes towards opera for the better in the areas he has worked.

One can ask, then, why Tynkkynen's opera work has been ignored in arts publicity, as well as in academic research? Why have there been hardly any reviews or other articles in the national press over the years? One explanation could be that since Tynkkynen is a church musician but not a qualified composer, he has been blurring structural boundaries and threatened established value systems, and has thus diluted and dismantled traditional hierarchies in favour of open participation and opportunity. Or, perhaps his opera work has taken a stand on behalf of a more

extensive understanding of professionalism, which has been seen as undercutting the hegemony of the traditional and established operatic institutions and models of academic composing.

Another question that arises concerns the artistic demands for such operas. In the circumstances of local opera, it is enough that the performing itself is a pleasant and empowering experience; it is an added value if the audience also enjoys the performance. In Tynkkynen's local opera performances, the positive feelings of the participants have been supplemented by the audience's enjoyment. According to Tynkkynen, after the performance of *The Sinking of the Kuru* there were more than 800 people in the audience in a single church, and "hardly any dry eyes amongst the people" (January 23, 2018).

Tynkkynen has been a socially responsible professional, who has expanded his professionalism past his work in the parish context towards the local communities and "ordinary" Finns. In general, Tynkkynen's local opera work indicates that developing professional social responsibility might create pressure to do your work differently and imaginatively, and thinking locally might be a way to be inclusive and create participatory art forms, even for the so-called high arts. In addition, seeing music from the perspective of *affordances* helps not only to escape a one-sided artistic view of opera but also to understand the art form's power as a service for the benefit of others.

Yet, Tynkkynen is not the only one composing local operas. There are other professional musicians, and even a few academically trained composers, who have written operas for local communities in rural areas in Finland. That professional composers have started to do this is encouraging. It suggests that trained composers have also begun to understand their duty as a part of larger societal circles, and that perceptions of who can compose, perform, and listen to opera, and where it can be performed, are perhaps gradually changing. Importantly, in the context of opera as a highly contested art form, Tynkkynen and others provide an example of an opera type that clearly demonstrates relevance for its communities and, at the same time, potential for opera to flourish in general. It seems that even though opera may not be for everyone, in Finland the phenomenon of local opera has made it enjoyable and meaningful for many. This success is due, in part at least, to significant elements of expanded professionalism—as illustrated here by the case of Tynkkynen, a church cantor.

Acknowledgements

This publication has been undertaken as part of Hautsalo's Politics of Equality in Finnish Opera research project funded by the Academy of Finland (project no. 314157).

Notes

- 1 To be more specific, according to my statistics, which include all operas composed and first performed in Finland during 1852–2017, it seems that in the 2010s there have been operatic first performances yearly as follows: in 2010: 16; in 2011: 27; in 2012: 20; in 2013: 12; in 2014: 20; in 2015: 20; and in 2016: 16.

- 2 According to the Martha website (2018), “The Martha Organization is a Finnish home economics organization, founded in 1899 to promote well-being and quality of life in the home. It carries out cultural and civic education and does advocacy work in Finland”.

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