OPERA FOR ALL

Evaluation 2017 - Summary

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1. Introduction

Opera for All built on a three-year pilot programme of free public opera screenings and education work by Garsington Opera in Skegness (2012-2014). In 2015, Garsington Opera and the charitable trust Magna Vitae (East Lindsay District Council) established a partnership supported by the Coastal Communities Alliance and Arts Council England's Strategic Touring Fund. The ambition was to extend work to coastal communities with little access to the arts, to build local cultural capacity and to establish a touring network bringing culture to underserved communities.

Opera for All is now at the end of three-year programme (2015-17). During 2017, Garsington Opera and Magna Vitae worked in partnership with local authorities and cultural organisations in Bridgwater, Grimsby, Ramsgate and Skegness to deliver free public screenings of Garsington Opera productions, alongside workshops, residencies and events with schools and community groups.

2. The Purpose and Structure of this Document

This report offers an overview of activities in 2017 and a summative evaluation of the key lessons emerging from the three-year programme. It covers:

- **Programme Aims** objectives and success measures (Para. 3)
- **Evaluation Aims** and methodology (Para. 4)
- **Programme Overview** 2017 (Para. 5)
- **Reach in 2015-17** including outputs and beneficiary numbers (Para. 6)
- **Marketing and communications** (Para. 7)
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- **An Executive Summary** of Key Lessons for Opera for All, its stakeholders and suggestions for ways of building on the legacy of the programme. (Para. 16)
- **A Summary of Recommendations** (Para. 17)

3. Opera for All Aims, Objectives and Success Measures

3.1 Overall Aim

The overall aim of the programme was to promote, develop and sustain a national network of cultural opportunity in rural and coastal communities, offering access to high quality opera and creative learning experiences for targeted local communities.

3.2 Specific Aims

- **To** engage new audiences in opera in coastal areas with limited access to cultural opportunity.
- **To** develop regional cultural capacity and partnerships.
- **To** leave a legacy, including new touring opportunities in isolated coastal communities.

3.3 Objectives:

The programme set out to offer:

- **A free public screening** of a Garsington Opera production jn each coastal community
- **Creative workshops for s**chools and community groups in each region, linked to the screening.

A Legacy including:

- **Capacity Building:** skills development for local artists and teachers.
- **Partnerships:** opportunities for cultural collaboration and sharing practice.
- **A Coastal Cultural Network** to increase access to touring product in coastal communities.

4. Evaluation Focus and Methodology

The evaluation focuses largely on the impact of the programme with some commentary on project management processes and draws on quantitative and qualitative data from:

- A survey of 25 schools and interviews with 26 teachers.
- Interviews with 10 regional partners.
- Regional visits and observation of schools and community activities.
- Interviews and a focus group with Garsington artists.
- 1-1 meetings or phone calls with key stakeholders including regional partners, Magna Vitae, and Garsington Opera.
- Data on audience participation and partner engagement supplied by the Audience Agency.

Summaries of interviews can be found in Appendices One to Three of the report.

5. Programme Overview Year 3, 2017

5.1 Screenings: In 2017, four free pubic screenings of the opera Semele took place in Bridgwater, Grimsby, Ramsgate and Skegness. Three further local screenings took pace in Buckingham, Oxford and Yarlington.

5.2 Schools Workshops and Sharings

The Garsington team ran workshops for primary and secondary schools aged 8-19, lasting a half or whole day for primary and one or two days for secondary schools. In some areas, secondary schools worked together, taking in in turn to host activities.

Workshops had a common structure, with room for individual artistic approaches. Students learned vocal, drama and movement techniques, explored the dramatic content of the opera and composed music based on key themes. They rehearsed work and shared outcomes at screenings or concerts. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) also took place for participating teachers.

5.3 Community Events

Workshops and events took place in Bridgwater, Grimsby, Skegness and Thanet, engaging the local community in opera-related activity.

5.3.1 Bridgwater: The 2017 programme was a two-part event, piggybacking on the Quayside Festival, which celebrates the cultural diversity and history of the area. A trail of pineapples guided audiences to the screening, where there was a pop-up food event. Other street art activities took place on linked sites, inviting audiences to follow a journey through the town. Forty-nine members of local choirs took part in a singing workshop in the library and an informal performance in the foyer before the screening.

5.3.2 Grimsby: The 2017 programme lasted several months. Activity included a composition workshop for young instrumentalists, a primary school singing festival and workshops for community choirs. In spring, there were two large-scale community events, the Big Sing and Carmina Burana. Events culminated in a three-day festival including:

- A schools' showcase inspired by Handel interwoven with filmed extracts from Semele.
- A concert at Grimsby Minster, where four community choirs, a poet and Grimsby Youth Band performed extracts from Handel as part of a new Words and Music Festival.
- A concert in Grimsby Auditorium for groups that had performed during the year including over 200 pupils and two Garsington singers.

- A screening of Semele in Whitgift Film Theatre.

5.3.4 Ramsgate: A screening of opera extracts and a full screening of Semele on the beach were part of the 2017 Ramsgate Festival. Prior to the screening, a pop up company, including Garsington professionals and community choirs, performed wedding scenes from Semele in a promenade performance around the town, harbour and beach, Local director Tania Holland Williams, from Kent Opera, directed the pop-up event with support from Garsington Opera.

5.3.5 Skegness: Young people designed the setting for the screening, which included a dragon, cut-out gods and goddesses and garden games. A chaptered version of the screening and the presentation of arts awards made the event more of a destination for people.

6. Reach

6.1 Introduction

A key objective of the programme was to engage audiences new to opera, with a target of a 1,000 people per region per year. A survey of the audiences for screenings by the Audience Development Agency also took place in 2017.

6.2 A Summary of Reach

Between April and October 2017, Garsington Opera worked with 25 schools in Bridgwater, Grimsby. Skegness and Thanet and community partners. **Table One** shows the total reach of the project and a breakdown of beneficiaries per year. **Table Two** shows total audience numbers each year by event. **Table Three** offers a breakdown of engagement figures by region and activity.

6.3.1 Table One: Total Beneficiaries

Total Reach	2017	2016	2015	Total
	7,858	5,692	3,624	17,174

Commentary on Trends

- Public engagement levels rose by over 100% over the three-year period.
- On average, engagement numbers exceeded the target of 1,000 people per year per region.

6.3.2 Table Two: Aggregated Reach by Activity Type

Reach	2017	2016	2015	Total
Schools residencies	654	760	1065	2,479
Public screenings	1,963	3,798	2, 559	8,320
Schools showcases	810	814	NA	1,624
Concerts/pop-up events	3,682	80	NA	3,762
Community workshops	719	188	NA	907
CPD for teachers	30	52	NA	82

Commentary

- Numbers for full public screenings decreased as regional partners found new ways of engaging audiences in opera, including workshops, screenings of extracts and pop-up events.
- Pupil numbers decreased as schools found that longer residencies had most impact on pupils
- There was a growth in community activity as regions developed new partnerships.

6.3.3 Table Two: Engagement by Region by Activity Type 2017 (2016 figures in brackets)

Area	Bridgwater	Grimsby	Skegness	Thanet
Schools residencies	119 (141)	168 (126)	246 (150)	121 (302)
Public screenings	400 (107)	30 (164)	400 (250)	450 (850)
Schools showcases	80 (179)	500 (299)	NA (210)	230 (299)
Concerts/pop-up events	80 (80)	2,832 (NA)	NA (NA)	488 (NA)
Community workshops	120 (83)	1,427 (410)	14 (NA)	147 (NA)
CPD for teachers	6	10	12	2
Total Reach	805	4,957	672	1,438

Commentary

- There was a much stronger focus on community activity in 2017 in Grimsby and Thanet.
- School showcases and pop-up events became an increasingly important means of increasing cultural engagement.

6.4 Audience Demographics

Audience surveys of a sample of 172 people attending screenings in 2017 revealed that:

- Between 82-96% of audiences were local.
- 53% of audiences enjoyed moderate levels of cultural engagement and 29% were from less engaged groups.
- On average 80% of audiences were new to the events and 30% had never seen an opera before.

The sample suggests that events achieved their aims, attracting a diverse audience reflecting the local demographic, including a relatively high proportion of new attenders.

7. Marketing and Communications

7.1 Introduction

Marketing and communications improved as the programme evolved. At the outset, there was confusion about roles and responsibilities and poor levels of regional engagement. To rectify this, in 2016, Garsington staff offered specialist support to regional marketing teams with planning, press releases and posters. This led to improved communications in 2016-17 with positive spin-offs for the regional and national profile of the programme.

Marketing to schools was most effective where regional partners with schools' knowledge, including Music Hubs, were involved. The recruitment of secondary schools was especially difficult in schools in areas of socio-economic challenge where there was reluctance to sanction time off owing to concerns about the impact on student attainment.

7.2 Overall Observations and Key Lessons 2015-17

The marketing of the programme got off to a slow start, hampering the recruitment of schools and community partners. With support from Garsington Opera, regional and national campaigns became more targeted. Key marketing lessons were as follows:

- **Allow sufficient lead in time** to plan national and regional marketing strategies.
- **Appoint specialists** with local knowledge to lead on marketing campaigns.
- **Piggyback** marketing on a wider programme of events – e.g. as part of wider festival programmes.

- **Undertake opera-specific marketing** in areas where the opera is part of a wider festival. Leaflet at busking and pop-up events; use tourist offices and local agencies to increase public profile.
- **Target marketing to niche groups** e.g. choirs, singers, older people
- **Use imaginative strategies** including pop-ups and busking as marketing and engagement tool
- **Recruit hard-to-reach schools:** Work with Music Hubs to identify hard-to-reach schools and work to overcome barriers to engagement.
- **Audience Profiling:** Undertake profiling to get a clearer understanding of audience demographics and responses to community programmes.
- **Market transferable skills:** Market the schools' experience more broadly than opera, emphasising other benefits including transferrable skills.

8. Planning and Project Management

8.1 The Planning and Logistics of Screenings 2015-17

The relative virtues of indoor and outdoor screening locations and approaches to engaging non-opera audiences with opera screenings were the subject of ongoing debate, yielding some useful lessons.

In 2017, as in 2016, three of the locations, Bridgwater, Ramsgate and Skegness mounted outdoor screenings using existing festivals as an engagement strategy. In Bridgwater, the screening was part of the Quayside Festival. In Ramsgate and Skegness, screenings kept their beach locations as part of Ramsgate and SO festivals. In all of these locations, screenings drew healthy audiences of 400 plus.

In Grimsby, the absence of an existing festival to draw crowds and poor audience numbers for screenings in previous years led to a low cost indoor screening in 2017, which played to only 30 people. However, the screening was part of an ambitious new Words and Music Festival, which generated impressive audiences of more than 1,000 people.

In the first year of the project, there were minor technical issues with screenings. By 2017, these had largely disappeared as partners secured reliable local technical support.

The only complaint about the management of screenings in 2017 related to a frustration that regional partners were unable to recoup VAT on the £6k charged to regional partners for the screening.

8.2 The Planning of the Schools' Residency Programme 2015-17

The schools' residency programme followed a common format, adjusted to regional need. Primary school pupils generally took part in half or one-day workshops, using music and drama to devise stories based on the themes of Semele. For secondary schools, the commitment was generally a full two days, culminating in the sharing of a devised musical theatre performance.

Feedback on the planning and project management of the schools' programme was positive from the start, with particular praise for the quality of scheduling and clarity of communication with schools. When pushed to identify weaknesses, some respondents felt that regional consultation prior to the project was insufficient to engage local partners fully in project planning.

The Garsington team also acknowledged the need to work more closely with local partners to recruit schools and to clarify expectations of teachers during school residencies.

8.3 The Planning of Schools Performances and Showcases

2016 and 2017 saw a rise in high profile showcases of pupils' work, including performances at Grimsby Central Hall, the schools proms in Skegness and St Lawrence College near Ramsgate.

In both Grimsby and Skegness, the absence of community arts infrastructure meant that regional Music Hubs drove the project, attempting to build community participation by targeting families of pupils involved. In 2017, Grimsby followed up the 2016 ambitious schools' showcase at Grimsby Central Hall with a Words and Music Festival, which involved a cast and audiences of over 1,000.

Showcases were a logistical challenge but generally worked well. In the first two years, there were minor issues with the timing of events and transport arrangements when weekend or evening scheduling or

insufficient notice prevented participation for some pupils. Some teachers also felt that rehearsals were too long for primary pupils.

8.4 Planning for Community Events

Community events focusing on audience development and engagement were at the heart of the original Arts Council proposal. However, they were not a strong feature of Opera for All in 2015 and 2016, when schools' residencies and workshops took centre stage. This deficit was, in part, due to the time it took to reach target groups in areas of low engagement and lack of clarity about available funding for community work held by Magna Vitae.

Community engagement increased in years two and three of the programme, following local consultation by regional partners, which identified groups and individuals keen to participate. It worked especially well in areas with existing cultural infrastructure, including Ramsgate where festivals allowed regional partners to capitalise on a wider programme of activity.

8.5 Key Planning Lessons 2015-17

8.5.1   General

- **Strategic planning:** Consult with regional partners early to identify local needs, reach target groups and ensure full regional engagement in project planning and delivery.
- **Oversight:** Ensure that a Garsington Producer attends regional events to ensure consistent oversight.

8.5.2 Screenings and Community Programmes

- **Local technical support** for screenings is crucial.
- **Clarify funding criteria for community programmes** and run community workshops to stimulate take-up amongst regional partners

8.5.3 Schools' Workshops and Showcases

- **School recruitment:** Allow sufficient lead-in time to overcome barriers to participation in new schools.
- **Preparation time:** Allow time between workshops and performance to allow artists the space for recording songs and preparation.
- **Lead-in time:** Offer maximum notice of schools showcases, ensuring that scheduling encourages maximum attendance, avoiding where possible weekends.
- **Rehearsals:** Keep primary school pupils occupied during lengthy rehearsals.
- **Reinforce protocols:** Create a light touch contract specifying expectations of schools, including attendance at CPD sessions and workshops.

Feedback on Planning

`The planning, organisation and timings of the workshop itself were all exemplary. I felt I knew exactly what was going to happen and Paul ensured we were extremely well informed…– Jo Thyer, East Brent C of E School, Bridgwater

`Initially, it was difficult to engage schools and only the usual suspects came forward but over the course of the three years more schools in priority areas were recruited – Jen Mckie, Area Partner, Skegness

`There is value in partnership with Garsington Opera as long as there is no duplication. The current partnership between Jackdaws, Somerset Music and Taunton Music Trust is cohesive and already offers schools some exposure to opera' – Helen Reid, Bridgwater

`Hardly any of our children actually made it to the screening on the Saturday of the SO Festival' – Jen Mckie. Skegness

9. Quality of Schools Residencies and Showcases

This section assesses the quality of the artistic programme in schools. Commentary draws on feedback from national and regional partners, workshop participants and schools. Feedback involved 1-1 structured interviews and questionnaires exploring the delivery, impact and potential legacy of the work. Detailed summaries of interviews can be found in **Appendix One** of this report.

9.1 Introduction and Overview

Over three years, the schools' residencies formed a solid core for the programme, reaching over 50 schools and three thousand young people in the 4 participating regions.

All of the schools taking part were located in coastal communities where access to the arts was limited by factors including geography, economics or poverty of aspiration.

Feedback on the schools' work was excellent from the outset, but even more positive in 2017 than in preceding years. Respondents agreed that the programme had overcome negative preconceptions about opera. They commended the skill of the artists in engaging pupils with challenging material and drawing out their creativity. Many commented that Semele, with its mythically inspired story was a particularly rich stimulus for pupils' imaginations.

Alongside familiar praise for the quality of delivery and levels of pupil engagement, respondents welcomed the focus on developing pupils' composition skills and creative confidence. Many teachers also noted that following workshops, pupils were inspired to join choirs or take up an instrument, as well as reporting improvements in their own subject knowledge and teaching practice.

School performances and showcases became an increasingly important and ambitious feature of the programme. Respondents felt that these gave pupils valuable experience of large-scale performance, increasing their self-esteem and confidence and offering opportunities to mix with pupils of different ages, abilities and social backgrounds.

Garsington artists also noted that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers and local artists built subject knowledge, confidence and local capacity to deliver opera activities. A few minor lessons, largely technical, emerged from the programme.

9.1.1 Quality and Impact of the Schools' Programme 2015-2017

Perceptions of the schools' programme were very positive, both in terms of the quality of delivery and longer-term impact on pupils and schools.

- **Engaging:** Workshops were entertaining, inspiring, and educational. There was an excellent mix of fast   paced and well-pitched warm-up exercises, drama and music activities.
- **Collaborative:** Schools partnerships encouraged team working, social understanding and confidence.
- **Creative:** Residencies stimulated pupils' creativity and a focus on composition gave pupils' ownership of the work.
- **Inclusive:** Artists kept pupils of all abilities focused and engaged, differentiating approaches for those with learning and physical disabilities.
- **Fostering Pride in Achievement:** Pupils learned the disciplines of performance and responded to the challenge, stretching themselves and taking pride in their achievements.

9.1.2 Longer term Impact

Respondents identified a number of lasting impacts arising from the schools programme:

- **Overcoming barriers:** For many teachers and pupils the experience transformed attitudes to opera.
- **Raising Aspirations:** Working with professionals raised pupils' aspirations and levels of creative confidence, influencing decisions to take up singing, a musical instrument or study the arts.
- **Developing Skills:** Work improved pupils' performance skills, confidence and capacity to take risks.
- **Capacity Building:** CPD gave teachers the knowledge and skills to explore opera with more confidence in the classroom (see Para. 12 for further detail)

- **Developing social skills:** Partnerships between schools fostered understanding between pupils from different backgrounds, increasing social confidence and team working skills.

9.1.3 Areas for Improvement

Respondents were generally short of ideas on how to improve the experience in 2017 with comments limited to minor technical and administrative issues.

- **Parental Engagement:** Levels of family attendance were disappointing.
- **Teacher Engagement:** Teachers were disengaged from workshops in some schools.

> `There was a lot of sitting around during the rehearsal which is difficult for young children' Anon
>
> `Teacher engagement varied massively and it was disappointing to see teachers from certain schools not getting stuck in with the workshop activities' – Michael Betteridge, Composer.

9.1.4 Key Lessons 2015-17: A Summary

Formative feedback over the three years encouraged the Garsington team to adapt and refine its approaches, notably in the following areas:

- **Residency Length:** Half-day workshops in primary schools and one-day workshops in secondary schools are too short. Longer residencies allow time to read group skills and foster creativity.
- **Make CPD an obligatory part of the programme:** The introduction of CPD for teachers in 2016 increased levels of teachers' commitment and skills.
- **Offer teachers' resources to support preparatory and follow-up work in schools:** The teachers' pack, introduced in 2017 helped teachers to get to prepare for residencies.
- **Sharing:** There is huge value in sharing outcomes with parents and teachers. This is sometimes their first exposure to the art form.
- **Sustained Engagement:** Work over several years builds capacity and buy-in. The scale of the public events in the final year was substantially larger than in year one.
- **Balancing repertoire with composition:** Giving equal weight to repertoire and composition helps students to value their creativity.
- **Partnerships:** Fostering partnerships between schools builds social understanding and confidence.
- **The multi-faceted nature of opera** encourages the cross-fertilisation of music, dance, drama, writing; this is especially beneficial for specialist students at GCSE and A level.
- **Showcases:** Film clips work well for family audiences interspersed with live performance.
- **Using standardised translations of opera (2017)** gives artists time to prepare and ensures a consistent approach to workshops.

Primary School Feedback

> `I liked the ways the workshops encouraged and made space for individual creativity whilst drawing on contributions to shape something new and dynamic'- Rifka Burman, William Barcroft Primary School, Grimsby
>
> `It has given two boys who had solos and would never normally put themselves forward a heightened sense of confidence and purpose'- Jo Thyer, East of Brent C of E Primary School, Bridgwater.
>
> `It has inspired me to think about starting a school choir again'- Jo Thyer, East of Brent C of E Primary School, Bridgwater
>
> `Composition is …not my strength and seeing it in action has really helped to stimulate other ideas that I have since done with the class'- Lisa Oliver, Canon Hall Peter C of E primary school, Grimsby
>
> `The activities have dramatically improved my subject knowledge….. I will be using some of them when I have to take up the mantle of leading whole school singing with 235 children in September! ' - David Hurdman, St Peter and Paul Primary School, Lincolnshire

`They made very quick judgements on the student abilities and adapted work to suit their needs. The Key Stage 4 students will take their ideas and improved confidence through to their performing arts course…..- Skegness Academy*

`It has enabled the GCSE and A level musicians to put Handel into context and increased their subject knowledge'- Chatham and Clarendon Grammar School*

`I would like to use some of the workshop ideas in our primary transition days' – Matthew Hawkins, William Blake Secondary School, Bridgwater*

`I am considering teaching this as a scheme of work. I also discussed working together with other schools to do a similar thing in the future' - Abigail Cooper, Dane Court Grammar School*

`I think the way I led the music writing had an impact on at least one teacher (Matthew) who said he would employ some of my devices to his work in future'- Richard Taylor, Composer*

Artists and Area Partners Feedback

`The excerpts pack was exceptionally useful……. It meant we could focus on our creative ideas rather than sifting through a large score and creating many new arrangements for the young people'- Michael Betteridge. Musical Director*

`Writing words and music based on an existing opera helps students to understand that opera further and to have a greater appreciation of their own work'- Michael Betteridge, Composer*

`The way people sing when they have composed the work they are singing is entirely different – there is a clear sense of pride and joy; they are more invested in it'.- John Barber, Composer*

`We should celebrate the fact that we came in to each school and each sharing as a company, and then created a bigger company – there was never any sense of 'us and them' - Nicola Wydenbach, Singer*

`Residencies were faultless. The Garsington team has the ability to connect with people of all ages. The approach is youthful and spontaneous, making the work feel different and fresh even when the workshops follow a common format' – Mo Bromley, Grimsby*

`Some students who are normally very quiet shone and took solo sung lines. And little Lucas, who played piano with me, showed musical skill that possibly would have not been discovered otherwise'- Richard Taylor, Composer*

`There is good anecdotal evidence about the ways in which the project engaged families that did not engage with the arts and young people with Special Educational Needs'- Jen Mckie, Skegness*

`For me the positive impact of the sharing was evident in the energetic, committed, disciplined and enthusiastic performance…..they came away with a greater sense of confidence in themselves, and a deep insight into a new art form'- Anna Sideris, Singer*
`Working over an extended period (in this case three years) is necessary to embed the work and have meaningful long-term impact on participants and partners' – Michael Betteridge, Composer*

10. Quality of Screenings and Community Events

10.1 Overview

Alongside schools residencies, the other focus of Opera for All was the screening of a Garsington opera and linked community events. In 2015, audiences for screenings fell well below target, owing to poor weather, ineffective marketing and issues with the format of screenings. The full-length screening of Cosi Fan Tutte in Grimsby stretched the patience of young people and members of the community with little prior knowledge of opera. By contrast, in Ramsgate where the screening was animated and interspersed with students and artists' performances and workshops, the reception was more positive.

Over time, regional partners sought to rectify low levels of community engagement, experimenting with new screening formats and events to engage new audiences. By 2017, screenings and associated activities

were more ambitious and less uniform, engaging local talent including community choirs. Screenings remained central to the experience in three areas, animated with workshops and participatory activity. A brief description of community activity by area appears in Para. 10.2.

10.2 Regional Overview 2015-17

10.2.1 Bridgwater: Community activity in 2016 was limited and featured an Opera evening at Bridgwater Arts Centre. In 2017, the programme was more ambitious with a successful screening, including community choirs as part of the Quayside Festival.

10.2.2 Grimsby: Levels of community engagement were disappointing in 2015-2016, with poor turnout for screenings and events. The programme surpassed expectations in 2017, following concerted efforts from Lincs Inspire and the Music Hub MAPAS to use school's residencies as a hook for engaging local community choirs and orchestras in the programme.

Activities included a primary school project on Rosalka, a community performance of Carmina Burana, opera workshops and a Words and Music Festival with a Handel theme. Between them, these events attracted audiences of over 3,000 people.

10.2.3 Ramsgate: Poor turnout in for the screening in 2015 prompted a change of strategy. In 2016, three community workshops and a performance of excerpts accompanied the screening. In 2017, there was a focus on opera by stealth to tempt people across the threshold. The prelude to the screening was an ambitious pop-up performance, featuring local community choirs that toured prime locations in the town.

 10.2.4 Skegness: There was a strong focus on schools' work and ambitious public screenings. The first screening in Louth in 2015 attracted a small audience. From 2016, screenings took place on the beach, piggybacking on the SO Festival and were dressed to bring in new audiences. In 2016, the setting was a country tea garden. In 2017, young people designed the setting, which included a dragon, cut out gods and goddesses and family garden games. The team also ran a series of community opera workshops for dementia sufferers in local homes.

10.3 Commentary

Although partners became more successful in making screenings work, respondents generally concluded that they were the most problematic aspect of Opera for All. One common concern was the cost of high quality screenings (around £6k). However, this was perhaps less of an issue than questions about the value of **full –length** screenings in developing new audiences.

Interviewees also highlighted competition from key players like the Royal Opera House and Northern Opera with their regular live opera relays in local cinemas. A number of people felt that participatory approaches to opera were key to overcoming barriers to engagement, not showing a film.

On balance, screenings were most effective as part of local outdoor festivals, which brought in unexpected passers-by and used place dressing, live singers and participation to engage audiences.

If screenings are to continue without high levels of subsidy, the best strategy may be to focus on informal encounters with opera through flexible packages based on film extracts, which can be used by regional partners to engage the community in live events.

10.4 Strengths

- **Flexibility:** partners responded well to regional needs, adapting screening formats imaginatively for local audiences.
- **Reach:** Screening-related events grew in scale and ambition, engaging local audiences, for example in Bridgwater and Ramsgate.
- **Capacity building:** Regional partners developed the skills and confidence to lead work themselves (see also Para.12).
- **Partnerships and credibility:** The programme has forged new partnerships between regional cultural organisations and an appetite to continue the work with support from the Arts Council and other funding sources.

10.5 Areas for Improvement

- **Targeting:** Local partners were not sufficiently involved in the early stages of programme design and were slow to identify target groups.
- **Format:** The format of community engagement was too passive in the first year.

10.6 Key Lessons 2015-17

Over the course of Opera for All, regional partners successfully adapted community events to meet regional need. Key lessons were as follows:

- **Maintain flexibility:** Flexible formats for screenings including extracts, live and recorded action and pop-ups help to overcome barriers to opera.
- **Use chaptered versions of the opera,** interspersed with live narrative, singing and workshops as a tool for engaging new audiences.
- **Use informal settings for screenings** such as the Semele-influenced beach games in Skegness 2017 to make the screening experience more inviting.
- **Schools involvement:** Engage schools in screenings through pre-screening performances to bring in new audiences, including family members.
- **Use pop-up events** to make content relevant to place and communities.
- **Develop partnerships** between community organisations to encourage cross-fertilisation of ideas.
- **Sustain** engagement with communities over time to embed activities, build traction and reach.

Regional Partner Feedback

> `The programme has changed perceptions of opera. It has created "awe and wonder". In 2013, there was no cultural hinterland in Ramsgate. Now there are buskers on the street. Pop-Up opera has normalised opera for people in Ramsgate. Animating opera in imaginative ways is crucial if people are to cross the threshold. It is always preferable to have a live show' – Suzy Humphries, Ramsgate
>
> `The Garsington screening in the square brought people and passers-by to areas of the town that are hidden' – Victoria Banham, Sedgmoor District Council.
>
> `The 13 choir members taking part had never performed opera before and learned a considerable amount about acting as well as singing, about doing more than making a nice noise – Suzy Humphries, Ramsgate
>
> `There are already plenty of opera screenings…. These introduce people to opera but do not break down barriers unless they are animated with other events. At £5k, they are also unsustainable unless they part of a wider event generating income – Anon
>
> ` Using film extracts as part of the sharing are an amazingly important asset, but the full screenings didn't really work'. John Barber - Composer

11-14. Sustainability and Legacy

In addition to delivering annual screenings and workshops in each of the participating regions, Opera for All sought to leave a legacy by building cultural capacity and setting up a touring network for underserved coastal areas. These objectives reflect the Arts Council's interest in reducing the regional cultural deficit and using digital means to bring culture to new consumers. The original proposal outlined plans to:

- **Build Partnerships** by encouraging arts organisations, Music Hubs and others to share practice
- **Build cultural capacity** through a "buddy scheme" to enable local teams to run "large scale cultural and meaningful audience development during and after the project".
- **Establish a Coastal Cultural Touring Network** working with the Coastal Cultural Alliance, arts organisations, local authorities and schools to increase access to touring arts in coastal areas.

In 2015, there was limited progress in meeting these objectives, as the priority was to get the opera programme up and running. In 2016-17, legacy plans were a higher priority. This section of the report evaluates achievements and makes suggestions for next steps.

11. Building Partnerships

A grants programme, administered by Magna Vitae gave regional teams a financial incentive to set up cultural activities as part of the Opera for All programme. However, lack of local infrastructure and limited planning time meant that partnerships were initially slow to develop.

However, by 2017, there was a significant shift, even in Bridgwater, which had only been involved in the project for one season. As Victoria Banham observed

`The project was a good platform for encouraging regional collaboration between small arts organisations that often find it hard to connect. There is no umbrella body locally to encourage partnerships'

Opera for All brought together schools with contrasting demographics, community choirs, local authorities, festival organisers and local directors, often for the first time.

In all of the participating areas, there is a keen interest in sustaining and developing these relationships in the longer term. Paragraphs 11.1-11.4 summarise partnership activity by area.

11.1 Bridgwater: Partnerships were slow to get off the ground, hampered by lack of local infrastructure. In 2017, following a successful opera event, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Bridgwater Arts Centre, momentum began to develop through:

- **A collaboration between Fuse Productions, the local authority and community choirs** on a pop-up opera and screening of Semele as part of the local Quayside Festival.
- **A partnership between Sedgmoor District Council and the local Music Hub** on an extended programme of work in schools.
- **The establishment of a local arts network by Bridgwater Arts Centre,** which brings together local partners including the Macmillan Theatre, Fuse Productions and others to share expertise.

11.2 Grimsby: Partners were initially thin on the ground. In 2017, there was a clear step change, with the development of more ambitious partnerships including:

- **A choral collaboration** with Great Grimsby and Orpheus choirs, youth and community orchestras and a performance of Carmina Burana.
- **Work in new schools** including Skegness Academy and a project on Rosalka for 500 primary pupils.

11.3 Skegness: Wider public engagement built on screenings as part of the SO Festival. In 2017, a local artist worked with young people to design and the screening space and there were opera workshops for people with dementia.

1.4 Thanet: There is a growing but fragmented cultural sector in Ramsgate. The local Music Hub did not engage with programme, leaving project co-ordination to the Ramsgate Arts, which runs the local Looping the Loop Festival. By 2017, the small but energetic team had fostered impressive partnerships, including work with over 40 community choirs.

11.5 Key Lessons 2015-17

- **Building Regional Partnerships takes time** and these should be nurtured in the future with modest input from Garsington Opera.
- **Exploiting potential links with local cultural tourism** including festivals and local attractions is a **useful** way of building strategic partnerships.
- **Exploiting links with Music Hubs** increases the longer-term impact on teachers' skills.
- **Partnerships between schools** build pupils' confidence and social understanding.
- **Outdoor events** are an effective catalyst for partnership.

> *`The children were quite fascinated by the other schools and although timid at the beginning of the day, became more confident as they saw how pieces co-ordinated for a mass performance'. – Susan Booth, East Ravendale Primary School*
>
> *`Collaborating with other schools…….provided the children with the opportunity to broaden their understanding of how others work and to see other children engaging with opera and having fun'. - Ryan Frost, Tattershall Primary School*
>
> *`Healing School and our school are teaming up to do some joint appraisals and will be invited to join us in our community sing, which I hope will happen in 2018'- Melanie Benzon, St James's School, Grimsby*
>
> *`The project has given Ramsgate Arts more credibility with Kent County Council – Suzy Humphries, Ramsgate.*
>
> *`The programme has catalysed increased collaboration between local community choirs and schools and encouraged the cross-fertilisation of ideas. It has encouraged more large-scale work for example, collaboration on Carmina Burana' – Sue Baker, Grimsby*

12. Regional Capacity Building

12.1 Introduction

An objective of Opera for All was to build opportunities for regional partners to:

- **Share** regional knowledge.
- **Develop** and hone their arts skills.
- Put on their own large-scale events.

Capacity-building was initially slow. However, over time, a growing sense of shared purpose led local teams to take more responsibility for shaping schools and community activities.

Although the schools' programme was limited to a one or two day residency and showcase, CPD built teachers' capacity to deliver opera-related activities and stimulated an appetite to learn more.

In the wider community, regional partners also developed programming skills and identified local artists and producers to lead and sustain activities. Many are keen to continue work in 2018 with support from Garsington Opera. Paragraphs 12.2 – 12.6 list impact by region.

12.2 A summary of Regional Capacity Building

12.2.1 Bridgwater

The arts have been under considerable pressure in the area following brutal historical cuts. There is currently no umbrella body linking cultural organisations and cultural development budgets aretied to broader social and regeneration agendas.

Despite the challenging context, promising new partnerships are building local capacity and skills.

- **Local arts collective Fuse Productions** worked with Sedgmoor District Council and community choirs on a pop-up event as part of the Quayside Festival.
- **Schools** reported increased confidence in running opera-related activities for themselves.
- **Bridgwater Arts Centre** set up a network to support the sharing of effective practice

12.2.2 Grimsby

Although initially schools-focused, wider partnerships blossomed in 2017 under the leadership of MAPAS and Lincs Inspire. These developed the regional confidence and capacity to run large-scale community programmes independently.

- **MAPAS**, the local Music Service ran a Big Sing event, school and community concerts with limited support from Opera for All.

- **MAPAS** and Lincs Inspire used schools work as a catalyst to work with community choirs.School leaders reported increased confidence in delivering activities themselves,

12.2.2 Skegness

Work in schools was the major focus here. By year three, Jen Mckie at the Music Hub had transformed the programme, building teaching capacity in new schools including Skegness Academy and bringing in new money to support the work.

12.2.3   Thanet

As the project evolved, Ramsgate Arts took responsibility for designing and leading aspects of the work. In 2017, Ellie Jones from Ramsgate Arts directed part of the schools' residency and a local director from Kent Opera, Tania Hollands Williams took charge of the community pop-up opera.

12.3   Key Lessons

- **CPD** for **artists** and teachers is an effective way of building capacity.
- **Time:** It **takes** time to build capacity, especially in areas where cultural provision is fragmented.
- **Regional Networks** can play a key role in capacity building.

12.4 Building Skills for the Future

Albeit slowly, the programme built regional capacity. In Grimsby and Thanet there is a particularly strong interest in nurturing local skills with modest continuing support from Opera for All. Areas of interest that emerged in discussion with regional partners are summarised below.

12.4.1 Bridgwater

With support from the team at Garsington Opera:

- Develop a strategy for using opera with SEN pupils.
- Offer CPD to develop the talents of local artists.
- Mentor teachers to keen to run their own Opera residencies (William Blake and Danecourt School).
- Programme opera concerts and screenings at Bridgwater Arts Centre.
- Mount opera screenings and workshops as part of the Quayside Festival, for example through a festival of choirs (Fuse Productions and Sedgmoor District Council).
- Run opera sessions as part of initial teacher at Canterbury Christchurch College. (Abigail Cooper, Dane Court Grammar School)

12.4.2 Grimsby

There was a huge appetite for continued partnership working in Grimsby.

- Work with MAPAS offering CPD for teachers on vocal technique and approaches to opera, linking activities to schools' festivals and local music strategy.
- Collaborate with local community choirs on a large-scale community opera.
- Run a second Words and Arts Festival in 2018.
- Train schools with music expertise to like St James's to run smaller opera residencies independently.

12.4.3 Skegness

- **Work with the regional Music Hub** and offer continued workshops for teachers and the development of opera resources based around Sing-Up. (Jen McKie, Lincs Inspire).

12.4.4   Thanet

- Mount a pop-up opera as part of the summer festival in 2018 with support from Kent Community Foundation (£6k), Garsington Opera and a local director Tania Hollands Williams (Suzy Humphries).
- Mentor Kent Opera and Ellie Jones from Ramsgate Arts to run small-scale opera projects.
- Consider further screenings on Ramsgate beach.

13. Establishing a Coastal Cultural Touring Network

13.1 Background

One of the objectives of the programme was to use Opera for All as a vehicle for building local capacity and a strategic touring network to bring the arts to isolated and underserved coastal communities.

As the Arts Council application stated:

"Using the existing network of the Coastal Communities Alliance, this project will be the first to establish a secure group of partners, who will be skilled through the programme to receive, deliver, develop and fund other projects jointly beyond the scope of the three-year project"

"The project will establish the basis of a touring network with the Coastal Communities Alliance, enabling other arts organisations to access these resorts with touring work in future"

13.2 Progress 2015 -17

Those interviewed admitted that plans for the Network had taken a backseat in 2015, owing to budgetary constraints (there was a £250k shortfall) and an understandable focus on getting the schools' programme up and running, which put pressure on delivery.

In 2016, following positive meetings with the Coastal Communities Alliance and the Department of Communities and Local Government, which supports the integration of cultural activities in local economic regeneration plans, Polly Gifford was appointed on a part-time contract to take a strategic lead on the Coastal Cultural Network.

The Network was launched in the House of Commons in February 2017. Since then it has:

- **Defined its mission**, which is broadly to bring partners together to share and generate new work and to advocate for culture in coastal areas.
- **Developed a database** of 350 contacts including Coastal Cultural Teams and other partners keen to address the common challenges of culture in coastal areas.
- **Consulted regional and national partners** about local challenges and build commitment via meetings in each of the participating regions.
- **Launched a new website** to support the network with details of regional programmes and examples of good practice.

There is good evidence that the CCN is connecting cultural leaders in coastal areas and encouraging shared approaches to practice. However, at this early stage it has had neither the time nor the capacity to develop the proposed new touring network, which was originally part of its brief.

Interviews with national and regional partners also reveal different views on how the network should develop. Regional partners were particularly keen to see the CCN playing a role in identifying and sourcing artists and brokering regional collaboration.

National partners from Magna Vitae saw the CCN occupying a potentially more ambitious role covering both the sports and arts, bidding for strategic funds and setting up touring programmes nationally and internationally.

Overall, the CCN has attracted the interest of local authorities and seems to have some traction but its niche in relation to the organisation Coasters is still unclear. Both its remit and its funding base need urgent consideration.

13.3 Strengths

- **The Mission** of the network is clear.
- **Regional Capacity:** 130 Coastal Cultural Teams and councils across the UK are keen to harness the arts, culture and sports to support regeneration and economic prosperity.
- **Recognition:** The network has an online presence and support from the Arts Council, the DCLG.

13.4 Key Lessons

Regional Partners support the case for the CCN and consider that it could offer neutral space for partners to put culture higher on local and national agendas. However, despite recent progress, views on its role and future differ. Respondents highlighted the following issues:

- **Consultation:** Regional partners wanted to be consulted more about the network.
- **Priorities:** Whilst some respondents see the primary role of the CCN as advocacy and information exchange, others are keen for it to take an active role in brokering partnerships, funding and touring programmes. Views also diverged on whether the CCN should have an international, national or regional focus and how far it should be user-led.
- **USP and Niche:** The CCN should clarify how its role complements the work of other agencies, including Coasters, which runs successful touring work in coastal areas.
- **Future Funding:** Prospects of longer term funding from the DCLG and Arts Council have not materialised. Without support, the network will not survive.

Comments on the Coastal Cultural Network

> `There was an anticipated quarter of a million pounds extra funding in the budget, which was critical to delivery but did not materialise This left the project short of funding for commitments including the Coastal Community Network' – Matthew Archer, Magna Vitae.
>
> `Originally, the programme was just going to involve a focus group for participants to share ideas. This then evolved into the concept of creating a national network' – James Brindle, Magna Vitae
>
> `Nationally, plans for the Coastal Cultural Network were neglected'- James Brindle, Magna Vitae
>
> `There should be consultation with local stakeholders about purpose and focus of the network' - Sally Mann, Bridgwater
>
> `There is scope to make links between culture and sports. England and Wales Cricket has joined the network and the English Cricket Board paid for artists and coaches to take part in the 2017 Skegness programme' – James Brindle, Magna Vitae
>
> `There needs to be more clarity about the relative roles and responsibilities of the CCN and Coasters, which runs successful touring work in coastal areas. Coasters could take a lead in running practical aspects of the network' James Brindle, Magna Vitae
>
> The CCN could take a more strategic role acting as a grant giving body on behalf of the Arts Council like Sporta does in the sports arena'- Matthew Archer, Magna Vitae
>
> `Strategic touring in coastal towns and the generation of work that would tour European festivals in post - Brexit Britain. Work might be funded via Grants for the Arts, developing the voices of young people, encouraging aspiration and vision' – James Brindle – Magna Vitae
>
> `There are many occasions where people talk about a theory of change and nothing changes. The network should be needs- driven and responsive' – Dave Power, Lincs Inspire .
>
> `Start with practice, for example, brokering economically favourable rates for bringing in arts professionals. The Grimsby team already has good links with other regions including Lincolnshire, Norfolk York and Sunderland but the CCN could help with to identify artists to meet needs.' – Dave Power, Lincs Inspire
>
> `Supporting links with other areas, for example creating economies of scale that build a legacy for the Garsington programme. This might include working in partnership with Thanet to bring in The 16 or arranging exchanges between schools in Grimsby and Skegness or sharing the costs of screen hire'- Sue Baker, MAPAS.

14. The Future of the Programme

14.1 The Opera for All Programme

As part of broader plans for the Coastal Community Network, many members of the Garsington Opera team are keen to bring high-quality opera to coastal communities beyond 2017 and there is clear demand for further training and resources from regional partners.

Garsington Opera has recently revised its strategic plan and is investing substantial new resources in the development of work in new schools near its home base in Buckinghamshire. In light of this, the team will need to consider whether there is both the case and capacity to develop its national profile. However, some continued modest investment might help to secure the legacy of the programme as well as increasing Garsington Opera's national reputation.

One cost and resource effective way of creating a legacy might be to offer tailored CPD and mentoring for regional arts and education practitioners led by Garsington's freelance team. Any training would need to be co-ordinated and monitored centrally by the Learning and Participation team to assure quality. Regional partners would also need to take some responsibility for project management to reduce any administrative burden on Garsington Opera.

There is also interest in creating a wider digital arts platform offering free access to the arts, regardless of financial or geographic barriers. Garsington Opera is well placed to make a significant contribution to improving digital access to the arts following its recent partnership with the BBC Digital covering the creation the People's Opera Silver Birch. However, it could not achieve this alone and consultation with other arts providers, the Arts Council and BBC are important next steps.

A digital platform could bring the experience of Classical Music/ Opera and other art forms to audiences including schools, community arts organisations and Music Hubs across the country. Apps on the platform could be interactive, focusing for example on composing, singing technique and artistic direction or progression routes for young people keen to engage with local arts activities.

14.1.1 Options to Consider

Opera in Schools Resources: Although the Royal Opera House and Sing-Up produce high quality music teaching resources, there is demand for more opera-specific material. These might form part of a wider digital resource made in collaboration with other arts organisations.

Schools CPD: Teachers have requested further CPD to develop their skills in teaching or leading opera events and activities.

Community Intervention: Regional artists and partners are keen for further CPD so that they can run community or schools programmes themselves.

14.1.2 Recommendations

Consult regional partners about the most effective ways of developing regional capacity, for example:

- **Continuing CPD for teachers:** focusing, for example, on teaching composition, operatic genre, Special Education Needs practice for both primary and secondary school teachers.
- **Develop the skills of regional arts and education practitioners** in running opera events, for example an opera "mash-up" in Grimsby or a schools sharing in Thanet.
- **Create a digital cross-arts hub** with resources and an online forum for teachers, possibly in partnership with the BBC and other arts organisations. This might include:

A primary school package: Opera-based activities for primary schools based on existing or new repertoire, for example, an introduction to operatic stories and arias, backing tracks, games and stimuli for composition.

A secondary school package: A unit on approaches to Opera at Key Stage 3, GCSE, BTEC and A level with some basic approaches, background, clips and exercises.

- **Develop a pool of local artists** who can play an increasing role in programme delivery.
- **Encourage skills and knowledge sharing across the network:** Use the newly established Coastal Cultural Network as a platform to share practice and approaches across the regions.
- **Stage a Community Opera:** Consider supporting regional plans to stage a community or youth opera with local artists taking gradual ownership of the project, supported by Garsington Opera.

Feedback from Area Partners and Artists

Schools

`I would appreciate some training so that I could….. run these workshops myself at local primary schools in preparation for joining our secondary school'- Matthew Hawkins.

`Even having just teachers' workshops would be great and then we could work with our Music Hub to run our own opera workshops and performances.'- Melanie Benzon, St James's School

`I appreciated the teachers pack …….— more of these would be so good as a way to introduce other operas and works to students especially younger children'- Melanie Benzon, St James's School, Grimsby

Community

`We have Increased our confidence in running workshops ourselves on operatic themes We are increasingly confident that we can sustain the impetus…..'- Sue Baker, MAPAS, Grimsby

`The project has built capacity, working up new partnerships, for example between Kent Opera and local Director Ellie' – Suzi Humphries, Ramsgate.

`The experience has given the team confidence and built trust and knowledge in its abilities. Recently Ramsgate Arts has just appointed a new producer' – Suzy Humphries, Ramsgate

`I think PGCE Music students could have CPD and this will help further generations teach it (I am an associate tutor at CCCU)' – Abigail Cooper. Danecourt Grammar School

`Partnering Opera for All artists up with regional artists (such as happened at Ramsgate Festival) is a great way to skill people up and leave a legacy'- Emily Leather, Musical Director .

`Offer high quality focused CPD for teachers… A vocal specialist could would work with teachers. Pupils could then take part in an Opera "mash up" with each school performing a section of an Opera'-Sue Baker, Mapas

`MAPAS has an interest in in running a conference for older pupils doing GCSE or BTEC courses…. focusing on production, composition….progression opportunities – Sue Baker, MAPAS.

`This year, I worked with year 2 pupils using material from Rusalka; I would not have had the confidence to do that last year'- Sue Baker, Grimsby.

`I would like to work with Opera for All to develop a school song-in an opera inspired style. I hope that MAPAS can engage members of Opera for all to lead workshops on teaching creatively – Rifka Burman, William Barcroft School

`Providing a 'BBC Ten Pieces' type DVD of with Operatic performances to share with the children would be useful as a starter activity to introduce children to an opera, teach them a song and investigate the plot and storytelling through their own drama' - (anon)

> *`There is scope to continue the festival format piloted in 2016 next year, bidding to Grants for the Arts to continue the work and create a legacy…..'– Dave Power, Lincs Inspire*
>
> *`There is potential to programme opera screenings…. We could screen repertoire at Parkway; MAPAS and Lincs Inspire could run an outreach programme to accompany it, supported by a couple of professionals from the Garsington team' – Dave Power, Lincs Inspire.*
>
> *`In Ramsgate, a totally unique and quirky company was formed out of a bunch of differently skilled individuals and they are trying to think up ways to continue this in some way' - Emily Leather, Musical Director*
>
> *`Garsington might mount community operas of the regional venues. This would be an amazing step up for young people…. Building skills in the local community exceptionally well '– Freya Wynn Jones, Director*
>
> *`Commission composers to write a new 21st century Opera, something that would be thematically complex, mixing musical genres for example with rock and world music'- Dave Power, Lincs Inspire.*
>
> *`Mount a pop-up Opera as part of the summer festival in 2018 with support from Kent Community Foundation (£6k). This might be directed by Tania Hollands Williams, supported by one of Garsington's Musical Directors, lasting eight weeks culminating in May'- Suzi Humphries, Ramsgate Arts*

14.2 The Future of the Coastal Cultural Network (CCN) 2017

Whilst the regional meetings following the launch of the CCN were highly effective in promoting the network and communicating its mission, there is still some confusion about its function. Interviews with regional partners, Magna Vitae and Garsington suggest divided views on next steps and longer-term success measures.

Some respondents felt that the CCN was just a talking shop, others considered that it could be useful platform for sharing practice and building regional capacity. A few of those interviewed saw the CCN taking a strategic role in funding and brokering touring nationally and internationally. It is clear from interviews that the remit of the CCN needs further clarification.

14.2.1 Strategic Priorities for the Coastal Cultural Network

Recommendation One: Review

The CCN has developed a good profile in the last year and has started to develop some traction with local authorities, the DCLG and the Arts Council but there is still a need to clarify focus and establish the USP of the network.

- **Review the achievements** of the CCN with regional and national stakeholders.
- **Clarify the USP of the CCN in relation to other key partners** for example, Coasters, which has a practical touring remit, the Arts Council, and arts agencies.

Recommendation Two: Confirm strategic priorities

Following an initial review, The Arts Council, Magna Vitae, DCLG and Coastal Communities Alliance should clarify which of the following areas fall within its remit.

- **Promotion and Advocacy:** Sharing examples of good practice and advocating for the arts and culture as part of coastal regeneration.
- **Needs Analysis:** Encouraging coastal areas to integrate cultural activity into economic regeneration plans in partnership with the DCLG and coastal town teams.
- **Capacity Building: D**eveloping regional cultural capacity through training and mentoring.
- **Cultural Brokering:** Identifying appropriate cultural practitioners to run coastal cultural programmes that are responsive to lo al needs including social regeneration or heritage issues.
- **Fostering Regional Partnerships** including small-scale collaborative touring projects with local artists curating programmes and collaborative projects involving towns in close proximity.
- **Strategic Touring:** Working with the Arts Council, arts networks and arts organisations to develop touring models that respond to the economic, skills and cultural barriers in coastal areas.

- **Grant-Giving:** Acting as a grant-giving body on behalf of the Arts Council, developing coastal programmes.
- **Fundraising:** Sourcing funding from the Arts Council, DCLG, coastal towns, local authorities and trusts and foundations to support network running costs (website and Network Co-ordinator) and touring or collaborative programmes.

None of the above of course are mutually exclusive.

Recommendation Three: Longer Term Strategy

- Set out a longer term business plan including i) aims and targets ii) regional needs iii) targets iv) cost assumptions and v) success measures and a fundraising plan for the CCN.

`Coasters could take a lead in running practical aspects of the network, as it is inclusive, democratic and tours cultural product to festivals in coastal area around the country. The CCN could take a more strategic role acting as grant giving body on behalf of the Arts Council like Sporta does in the sports arena'- Matthew Archer, Magna Vitae

`If well supported, the network could bid for strategic funds in its own right i) setting up touring programmes ii) becoming a voice for coastal communities in arts and culture and sport' Matthew Archer- Magna Vitae.

`Strategic touring in coastal towns and the generation of work that would tour European festivals in post - Brexit Britain. Work might be funded via Grants for the Arts and developing the voices of young people, encouraging aspiration and vision' – James Brindle, Magna Vitae.

`The CCN should have a role in advocating for outdoor arts with Government It should market and promote the work that is happening locally highlighting work tht deals with social issues including unemployment, drug-use; issues that are common to coastal areas. It should identify projects that might fill the gaps. Any programmes should put a focus on developing local talent, including Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for local artists. The CCN should support the sharing of work locally and help to strengthen international links' – Area Partners, Bridgwater

`It should be more than talking shop… The network should be needs- driven and responsive….. brokering economically favourable rates for bringing in arts professionals. The Grimsby team already has good links with other regions including Lincolnshire, Norfolk York and Sunderland but the CCN could help with to identify artists to meet needs'- Dave Power- Lincs Inspire

`It should ….Identify cultural leaders who can encourage collaboration, in the absence of any regional strategic lead. In Thanet, council buy-in is crucial to make artistic planning more coherent rather than a loose federation of artists' – Suzy Humphries, Ramsgate

`Ensure that local people are consulted and that there is money to co-ordinate activities locally. Seed funding for organisational development would help'- Suzy Humphries, Ramsgate

`Raise modest funding in order to help set up local infrastructure which would encourage collaboration, for example addressing the need for artists work spaces. There might be scope for the council or the Bridge organisation to act as a conduit for joint bids' – Suzy Humphries, Ramsgate

`Strengthening and broadening local work, helping to broker funding applications'- Sue Baker, Grimsby

`Supporting links with other areas, for example creating economies of scale that build a legacy for the Garsington programme. For example, this might include working in partnership with Thanet to bring in The 16 or arranging exchanges between schools in Grimsby and Skegness or sharing the costs of screen hire' – Sue Baker and Dave Power, Grimsby

15. SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Project Management Communication and scheduling of the schools and community programme was generally effective. **Marketing** Marketing was imaginative and drew in new audiences. **The Artistic Programme** Schools residencies were inspirational, high quality and engaging. The tailored and chaptered screenings in 2016-17 were effective in developing new audiences. Effective us of pop-ups and community events in 2016-17 generated large audiences and built capacity. **Legacy** **Partnerships:** There was increased collaboration between cultural partners as the programme evolved. **Capacity Building:** Local artists and regional partners made a greater artistic contribution in 2016-17 and there is appetite for more training. **Cultural Network:** A dedicated Network Co-coordinator is now in post, the CCN has been launched and established a profile in the four Opera for All regions. meetings. It has strong strategic support and a website.	**Planning, Marketing and Communications** Local partners were not engaged sufficiently early in planning. Schools needed to be recruited early and the cross-curricular benefits of the programme spelled out. **The Artistic Programme** Full screenings were expensive and of limited appeal to family audiences Levels of community engagement were initially low in some areas. **Legacy** **Capacity Building** – plans for developing regional cultural skills are still embryonic and need to be built incrementally. **Cultural Network** Plans for sustaining the network beyond the end of 2017 are not yet in place. The remit of the CCN needs further clarification.
Opportunities **The Artistic Programme** **Schools Residencies:** Embed Opera for All work in schools in the four participating areas through training, CPD and a digital platform **Regional Capacity Building:** Build more opportunities for regional partners to lead on opera programmes in in schools and with community partners **Community** ; Consider low-cost options for regional screenings **Digital arts platform:** Consider working to create a digital arts platform **Legacy Coastal Cultural Network** **Clarify** the practical remit of the CCN and its role in relation to other providers through further consultation with regional partners and potential funders. **Develop** a business plan **Fundraise** for the future.	**Threats** **Opera for All** Lack of capacity at Garsington to deliver a continued legacy programme **The Coastal Cultural Network** Lack of finance and capacity to develop the touring network beyond 2017 Lack of regional engagement Lack of engagement from arts touring organisations and arts agencies

16. Summary of Key Lessons 2015-17

Paragraph 16 collates key lessons thematically under evaluation headings.

16.1 Improving Reach

Marketing

- **Use creative approaches to marketing**, including town-centre canvassing and pop up events to generate local audience interest.
- Continue to use regional agencies to promote the work.
- **Undertake Opera-specific marketing** in all areas where the opera is part of a wider festival.
- **Target marketing to niche groups** e.g. choirs, singers, older people
- **Recruit schools earlier:** Begin school recruitment earlier in the year
- **Recruit hard-to-reach schools** that might benefit from the programme, emphasising the cross-curricular and social benefits
- **Clarify the role of busking by** making it more than a marketing tool by integrating it in the workshops and screening.

16.2 The Artistic Programme

16.2.1 Workshop Planning and Targeting

- **Strategic planning:** Project planning should include early consultation with regional partners to identify local needs and ensure full engagement in project planning and delivery.
- **School recruitment:** More lead-in time and early engagement of schools helps to overcome barriers to engagement.
- **Hard-to-reach schools:** Work with Music Hubs to overcome barriers to participation in new schools.
- **Local technical support** for screenings is crucial.
- **Reinforce Protocols:** Create a light touch contract specifying expectations, including attendance at CPD sessions and workshops.
- **Offer teachers' resources** to familiarise schools with the programme content and potential links to the curriculum.

16.2.3 Schools Workshop Delivery

- **Make CPD an obligatory part of the programme:** The introduction of CPD for teachers in 2016 and a common approach to CPD in 2017 increased levels of teacher investment, preparing schools more **effectively** for residencies and workshops.
- **Offer teachers' resources to support preparatory and follow-up work in schools:** The teachers' pack, introduced in 2017 helped teachers to get to prepare for residencies.
- **Sharing:** There is huge value in sharing outcomes with parents and teachers. This is sometimes their first exposure to the art form.
- **Sustained Engagement:** Work over several years builds capacity and buy-in. The scale of the public events in the final year was substantially larger than in year one.
- **Balancing repertoire with composition:** Giving equal weight to repertoire and composition helps students to value their creativity.
- **Partnerships:** Fostering partnerships between schools builds social understanding and confidence. (
- **The multi-faceted nature of opera** encourages the cross-fertilisation of music, dance, drama, writing; this is especially beneficial for specialist students at GCSE and A level.
- **Showcases:** Film clips work well for family audiences interspersed with live performance.
- **Using standardised translations of opera (2017)** gives artists time to prepare and ensures a consistent approach to workshops.

16.2.4 Community Workshops

- **Maintain flexibility:** Flexible formats for screenings including extracts, live and recorded action and pop-ups help to overcome barriers to Opera.
- **Use chaptered versions of the opera,** interspersed with live narrative, singing and workshops.

- **Use informal settings for screenings** such as the Semele-influenced beach games in Skegness 2017 to make the screening experience more inviting.
- **Schools involvement:** Engage schools in screenings through pre-screening performances to bring in new audiences, including family members.
- **Use pop-up events** to make content relevant to place and communities.
- **Develop partnerships** between community organisations to encourage cross-fertilisation of ideas.
- **Sustain** engagement with communities over time to embed activities, build traction and reach.
- **Maintain flexibility:** Flexible formats for screenings including extracts, live and recorded action and pop-ups help to overcome barriers to Opera.

16.2.5 Legacy

16.2.6 Partnerships

- **Building Regional Partnerships takes time** and long term investment in communities is vital.
- **Exploiting potential links with local cultural tourism** including festivals and local attractions is a **useful** way of building strategic partnerships.
- **Exploiting links with Music Hubs** increases the longer-term impact on teachers' skills.
- **Partnerships between schools** build confidence and social understanding.
- **Outdoor events** are an effective catalyst for partnership.

16.2.7 Building Regional Capacity

Continuing Professional Development for artists and teachers is an effective way of building capacity.

- **Time:** It takes time to build capacity, especially in areas where cultural provision is fragmented.
- **Regional Networks** can play a key role in capacity building.

16.2.8 The Regional Network (CCN)

- **Consultation:** Regional partners need to be engaged in developing the network.
- **Clarify Priorities:** There are divided opinions about network priorities. Whilst some respondents see its role as advocacy and information exchange, others emphasise the need for a more active role, brokering partnerships, funding and touring programmes.
- **USP and Niche:** The CCN is unclear about how its role complements the work of other agencies, including Coasters, which runs successful touring work in coastal areas.
- **Secure Funding:** Without longer term funding the network will not survive. Investment of £40k might bridge the gap.

17. A Summary of Recommendations

17.1 Opera for All

Consult regional partners about the most effective ways of developing regional capacity, for example:

- **Continuing CPD for teachers:** focusing, for example, on teaching composition, operatic genre, Special Education Needs practice for both primary and secondary school teachers.
- **Develop the skills of regional arts and education practitioners** in running opera events, for example an opera "mash-up" in Grimsby or a schools sharing in Thanet.
- **Create a digital cross-arts hub** with resources and an online forum for teachers, possibly in partnership with the BBC and other arts organisations. This might include:

A primary school package: Opera-based activities for primary schools based on existing or new repertoire, for example, an introduction to operatic stories and arias, backing tracks, games and stimuli for composition.

A secondary school package: A unit on approaches to Opera at Key Stage 3, GCSE, BTEC and A level with some basic approaches, background, clips and exercises.

- **Develop a pool of local artists** who can play an increasing role in programme delivery.
- **Encourage skills and knowledge sharing across the network:** Use the newly established Coastal Cultural Network as a platform to share practice and approaches across the regions.
- **Stage a community opera:** Consider supporting regional plans to stage a community or youth opera with local artists taking gradual ownership of the project, supported by Garsington Opera.

17.2 Recommendations for the Coastal Cultural Network

Recommendation One: Review

The CCN has developed a good profile in the last year and has started to develop some traction with local authorities, the DCLG and the Arts Council but there is still a need to clarify focus and establish the USP of the network, especially in relation to Coasters, which has a touring remit.

- **Review the achievements** of the CCN with regional and national stakholders.
- **Clarify the USP of the CCN in relation to other key partners** for example, Coasters, which has a **practical** touring remit, the Arts Council, and arts agencies.

Recommendation Two: Confirm strategic priorities

Following an initial review, The Arts Council, Magna Vitae, DCLG and Coastal Communities Alliance should clarify which of the following areas fall within its remit.

- **Promotion and Advocacy:** Sharing examples of good practice and advocating for the arts and culture as part of coastal regeneration.
- **Needs Analysis:** Encouraging coastal areas to integrate cultural activity into economic **regeneration** plans in partnership with the DCLG and coastal town teams.
- **Capacity Building:** Developing regional cultural capacity through training and mentoring.
- **Cultural Brokering:** Identifying appropriate cultural practitioners to run coastal cultural programmes **that** are responsive to lo al needs including social regeneration or heritage issues.
- **Fostering Regional Partnerships** including small-scale collaborative touring projects with local artists curating programmes and collaborative projects involving towns in close proximity.
- **Strategic Touring:** Working with the Arts Council, arts networks and arts organisations to **develop** touring models that respond to the economic, skills and cultural barriers in coastal areas.
- **Grant-Giving:** Acting as a grant-giving body on behalf of the Arts Council, developing coastal programmes.
- **Fundraising:** Sourcing funding from the Arts Council, DCLG, coastal towns, local authorities and trusts and foundations to support network running costs (website and Network Co-ordinator) and touring or collaborative programmes.

None of the above of course are mutually exclusive.