

Social Media, Marketing, and the Opera Singer

by

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ABSTRACT

This research is focused on technology in the arts, social media, and the opera singer. Topics include recent performance trends, social media, marketing techniques, and creating a successful brand. This paper also focuses on how to leverage social media platforms build a digital persona, and create an engaged audience. The same techniques used by corporations and opera companies for their social media and marketing strategy can be leveraged to increase brand awareness, build a strong network, and may aid in generating new opportunities for the opera singer.

Key Words: Social Media, Opera Singer, Branding, Marketing, Technology

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my professors: Anne, Dale, Robert, Rodney, and William, who have cultivated and supported my growth as an opera singer and scholar throughout my studies at Arizona State University. I would also like to thank my husband David, who inspired me to combine my two loves of music and technology for this dissertation.

Included is a heartfelt thank you to our five cats who each provided moments of stress relief and collaboration in exchange for a scratch behind the ears.

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INTRODUCTION

Research into technology and the arts, current marketing strategies, and social media trends, can assist the opera singer in creating a successful and professional digital persona. Discussion topics in this paper include marketing and branding concepts, creating a brand, and how to present a unified and targeted approach to social media. In the business of classical singing it has become essential to have an engaging digital persona. The goal of this research is to define specific elements that are needed to create a successful brand, and discuss why these tools are an integral part of a successful marketing strategy.

The same techniques used by corporations and opera companies for their social media and marketing strategy can be leveraged to increase brand awareness, build a strong network, and may aid in generating new opportunities for the opera singer. There is an abundance of research regarding social media and marketing for companies; however, currently there are few studies focused on combining these tools to create a unified brand and digital persona, for the singer. It is also important to note how the implementation of technology is effecting opera performance practices before we discuss specific social media techniques, as it also correlates to changes in the use of social media for professional singers.

TECHNOLOGY & THE ARTS

Technology is impacting the arts in much the same way it is impacting our daily lives...fast and furiously. Social media in particular is in a constant state of flux and the adoption of multiple platforms is driving marketing trends and opera performance

practices. Camille Pernelet, prior policy and project manager at the European Network for advocacy of Opera and Dance (ENEO), describes this impact in her paper presented at the European Symposium (of) Culture and Education Conference as follows:

“Digital tools have opened up unique possibilities for communication and participation, with the web becoming a forum where communities are created around interests that go beyond geographical, generational and even cultural barriers. Artistic content and information is accessible from anywhere, at any time and even while on the move. It can be shared, reused, and modified.” (Pernelet 2015, 2)

Opera and other cultural fields that may not have traditionally engaged in the use of technology are now adopting and embracing it to reach, engage, and attract audiences. Changes in performance practices also present unique complexities in the goal of honoring the original work of art. A wide variety of digital tools are also inspiring and influencing methods used to portray and present traditional art forms. Julian Johnson, Regius Professor at Royal Holloway, University of London, highlights the challenge of how to create an experience that is true to the composer’s vision and also relevant to a present day audience.

“Artworks are most certainly of their time: everything from their physical materials to their ideas and constitutive formal tensions speak of the world in which they were made. But they also project a content that self-evidently slices through time, transcends its power over the material, and strikes us with a force that vivifies our present experience with a unique intensity. In doing so, art exerts a powerful symbolic force: it redeems what is past by bringing it into a living relationship with the present.” (Johnson 2002, 95)

Opera is an art form that addresses and explores the fallible qualities of the human condition. There is an emphasis in operatic music on the complexities of love, betrayal, and death. Enduring questions on what it means to be “human” remain constant throughout our history as a species and continue to impact audiences today. These

questions are one of the reasons it is possible to have an opera that is hundreds of years old and yet contain subject matter that is relevant today. Opera companies are caught between these two worlds; however, advances in technology are providing new platforms for sharing the beauty of music and the arts with a wider audience. One example of how companies are addressing this dichotomy is through the creation of Live Streaming broadcasts.

Live Streaming

On Demand and live streaming technologies have made it possible to immediately engage audience members in the action of a performance. This technology also grants opera companies access to audiences in other countries and cities outside of the original market region. High Definition (HD) broadcasts have been embraced by the Metropolitan Opera (MET) in New York and the Royal Opera House (ROH) in the United Kingdom. The MET and the ROH offer live streaming events of operatic performances in movie theaters. These programs also offer subscribers or ticket holders the opportunity to watch rehearsals and performances in real time. The features available after subscribing to this service are discussed on the MET website.

Subscribers to (MET) Opera on Demand enjoy unlimited access, anywhere in the world, to everything available through the service. Met Opera on Demand is now available and accessible on many of the most popular device and platforms, including: computers (desktop or laptop, directly through the Met website), tablets (iPad and Android), mobile phones (iPhone and Android), and Apple TV (using AirPlay in the free Met Opera on Demand iPad app.) (The Metropolitan Opera HD Live 2016)

In addition to the two opera companies mentioned above, the Wiener Staatsoper in Austria, offers subscribers access to performances in a pay-per-view format. (Wiener

Staatsoper LiveStreaming c. 2016) Multiple subscription options give the audience the ability to view an opera performance live and in the comfort of their own home. Similar to the Amazon Prime service for movies and music, opera companies are marketing a specific commodity to an audience that is virtual. Live streaming content has the potential to create audience participation in markets that are outside the companies geographic foot print. (Amazon Prime c. 2016) The number of opera companies and online providers that offer subscription options to similar content is steadily increasing. A few examples of current companies include: Sonostream T.V., Staatsoper T.V, Medici T.V, and Emergingpictures.com/opera.

Yu-Wei Lin from The School of Film and Media, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK, and Alan E. Williams from The School of Arts and Media, University of Salford, Salford, UK, describe the changing performance environment for opera companies and the impact on locations chosen for performances. “Increasingly we see opera and digital theatre being staged in mixed reality or virtual reality environments, or distributed outside single-site venues.” Opera companies are under immense pressure to create new productions and offer more choices without alienating their core audience. Lin and Williams also highlight how these technologies are impacting the way companies interact with audience members and are driving innovation in performance style. “Immersive theatres and creative use of digital technologies for performance are gaining momentum, partly because of the industry’s aspirations to develop innovative ways of interacting with audiences, and to both increase and diversify those audiences.” (Lin and Williams 2014, 2)

Live streaming content can also be used to supplement arts education for schools and organizations. One example is the MET Live in HD program. “In partnership with the New York City Department of Education and with support from Bank of America, the program brought free high-definition transmissions to New York City public schools and 33 school districts in states across the country.” (The Metropolitan Opera 2015)

Another example is the live streaming program for classrooms titled, “What is Digital Creative Learning?” offered by The Sydney Opera House. The website describes this program as follows: “Video conferencing is a fantastic way to connect your students to professional artists and educators at Sydney Opera House. Participate in free live, interactive, curriculum-driven workshops and tours without leaving your classroom!”

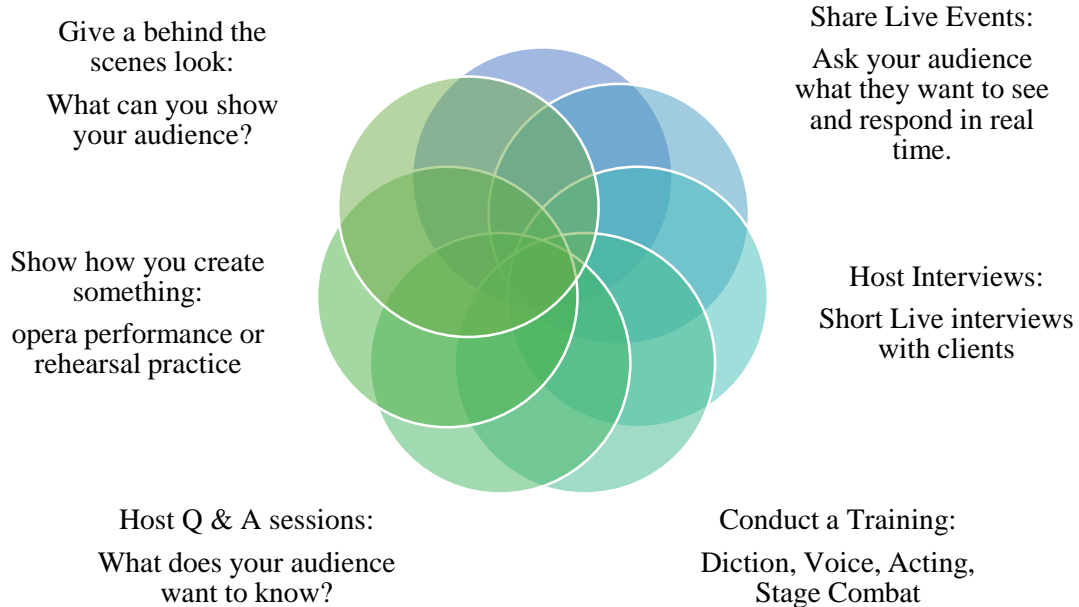
This program includes free streaming for schools in Australia and is also available to schools outside the country for a fee. (Sydney Opera House 2016) In addition to the video conference live stream programs, the Opera House has also partnered with Samsung to offer an interactive journey for students who are touring the Opera House in person. The program is described as follows:

Quest to Stop the Mischief-Making Opera Ghost is presented on Samsung Galaxy Tab S tablets and uses beacon technology to customize educational content as children explore the Opera House with their guide. Their mission is to help the performers of the Sydney Opera House get ready for their evening performance. This is not as easy as it seems as Marco the Mischievous, the Sydney Opera house ghost, has been getting up to mayhem and silliness and moving props and changing signs. With the Tour Guides' help, the children will be able to find the performers and by answering questions correctly, the performers will once again be ready to perform on the stage. All questions are tailored to the curriculum and have been written in collaboration with teachers to provide a fun, yet educational experience of the Sydney Opera House. (Sydney Opera House 2016)

The goal of these varied educational offerings is to provide multiple ways to access, engage, and support the performance of opera. Combining technology and the arts allows opera companies to reach students and classrooms all over the world.

Live streaming technology can be utilized by the opera singer to present performances in real time. This option enables the performer to present recitals and other performances to family, fans, and friends who may not be able to attend in person. There are multiple companies online that offer live streaming services. Using real time technology connects the opera singer to their audience in a more visceral way than a standard video recording. A live performance carries with it a certain amount of risk and unexpected outcomes. This energy is transferred into the performance and also impacts the audience's experience in connection with the music. In addition to hosting a performance, it is possible to use Live Streaming technology to engage with your audience in a more direct format. Antonio Calero, author of the social media examiner website, discusses six ways you can use Live Streaming Video to interact with your audience. He breaks down the different uses into several sub categories. The categories listed in Image: 1, can be integrated into the opera singer's marketing strategy. Sharing live events and interacting with your audience in real time may consist of discussing a performance during breaks, highlighting the meaning of the text, a brief overview of the composer, or a glimpse into the thought process before a piece is performed. The key to utilizing this category is engaging the audience in an interactive dialogue. This connection provides a dynamic way to engage and cultivate relationships with audience members.

Image 1: Live Streaming



(Calero 2015)

Live streaming content can create a mutual exchange of information while fostering brand recognition and building audience loyalty. Behind the scenes access to performances or events can provide a window into the expertise and equipment needed to create an opera. This could include interactions between performers, stage management, or members of the orchestra and the conductor. The audience becomes an active part of the production and is able to provide real time feedback. This interaction may in turn generate additional content and also encourage potential audience members to attend a production.

By showing your audience the process of creating a production or performance, the singer connects to audience members in a more dynamic and interactive way than by

simply presenting the finished product. Several examples of content that can be highlighted include, how to create a corset, prop construction and design, or the type of paint and techniques used to create a landscape panel for a set. This type of content encourages interaction and provides subject matter for additional discussion and engagement. The process of creating a prop for example, may require historical research of period practices and types of food available during that time. Food, in particular, is often created for the stage and in order to look realistic requires creative license and ingenuity. Audience members may find it interesting to see the process used to create a loaf of French bread, for example.

By hosting interviews with specific people who are involved in the industry the performer gives the audience access to one-on-one conversations with people they may never have had the chance to speak with in a standard setting. An example could include a discussion regarding the type of content selected for a new opera, an interview with the composer regarding his or her inspiration for a specific work, discussions about the meaning and translation of the opera, or perhaps a discussion of form and tempo with the conductor. Topics could also include the performance process, set design, costume design, wigs & makeup, or set creation and lighting.

Conducting a training or specialty class opens up new and inventive ways to discuss the process of creating a full staged performance. Training or specialty classes could include basic dance styles of the period, stage combat safety, or period movement and etiquette. Suggestions for future presentations from audience members may also generate new interest in live stream programs presented by the singer or opera company.

Hosting a question and answer session encourages interaction and content generation from the audience. This category may provide the most relaxed and informal format of the six categories listed by Calero. The audience has a more engaged role in this type of live stream event. Question and Answer sessions also warrant an experienced moderator to keep the discussion focused and lively. The concept of critical mass is discussed at a later point in this paper and ties well into the categories defined above. Critical mass is the goal of any online content. Engaging content can create dynamic interaction between audience members and may assist in developing connections with new networks.

Projecting a New World

Digital Projections are taking center stage and have become a popular addition to current opera productions. Projections are often used to provide the buildings or landscape traditionally created by set pieces, props, or structures. This technology has created a way for opera companies to develop and use engaging content including a wide variety of images and animations, without detracting from the art on stage. Pernelet describes the influence of these changes in addition to the available uses of digital technology.

It is indeed impossible to deny the omnipresence of digital technologies within cultural institutions, influencing not only internal communication but also that with audiences, integrating works not only as an accessory or theme, but also as an artistic tool, used in sound, lighting, sets and, with holograms, even characters. (Pernelet 2015, 2)

Digital projections have assisted smaller companies and universities in presenting operas that could be cost prohibitive if the budget required an expensive set rental or build. In 2016, Arizona Opera used digital projections in a production of Bizet's opera *Carmen*. Projected images were shown above the stationary raked set, to create different scenes in a cigarette factory, a gypsy tavern, mountain camp, a rising moon, and the final scene at the bull fight. (Carmen 2016)

The University of Central Florida, in 2016, integrated digital projections into their performances. Dr. Stella Sung, a composer and professor at the UCF School of Visual Arts and Design describes the adoption of digital projections in performance on the UCF website. "More opera and theater companies are using technology and virtual effects. The sets are active, not static, and with the animation you can build in movements and scene changes — things that you cannot do with regular sets." (University of Central Florida)

During the 2015 season, the Lyric Opera Theatre at Arizona State University also used digital projections in the opera *Guadalupe*. The projections created the walls of an Aztec temple. As the story progressed, the Aztec hieroglyphs were transformed from the temple walls into blooming red roses. The effect was instantaneous, beautiful, and provided a seamless transition into the next scene. (Guadalupe 2015)

Digital projections also give the creative team the opportunity to use symbolic representations of events, locations, and characters to evoke a specific emotional response. A few examples of material that could be used in this fashion include, religious symbols, flags and other forms of nationalism, and iconic images. Digital projections provide a way to change an entire set to a different location, room, or scene without the additional crew or set pieces.

The Minnesota Opera production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in 2014, included the use of hand drawn animations, digital projections, and cinematic references from the 1920s. Instead of using the technology as an accessory to the action, it played an integral role in the style and design of the opera performance. Michael Anthony, an author and content editor with the Twin Cities Pioneer Press, described the performance characteristics in his review. "The production blends live performance and hand-drawn animation and visually references silent films of the 1920s, notably Keaton, Chaplin and Louise Brooks, as well as German Expressionist cinema such as "Nosferatu." (Anthony 2015) The environment and changes in the set were created specifically for the characters and action of the opera.

"The production of Mozart's "The Magic Flute" created by the English theater company 1927 and the Komische Opera Berlin does not include scenery or props, merely a white wall dotted with revolving trap doors. When they spin, characters emerge to sing the story along, but the set changes all come courtesy of animated projections." (Twin Cities Pioneer Press 2014)

Los Angeles Opera also mounted this production in 2013-2014 and have revived it for their 2016 season. This production is a prime example of technology influencing opera performance techniques while also capturing the interest of a contemporary audience. New capabilities in digital projections and animation technology have generated inventive ways for set designers to incorporate these features in their own creations. Special effects possible when using digital projections offer new and inventive ways to present ideas and concepts needed to create other worlds. The designer can create animations, entire sets, and engaging content using digital projections. Digital projections also work well for Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, as the story contains, a

dragon, Queen of the Night, Temple of the Sun, and trials of fire and water that the principle characters must overcome.

Mobile Opera & Google Glass

Mobile technology and global positioning system (GPS) tracking are also influencing the arts. Hopscotch is a mobile opera company that was created in Los Angeles, California by Yuval Sharon. Performances include music composed by Veronika Krausas, Marc Lowenstein, Andrew McIntosh, Andrew Norman, Ellen Reid, and David Rosenboom. Hopscotch brings the audience into the action of the story physically and includes riding in multiple vehicles with performers to different locations around the city. “Hopscotch is The Industry’s most ambitious project to date, brought to life by more than 150 artists—singers, instrumentalists, dancers, actors, animation artists, architects, and designers. (Not to mention 24 drivers!)” (Hopscotch Opera 2015)

Driving your audience and performers to different locations, as well as tracking where they are in the story line, involves the use of mobile technology and effective synchronization of multiple teams. The Hopscotch website describes the experience for audience members as follows:

Imagine getting in a car without knowing the destination. Sharing the car are singers, actors, and instrumentalists who draw you into a story. The car stops at an incredible site, where another chapter of the story commences – until another car pulls up, with different artists, depicting another chapter of the story. (Hopscotch Opera 2015)

Managing an opera production that is performed in multiple vehicles across multiple locations successfully would not have been possible without recent advances in social media and cellular technology. The success of a performance of this nature also relies

heavily on customer generated content, proliferation of posts that share information about performances, and audience generated content to encourage attendance of future performances - word of mouth, digitally.

Arts organizations are bringing performances directly to the audience instead of waiting for them to arrive at the opera house. New opera productions are breaking the glass ceiling and creating discussion on what art is and how to present it to an audience. Using technological innovations and social media to reach a wider range of audience members can attract a more diverse audience, as well as encourage audience participation. Experimental venue choices may never fully replace the traditional concert hall, but these ideas are worth noting for reasons that include the amount of publicity and market reach. These performances also encourage content generation by audience members on social media to increase online traffic for the company, performance, venue, and website. Once the audience is engaged and posting content regarding performances or future offerings, it is possible to utilize this connection through re-posts, to engage and connect with other audience networks.

The goal of any successful digital marketing or social media engagement practice includes a desire to reach critical mass. Critical mass is reached when content is self-propagating through networks and connections on social media, without input from the original author or site. Andrew Moravick, Senior Research Associate for Aberdeen's Marketing Effectiveness & Strategy practice, defines the idea of critical mass with an emphasis on content strategy.

“...content marketing critical mass entails – enjoying a (nearly) self-sustaining environment where content can fuel its own intended objectives. Content created internally to drive traffic, for example, would get picked up by, or covered in

additional content assets from external sources, which, in turn, would experience their own pickup by others, and so on, while all still building potential and actual traffic to the original source.” (CMO Essentials 2015)

Critical mass in social media marketing increases audience participation, potential to expand the audience engaged, and propagation of this information to other networks outside the original post’s reach. The largest benefit is seen when the content has reached a vast audience and is in turn re-shared or re-posted in perpetuity. Image: 2, shows the characteristics of critical mass.

Another description of critical mass is the phrase “viral content.” Jane Williams, author at the Houston Chronicle, describes the characteristics of a viral post. “A **viral post** is something that has been shared, copied and spread across all social platforms.” (Houston Chronicle 2016) What characteristics enable content to “go viral” cannot be quantified. This result depends on the content and the response it receives via shares, likes, or comments. Marketing and social media professionals desire this reaction, but results depend on the audience reach and level of engagement. The end goal is to create content that an audience responds to and shares with other people on social media.

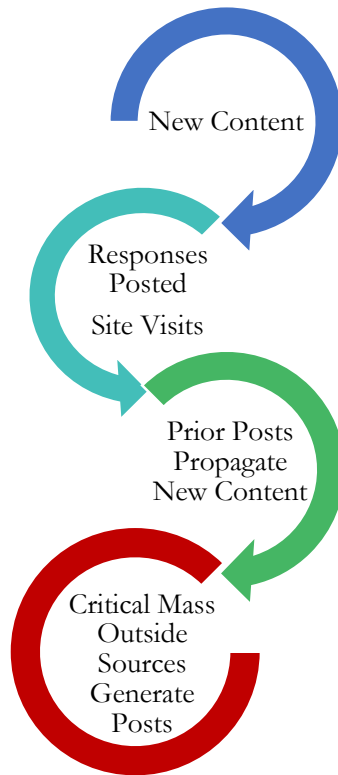


Image 2: Critical Mass

Another example of how opera is being influenced by advances in technology is the use of Google Glass. This device is worn on the face similar to a pair of glasses. Features of Google Glass include accessing the internet with voice commands, using hands free access to smart phone functions, taking pictures or video, receiving text messages, and using the GPS navigation options in Google Maps. (Google Glass 2012) Teatro Lirico di Cagliari used this technology during their production of *Tosca* in Sardinia. Sean Michaels, author at The Guardian, describes the performance as follows:

Singers, orchestral musicians and stagehands ... will wear the futuristic headsets at shows...allowing internet users to watch the opera from each unique point of view. As Google Glass records the performance from the perspective of different participants, these views will be streamed online and through the opera company's social networking sites. The project is a branch of the opera's own Centre for

Research and Technological Development, which explores different ways of bringing together technology and traditional opera. (The Guardian 2014)

Google Glass demonstrates a revolutionary way to interact with a performance by presenting a real time perspective of the action from multiple points of view simultaneously. Diverse perspectives present vastly different experiences of the action taking place during the performance. Embracing new technology also provides opera companies with innovative and exciting ways to engage their audiences. In addition, Google Glass technology may also encourage audiences to experience opera who have not attended a production in the traditional format, yet are intrigued by the combination of art and technology.

As technology and its uses become more robust, the opera singer must also adapt quickly to remain connected to audiences and knowledgeable of current opera performance practices and techniques. It is also essential to become proficient in new technologies in order to leverage them in creating brand recognition, generating connections with other performers, and researching new operas. Social media contains many platforms that can assist the opera singer in creating a successful marketing strategy. The singer should research and explore multiple options before deciding which platforms to use. The changing nature of social media and advances in technology add to the complexity and number of options available to the singer. By investigating available options, the singer can choose the format that works the best for their own brand and sustains the desired level of engagement with social media needed to create a digital persona.

QUICK GUIDE: CREATING A DIGITAL PERSONA

Step One: Develop and solidify your Brand

1. Who are you? What makes you unique?
2. What do you want to highlight?
3. Create a digital portfolio of your work. (Start with what you have and build on it.)
 - a. A professional headshot
 - b. Video of a performance
 - c. Audio recording of a performance/audition repertoire
 - d. Backstage photos or photos in costume
4. Keep track of performances & develop a professional resume.
 - a. List performances by role, show, company, and date
 - b. Clear and concise format for Resume

Step Two: Research

1. What are other performers using for Social Media?
2. Whose profile is interesting and why? Analyze their techniques.
3. What can you safely borrow from them without becoming an exact copy?
4. What new ideas do you have? What interests you? What do you want to share?
5. Which technology platform(s) will give you access to the audience you want to engage?
6. Watch tutorials on how to use the different platforms. Choose platforms that are interesting to you.
7. Start with one platform and build your brand.

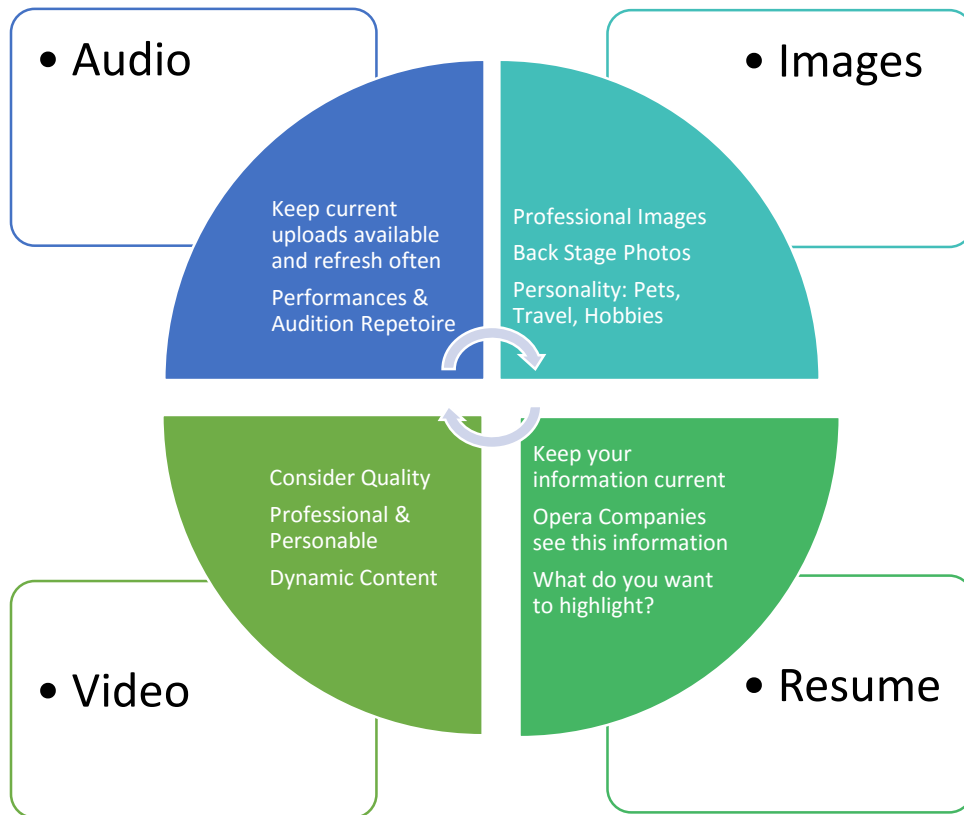


Image 3: Quick Guide: Your Digital Persona

Step Three: Start Using Social Media

1. Start small – Choose one platform and create your account.
 - a. Include interesting posts and information
 - b. Keep your message/content focused on a clear subject.
 - c. Numbers will increase in time – Feel free to invite friends
 - d. Don't invite friends too often. (Numbers will gradually increase as you post and your audience grows)
2. Keep in mind your naming convention (Brand)
 - a. Have a clearly identifiable name. Choose a name that is clearly related to your field. (Many singers use their full name and voice type.)
 - b. Each account you use should clearly represent your Brand and follow your naming convention.
3. Tips for Accounts - Feel & Look (Images, Colors, Name)

- a. Use the same banner or profile images (make it easy to tell which performer is attached to your account.)
- b. Use a similar account name. This also builds brand recognition.
- c. As your account becomes more advanced you may wish to create an email address for professional correspondence. This is a good idea at the beginning, even if you will not be using it right away, and enables you to create an account that matches your brand name.
- d. Link Accounts
 - i. (include information on one platform with account names on other platforms)
 - ii. This way your audience can find you on multiple platforms.
 - iii. You can also encourage responses on multiple platforms and engage with multiple audience groups.
 - iv. Keep information up to date on all accounts you are using.

Step Four: Keep Track of New Trends

1. Don't get complacent! Review your metrics and decide on which numbers or responses matter to your overall strategy.
2. Keep track of new technology and explore new Social Media trends and concepts.
3. Use these concepts to build your brand integrity and audience loyalty.
4. Be yourself. The things that make you unique are the things that make you stand out from the rest of the noise online.

SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING

Social media is defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary as follows: “Forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking or microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos).” Social Media also encompasses many different software platforms and forms of communication.

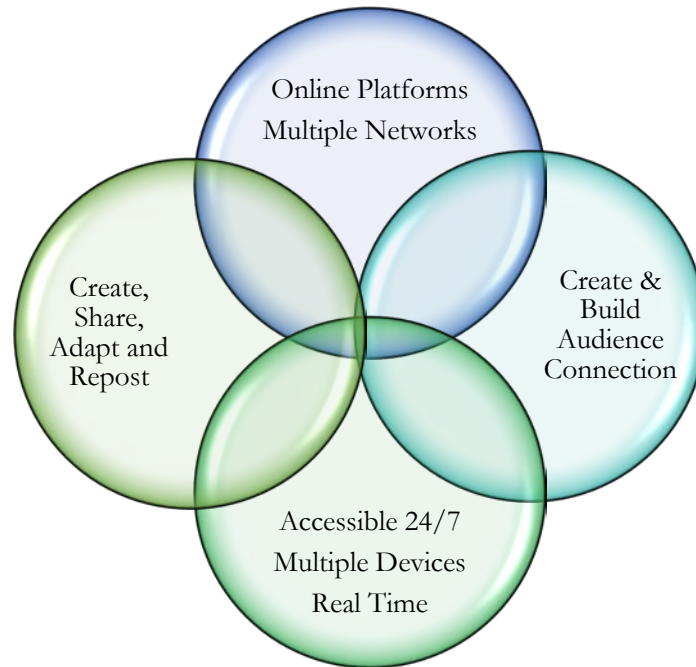


Image 4: Social Media Platform Characteristics

(Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand 2016)

Image 3, distills the characteristics and uses of online platforms with inspiration taken from a table discussing these differences on The Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand’s website. Strategic usage of this technology can be attained by understanding the sub categories and how to use them to the singer’s benefit. Camille Pernelet describes the importance of training and understanding social media and marketing tools as follows:

“These new tools require technical knowledge as well as staff training that institutions are sometimes reluctant to undertake. Thus, professionals who are obliged to adapt and offer digital content and activities are often tempted to reuse traditional education methods and content by transposing them into a digital format, with the content itself remaining the same. However, these methods appear inefficient when faced with the depth of the changes in consumer practices of cultural and artistic goods brought about by digital media and new technologies.” (Pernelet 2015, 4)

There is a gap between the level of technical knowledge of professionals using social media and the platforms that are available to them. The plethora of tools may seem overwhelming at first, but they are able to be broken down into sub-categories that highlight their uses. Categories can make it easier to decide which tools can accomplish the desired goal. A sample set of available platforms by category can be found in Image: 5.



Image 5: Social Media Examples

(Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand 2016)

Collaboration involves content that is created from more than one source of information and contributed to by more than one author. There are several platforms that

can be used to collaborate on projects or share documents across departments inside or outside of your organization. These platforms can be useful to work with multiple teams on a project, develop documentation on a procedure, or create new content. A few examples for the opera singer are creating a program for an upcoming recital, sharing program notes, or drafting a biography page with multiple performers. Having a way to share this document virtually eliminates the need to meet in person, but still allows the team to accomplish their goal. One tool under this category that is easily accessible and available for free is Google Docs. Google Docs allows multiple people to access the same document and make edits online in real time. Team member can see changes to document and if a member of the team is currently editing the document these changes are visible while they are in progress. Team members can observe changes as they are created and contribute to them in real time. This tool is beneficial if there is a strict deadline or limited time to meet in person. Collaboration also ties into networking platforms. A project may include team members from a common network or colleagues that are not in the same geographic location. Collaboration is an excellent way to build your brand, foster loyalty within your network, and discover new contacts. After successfully completing of the project, these colleagues may become a part of your professional network.

Networking includes using multiple platforms, connecting with other professionals, and building an engaged audience for future content. A few ways an opera singer can leverage these platforms include connecting with other performers, researching opera companies, and creating a rapport with audience members. Every connection solidifies the singer's personal brand and professional network. Connecting

with other singers can also provide a resource for solving routine issues including finding accommodations for an audition, connecting with a voice teacher in a new city, or perhaps information regarding travel advice. These same connections may also potentially provide information regarding current or future auditions or employment. A successful network requires time and effort to cultivate strong connections. The emphasis should be on reciprocity as opposed to “What can this connection offer to further my career?”

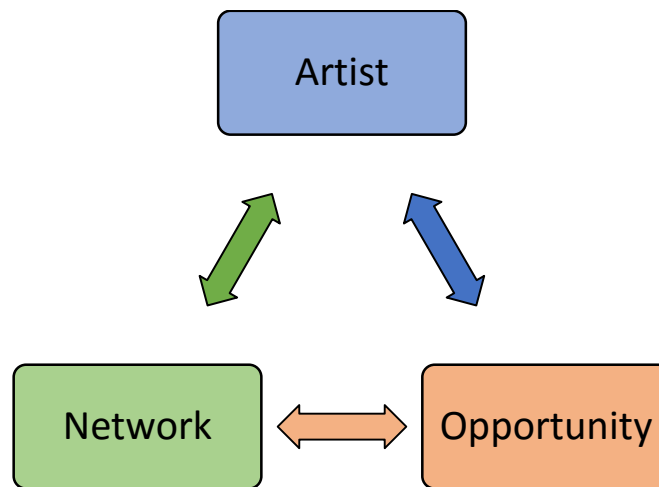


Image 6: Networking Diagram

Success in networking and social media can also be measured by the level of participation and engagement from audience members. Dave Evans, author of *Social Media Marketing: The Next Generation of Business Engagement*, describes the importance of connecting and engaging these resources.

“Engagement takes on a new meaning on the Social Web— or at least one that is different from what is typically implied in a marketing context. This is because “engagement” on the Social Web— like all other aspects of “social anything”— is

defined by participants rather than the creators of a marketing message or software application.” (Evans 2010, 203)

The opera singer should focus on audience participation as it generates interest in the art form, develops connections with other professionals, and also builds a solid network. Talent, poise, and technological acumen will assist in creating a space for the singer’s brand and may lead to new opportunities. Creating a strong and supportive network may also provide the singer access to new opportunities.

Branding

Branding describes the process of creating a recognizable name or image and includes a clear description of the service or content being provided by a company, product, or person. Karen Post, author of *Brain Tattoos: Creating Unique Brands That Stick in Your Customers' Minds*, describes the types of conditions that surround the creation of a healthy brand including multiple categories and generated responses. Post references tangible and intangible characteristics of the entity (brand).

The word brand has many definitions from a variety of respected resources. I believe the brand is a mental imprint that is earned and belongs to a product, service, organization, individual, and/or event. It’s a story embedded in the mind of the market. It’s the sum of all tangible and intangible characteristics of that entity. A brand is what an audience thinks and feels when it hears a name or sees a sign, a product, and/or a place of activity. (Post 2004, XV)

She points out a very important element of the branding process, a brand also contains characteristics that are not defined. The defined and undefined characteristics combine to give a brand a personality.

The observations of Daniel Rowles’, author of *Digital Branding: A Complete Step-by-Step Guide to Strategy, Tactics and Measurement*, are in line with Post. Rowles

specifies the intangible qualities that are part of a brand including emotion, thought, belief, and visual identity. The uniqueness of a brand must be multifaceted for it to resonate with an audience and promote an emotional connection that generates customer loyalty.

...branding has been developed over the years to factor in a far more extensive set of considerations. As well as this idea of visual identity we may also consider the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs, attitudes and so on that are associated with a brand. This set of considerations builds up our brand image, and we may also talk about our experience of a brand as our brand experience. The best way of thinking about it, in my opinion, is that brand is the personality of something. (Rowles 2014, 7)

Genuine and dynamic content is an important focus; however, as Rowles emphasizes, the perception of posted content will also impact a brand's reputation and should be analyzed to create new strategies and ideas for improving brand awareness. The categories listed in Image: 7, show a summarization of the type of content that should be considered when creating a brand. A brand that is clear and precise will attract an engaged audience.

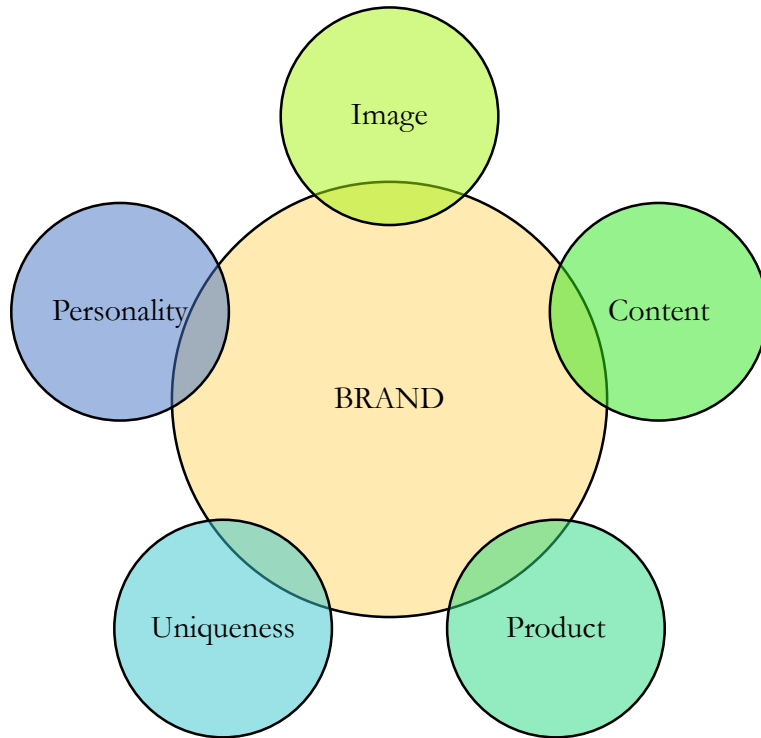


Image 7: What makes up a Brand?

(Rowles 2014)

An effective marketing strategy considers audience opinion and perspective when creating content. Geico Insurance ads, for example, include cute little dogs and a gecko with an English accent. (Geico Insurance 1996-2016) The marketing team uses animals to give their brand personality and engender compassion from the viewer. Audiences relate to ideas/marketing concepts presented as a personality, and form opinions about them. This is one of the reasons large companies use personality specific content in their advertising. By using animals, Geico is creating an emotional connection to their audience. Corporations have a larger leeway when it comes to marketing for marketing's sake. The same type of marketing strategy can be employed by the singer, but it is also important to keep in mind an audience can tell if you are being genuine and will react

negatively to forced or fake posts. Genuine content should emphasize the individuality of the singer, highlight the beauty of opera, and connect then to a specific digital persona. When brand strategy and social media work together, it is possible to engage audience members and simultaneously create a catalyst for additional posts and shares of content, thereby reaching a wider demographic.

It is the singer's responsibility to create a dynamic online presence, effectively market themselves, and network. Rowles discusses the impact of branding and the various sub categories with an emphasis on personality.

“Essentially, digital branding is the personality of our organization, service or product created by the sum of all experiences that an individual has with that brand. This still includes things such as visual identity, but now also includes much more important and influential touchpoints such as social media interactions and online reviews. Your logo may make you recognizable, but it is your overall brand that decides what I remember you for.” (Rowles 2014, 11)

Much like branding a corporation, your personal brand needs to have a clear focus that is easily shared across multiple platforms while also maintaining a unified look and feel. The reputation of a brand holds weight and influences audience perception of the brand. A vibrant brand can display an opera singer's body of work, provide quick access to reviews from prior performances, and highlight upcoming performances. A healthy brand also demonstrates the singer's level of connection with current social media networks and audiences. With an established brand the singer can connect with audience members and may also create additional publicity for upcoming productions.

Branding is a marketing tool that is well suited to the opera singer. Content posted on the opera singer's profile can be used by an audience to determine the identity of the singer and develop loyalty for the performer. All content created and posted online

should reflect the precise brand the opera singer wishes to emphasize. A few ideas include, discussions about costume design, history of the composition being performed, works that preceded or inspired the opera, and the process of creating characters or personalities for the stage. An engaged audience expects to connect to the artist directly through posts and open discussion. The performer can provide opportunities for an audience to become part of the journey and develop dynamic content that discusses the process of creation, from notes on the page of a score to a stage ready opera production.

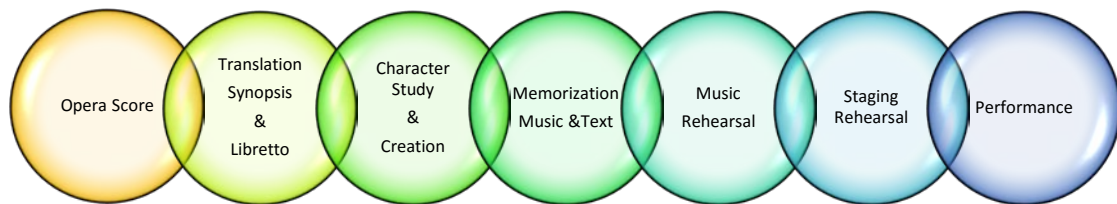


Image 8: The Operatic Journey – Score to Stage

Innovation in platform styles and marketing strategies has created a catalyst for arts organizations to implement these concepts into marketing strategies for their own brands. Social media platforms make it possible to connect with people all over the world. Jennifer Rivera, author with The Huffington Post, describes the ways opera companies are embracing these changes and offering new digital content.

One of opera's greatest obstacles can often be that people stay away, believing the stigma that opera is boring, old, and stuffy. New and exciting marketing strategies have the ability to bust these stereotypes wide open while possibly entertaining and informing customers about what opera really is. (Huffington post: Are We Entering the Golden Age of Opera Marketing? 2015)

An innovative marketing strategy at Arizona Opera offers two complimentary tickets to a dress rehearsal of an upcoming opera in return for volunteering to attend a

social media preview night. This marketing strategy is designed to help create comments about current productions before opening night, generate additional social media posts, and encourage participants to share stories about the opera. “You’ll receive two tickets to a dress rehearsal for one of our operas so you can post and share your thoughts on the performance with your social network during the show.” (Arizona Opera) Additional traffic created by these posts can assist the company in generating a greater number of ticket sales, and potentially increase the geographic reach of this content.

The opera singer can also use branding to connect with audiences, create a network of other singers, and discuss current and future operas. Post clearly describes the robust strategy that is needed create a vibrant brand. “Branding today needs to get down to business. Go beyond marketing, touch every point of the market, enlist all warriors, and embrace a “whatever it takes” attitude.” (Post 2004, xvii)

There are groups and forums specializing in a variety of subjects and connecting with these groups can generate traffic to the singer’s social media presence. In a business environment employees are encouraged to network with coworkers in multiple disciplines. This is the same premise used in a social media campaign. The opera singer should focus on creating new connections, sharing content about activities that follow a specific brand message, and connecting to the performing arts community as a whole. By sharing information for an opera company on social media for example, the opera singer is sharing content for the company, connecting with local audiences, and also potentially creating contacts with other opera companies. The singer must verify that the message presented is tailored to highlight and promote a specific brand strategy. Branding

connects a product with a target audience. The goal is to create content that invites discussion and encourages audiences to share this content with other networks.

Images

Images are a vital component in marketing and social media strategies. They provide the visual representation and drive perception of the brand. In an opera, costumes, set pieces, and props, are all designed to further the story. Images in marketing are used in a similar way. Rowles highlights the interdependence of brand value and image creation.

“The traditional idea of brand recognition is still essential. You need to be able to recognize my brand easily, so that the efforts I have made via my digital branding to make you understand my value proposition are remembered easily. Without that clear understanding of what the brand represents, the brand recognition is fairly pointless. Consistency in visual identity and tone only serves a purpose if the value you provide is clear.” (Rowles 2014, 165)

His statement also sums up the importance of creating a unified digital persona, effective branding, and leveraging content on multiple platforms. He also discusses the need to provide a view of the brand from multiple perspectives. “The key to delivering great digital branding is to see how all of the different experiences that we are delivering fit together, whether that is via search, social media, mobile or any other digital channel.” (Rowles 2014, 167)

The strategic use of images should be an important part of the opera singer’s digital persona. The opera singer should create three categories for images, professional (headshots) and publicity photos (on stage), behind the scenes or back stage photos (usually taken by the singer or other performers), and personality photos (pets, food, travel). Professional images are usually taken by a photographer. Personality photos

share something about the performer most people do not know or highlight a special event. Uses of images are also discussed in the Quick Guide: Creating a Digital Persona section of this research.

Video

There has been a sharp increase in the amount of video content available online due to technological advances in portable video recording devices. Diane Primo, founder and CEO of IntraLink Global, highlights the impact of technology and the subsequent proliferation of video content.

“Massive technology changes have been the foundation for this growth. Over the last 20 years, the best minds have engineered the right devices--as well as the networks, platforms and applications necessary to run video. And these technology advancements have enabled our brains to receive information in ways they naturally desire.” (Primo 2015)

A sharp increase in users engaged in this content as audience member and/or creator, is also prevalent in Image: 9.

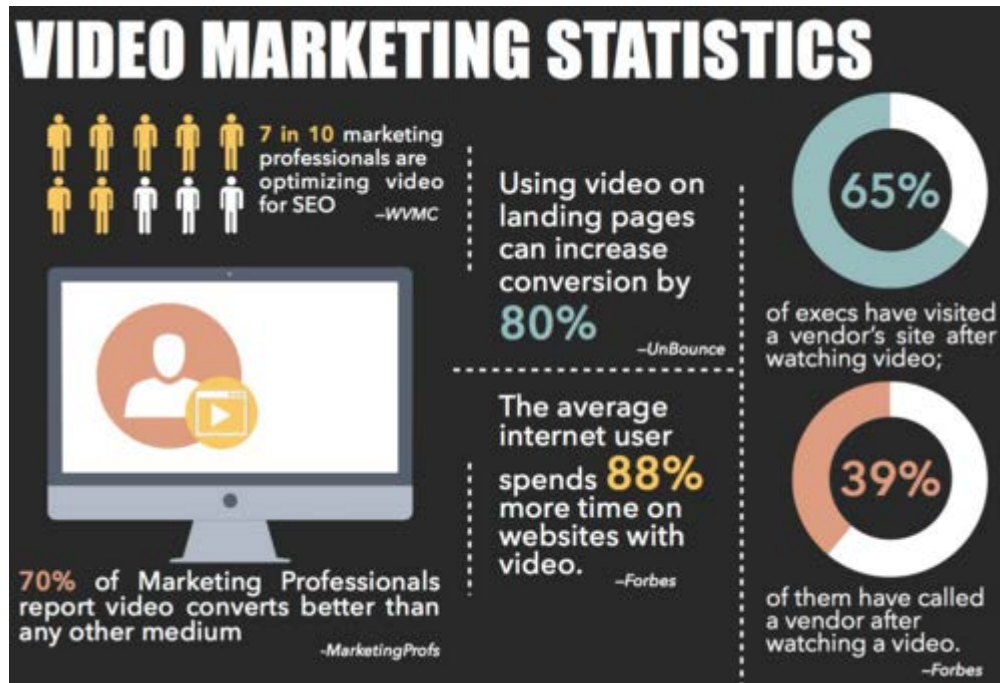


Image 9: Video Marketing Statistics

Image: 9 shows a sample of statistics and trends in video marketing and how video content is driving market strategy for companies including search engine optimization (SEO). (Primo 2015) Search engine optimization is a tool that is used to promote content and drive traffic to a website or online platform. Red Evolution, a web development and inbound marketing strategy firm defines the process of SEO as follows: “Search Engine Optimization or SEO is the simple activity of ensuring a website can be found in search engines for words and phrases relevant to what the site is offering.” (Red Evolution 2015) SEO is something the opera singer may consider in combination with a more advanced social media marketing strategy. It is predominantly used by corporations and marketing firms to assist in bringing a brand’s name higher on the list of search results. A sites ranking is also related to organic results. On the support site for SEO, Google states the following, “...Google search results page includes organic search results and often paid

advertisement (denoted as "Ads" or "Sponsored") as well. Advertising with Google won't have any effect on your site's presence in our search results." SEO is designed to add key phrases or words to a website or online content that in turn are picked up by search engines. This practice moves the website higher on the list of search results.

Sharing video online has become easier and more economical. The vast choices available in video editing software come at little to no cost to the user and provide a way to present content quickly and easily. Authors Darren Barefoot and Julie Szabo discuss the prevalence of video content and its cost effective qualities in their book, *Friends with Benefits: A Social Media Marketing Handbook*.

"Video sharing's emergence coincided with the evolution in hardware that allowed the average media consumer to film her own homemade movies. The price of webcam-enabled laptops declined (and continues to), and cell phones and digital cameras began to capture video as well as still images." (Barefoot and Szabo 2009, 196)

Image 10, shows a breakdown of users who access video on their mobile devices and the percentage of mobile data usage when accessing video content, in 2014. (Primo 2015) This image emphasizes that mobile devices have become a primary tool for accessing video content by the consumer. Video should be scalable and present the highest quality setting option for multiple platforms. This should be considered when creating content for the singer's brand as it will also affect the audience's experience when accessing this content.

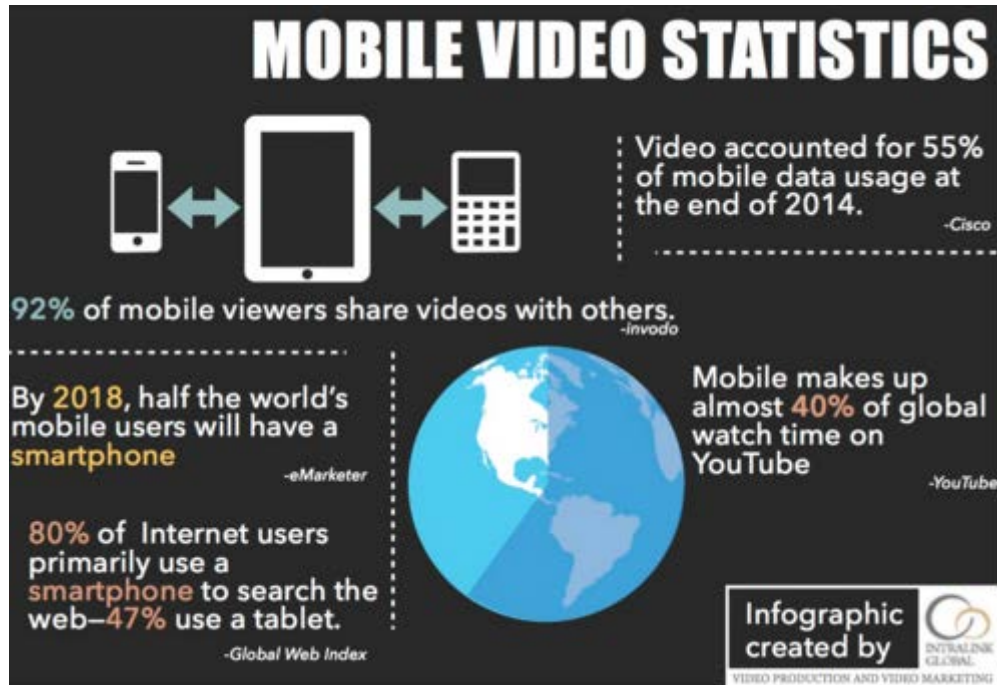
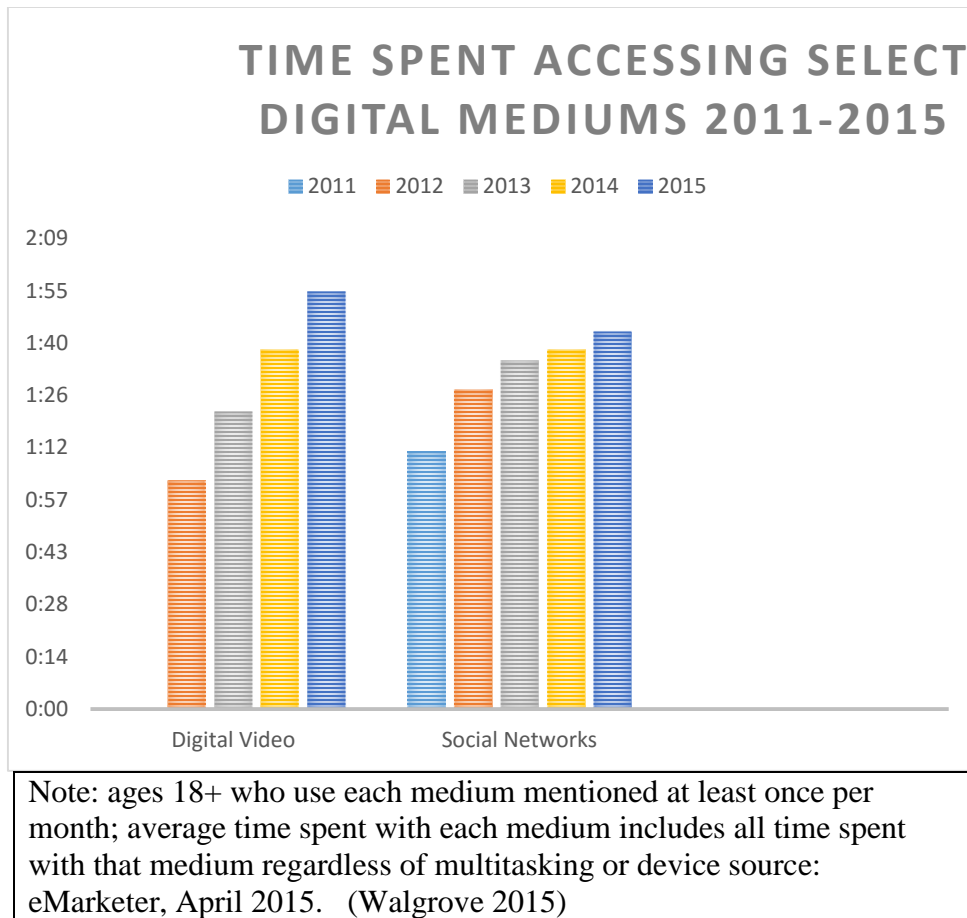


Image 10: Mobile Video Statistics

The plethora of digital video content has impacted the amount of time spent accessing and viewing this content. Amanda Walgrove author of the website The Content Strategist describes the average length of time spent accessing this content. “In 2015, digital video finally pulled ahead (of social media). Users are spending an average of 1:55 with digital video each day.” (Walgrove 2015) Graph: 1, shows the measurable increase in the amount of time spent accessing video by an average adult age 18+. This graph also demonstrates the steady increase in time spent accessing video and social networks, per viewing session, from 2011-2015.



Graph 1: Average Time Spent Digital Activity 2011-2015

Video content should be used to create a component of the professional brand for the opera singer. Quality and variety of content is important and should follow a defined strategy. This content creates a portfolio which becomes the singer’s body of work. All videos should be created with the highest quality possible. It is also important to note that audio quality should also be considered when creating video content performances or audition repertoire. A singer’s portfolio is not static and needs to be updated and edited for content on a regular basis. Vibrant and engaging videos promote and encourage proliferation of content to a wider audience. The singer should review multiple video platforms to find the best fit for their brand and marketing strategy. Before posting any

content, security settings and copyright should be considered. It is the singer's responsibility to make sure all posted content is in compliance. Many platforms offer the ability to set a password to limit access to this content. A password setting also provides the singer with an opportunity to share video content with a specific group of individuals versus making this content available to the general public.

Current job postings demonstrate a new trend of employers requesting supplemental materials from applicants in a digital format. (HigherEd Jobs 2016) Employment opportunities for faculty positions in Higher Education institutions are requesting video of performances, mini-lessons taught by the candidate, and examples of lectures or presentations. In addition to the above, it has become common place for employers to search for a candidate's digital presence during the screening process. It is in the best interest of the candidate to present a clear and precise digital persona.

Universities are beginning to offer video recording services for students. The School of Music at Arizona State University has implemented new technology that offers video recordings of performances in the Katzin Concert Hall. Recordings of performances are uploaded to YouTube and are available to the public. (ASU Katzin Concert Hall, YouTube Channel). Access to these performances enables performers to reach a wider audience with no additional equipment or service provider needed to create the recordings or host the content. The singer also has the right to review and approve videos or request to have content removed.

At the beginning of their studies, most young singers are not financially able to pay for high-quality video or audio recordings of performances. The additional services provided by universities can assist in building a strong portfolio of work that can also be

connected to the artist's social media profile. It is also possible to use free software to edit, copy, and create videos from this content. The singer may wish to investigate several options for video editing. These tools can be used by the singer to create branded content and upload it to their own video channel. Creating video content also assists in building brand recognition and forms a precise digital persona, for the singer.

Blogs

Blogs are another way to reach and engage with a target audience. David Meerman Scott, author of *The New Rules of Marketing & PR: How to use social media, online video, mobile applications, blogs, news releases & viral marketing to reach buyers directly*, discusses the impact blogs have had on marketing and social media engagement. "A blog is just a website written by someone who is passionate about a subject and wants to share that passion with the world...it is also a terrific marketing tool." (D. M. Scott 2011, 60) This platform is used to discuss a process, project, or simply to highlight something the author finds intriguing. The volume and amount of content needed for a blog can be time consuming and may require frequent editing and updates. Though dynamic content requires a larger time commitment, it may also yield a more informed and intimate relationship with your fans.

Blogs have the added bonus of being as formal or informal as the author desires. They provide a sounding board for a larger piece of content in one setting. A blog post provides more room to discuss specifics regarding a given topic in a blog that may not be present in the same depth on other platforms. Scott highlights four reasons to use blogs for marketing and public relations and how to use them in a marketing strategy below:



Image 11: Four Reasons to Use Blogs

(D. M. Scott 2011, 64)

Engagement between social media, customers, and businesses has also grown in complexity, fueled in part by the robust changes in software and pervasiveness of social media in our daily lives. Social media has also drastically changed the way businesses relate to their customer base. Daniel Rowles describes this change in Business to Customer (B2C) and Business to Business (B2B) communication, “The fundamental shift is to that of two-way communications and empowerment of the consumer (in both B2C and B2B contexts). All of the topics we have discussed up until now, including the need for authenticity, clear value proposition and the increased complexity of the user journey, are all because of social media.” (Rowles 2014, 45)

Each of the platforms we have discussed are tied to one another in content, delivery method, or audience reach. The large scale adoption of multiple platforms is driving marketing trends and performance practices. Camille Pernelet describes the impact of digital tools on communication trends.

Digital tools have opened up unique possibilities for communication and participation, with the web becoming a forum where communities are created around interests that go beyond geographical, generational and even cultural barriers. Artistic content and information is accessible from anywhere, at any time and even while on the move. It can be shared, reused, and modified. (Pernelet 2015, 2)

It is the individual's responsibility to decide which platform fit their message, style of communication, and will also reach the audience they are trying to engage. As the options available to the customer increase the complexity of managing a focused social media strategy also increases. Varying platforms and styles of communication factor into a marketing strategy and should follow the opera singer's personal style of communication. Daniel Rowles discusses how customers interact with brands on multiple platforms. "The number of different online touchpoints (points at which we are interacting with a topic, product or organization either directly via something such as a website or app, or indirectly via a search engine results page or a social media discussion) we make before making a purchase are increasing." (Rowles 2014, 4)

There are multiple ways for opera companies and audience members to interact with a performer's digital persona. The singer should focus on a platform or platforms that can easily be managed and updated regularly. Outdated content can reflect negatively on the singer's brand. For example, an outdated list of upcoming performances on a singer's resume may lead the audience to infer the singer is not currently employed. Dynamic content creates brand recognition and fosters audience loyalty. Missing or outdated content reflects negatively on a singer's digital persona.

Engagement

One of the primary goals in addressing social media and marketing techniques is to create an active and involved audience. In his book, *Social Media Marketing: The Next Generation of Business Engagement*, Dave Evan's discusses how social media has changed the nature of dialogue between businesses and customers. "At the heart of engagement is a fundamental connection between the business and the customer, a connection where the customer is not a "target" but is rather an equal partner." Current marketing strategies no longer consist of a one way stream of information directly from the company to consumer. Customers have an active voice online and can shape the dialogue around a company's brand, product, or service. Anna Turri and Karen Smith, in the Department of Marketing & Logistics, College of Business Administration at Texas State University in collaboration with Elyria Kemp from the University of New Orleans, highlight the impact comments and customer interaction have on brand loyalty.

"individuals that were actively involved in creating and sharing social content, or content creators, possessed greater intentions toward loyalty (whether it be purchase-related, opposing digital piracy, or supportive of artistic expression) as well as advocacy for an artist" (Turri, Smith and Kemp 2013, 209) Turri, Smith, and Kemp, highlight the emotional connection between a brand and brand loyalty that is created from content audience generated content. An audience that takes a vested interest in the performer's brand is more likely to develop an attachment to the performer.

Dave Evan's also points out one motivation of businesses, when engaging with customers online, is to develop a stronger connection between content they generate and the brand they are discussing. "Customers want to feel empowered and accomplished:

Creating a space where customers share experiences and learn from each other is a powerful way to connect your business or organization to them.” Another example of this process is found in online help documentation provided by various companies that has been populated with information generated by customers, as opposed to “how to” instructions created by the company. In this instance, the consumer is driving the content and engaging with other consumers while simultaneously providing content generation for the company. (Evans 2010, 206) Monitoring this content is also important as the items generated are not always positive in nature. An example is a negative review posted online about a hotel. A smart social media team from the hotel responds to this comment and assists the customer in resolving the problem they encountered. Potential customers who see this comment will ascertain that customer service is a priority and the hotel is responsive to its guest’s needs. Customers do not expect a company to only have positive reviews, but they will also read negative reviews to research a company’s reputation.

As new technology is created, additional platforms and ways of reaching people will also be available to the singer. New trends in social media and marketing should be investigated, embraced, and implemented to generate a dynamic way to reach audiences in multiple regions. The opera singer should revitalize and diagnose their brand periodically to ascertain which strategies are providing the desired results and which strategies need to be reimagined. Post describes the volatile nature of social media and its effects on brands as follows:

The strength and potency of a brand can be affected by so many uncontrollable factors: the environment, the economy, and social influences, in addition to the controllable decisions made by management and marketing teams. Market

conditions change, new media are introduced, stuff happens, and aggressive competition is always out there. (Post 2004, 20)

It is important for the opera singer to recognize current trends and use them manage and track brand awareness. Analytics can provide metrics and insight into which platforms are creating and supporting content proliferation.

Analytics

Many social media platforms include built in analytics and tracking tools.

Analytics create a statistical view of marketing and social media campaigns and can also provide a snapshot of the traffic a website, profile, or post is generating. Peter R. Scott and J. Mike Jacka authors of, *Auditing Social Media: A Governance and Risk Guide*, emphasize the importance of metrics in relation to social media strategies. “Just like any other project, process, or initiative, appropriate metrics must be established to ensure the organization’s social media initiatives are achieving what the organization hopes to accomplish.” (Scott and Jacka 2011, 116) For corporations, this grants valuable insight into the type of content that is resonating with an audience, what type of content has the most appeal, and which content is being shared.

Analytics data needs to be interpreted and clarified, if it is to provide value. John Lovett, author of *Social Media Metrics Secrets* describes some of the challenges involved in monitoring metrics.

Metrics can help you to present the facts and communicate them in a way that transforms data from numbers on a page to meaningful recommendations for operating a successful business, yet metrics are not the endgame. The endgame is communicating across your organization about the successes (and failures) that you experience by participating in social media. The reality is that you will have

failures, and the metrics you instill will help you to learn from them and to avoid them in future endeavors. (Lovett 2011, 7)

When developing a successful social media and marketing strategy, the opera singer also needs to consider the type of metrics used and how these metrics are measured. Questions that warrant consideration and planning to provide an overall view of the success of social media content include: How much influence should be placed on metrics? Which numbers should be tracked? How should they be tracked?

Lovett describes one scenario which provides valuable insight into the complexity of tracking metrics effectively across multiple platforms.

...so much of what we do in social media is stretched across platforms and channels. For example, you may initiate a social media campaign with a video, where data about the number of views and embeds may come from your video player of choice. From there, if the video is embedded within your Facebook page, you may use Facebook Insights to garner information about the demographics of your viewers— how many “liked” or commented on the video and who they interact with inside the Facebook platform. , but let’s assume that you have a call to action within the video that leads viewers back to your primary web site. Here you may require Web Analytics tools to understand referral source, content viewed, and conversion events. Each of these steps in this hypothetical example requires you to measure your initiative with a different tool. (Lovett 2011, 9)

Lovett defines a breakdown of the list of metrics corporations are utilizing including: foundational measures, business value metrics, outcome metrics – key performance indicators (KPIs), and counting metrics. These categories can assist in developing a marketing strategy to address key metrics by category, combine categories, or focus on a specific category. Foundational measures are concepts in a larger scope and include: “interaction, engagement, influence, advocates, and impact.” Business value metrics include “...revenue, market share, and customer satisfaction.” KPIs are “... (an) objective that you are working toward such as generating awareness, creating a dialogue,

encouraging interaction, facilitating support, promoting advocacy, or spurring innovation.” Counting metrics include numbers of “fans and followers, visits and views, and clicks and clickthroughs.” (Lovett 2011, 10)

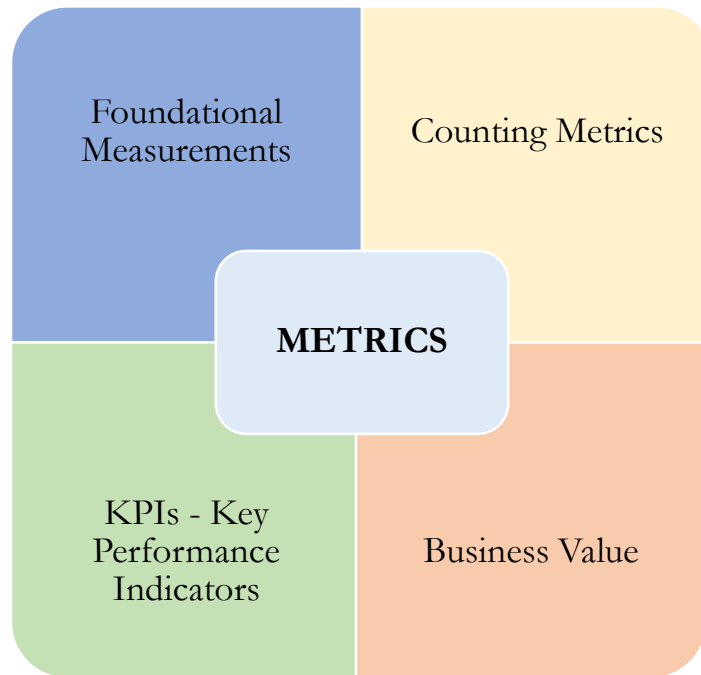


Image 12: Four Categories of Metrics

(Lovett 2011, 10-12)

The four categories of metrics described by Lovett can be utilized by the opera singer with varying degrees of integration and adoption. Counting metrics may provide insight into the number of site visits; however, KPIs can provide insight into arts awareness and advocacy or dialogues with organizations that generate additional traffic and discussion. Business value may be more of a challenge to measure for the opera singer, especially at the rudimentary stages of brand creation. Foundational measures are

tied into KPIs and combined can add to available opportunities for business value and progress.

“The important thing to know about counting metrics is that they reveal the tactical details of your social media campaigns. But they must be trended over time and presented in context. Simply knowing how many is irrelevant if you don’t have a basis for comparison, such as percent change or competitive share. This is why placing metrics in the context of your business is paramount for any organization.” (Lovett 2011, 12)

The singer should investigate multiple options to determine which metrics will provide the most benefit when tracked and analyzed. Many performers pay attention to counting metrics when starting out as they are easily digestible and tracking them is integrated into multiple platforms. There is a danger of becoming too focused on the number of likes or visits a page receives. The singer should give their brand time to grow and attract an engaged and loyal audience. A site can have over 1,000 likes; however, the level of audience engagement should also be evaluated, as well as if the audience is sharing content and engaging with the singer. Numbers can be inflated, but engagement level makes a difference in the integrity of the brand’s reputation and audience loyalty. Engagement is visible in interactions between the singer and their audience via comments or proliferation of posts. This also demonstrates the brand’s potential to reach and cultivate new connections.

Another tool that is helpful with researching social media trends and tracking the number of general searches available by a specific topic or brand name is Google Trends. (Google) “Google Trends is a fantastic free tool that allows us to see how users search in Google – and the trends that show over time. The great thing about this tool is that not only can we understand search trends but we can use this to inform our social content.”

(Rowles 2014, 49-50) Google Trends can also be used for a larger world view of the arts and online engagement in general. Searching for an opera title or a specific composer for example can lend insight into which locations in individual countries have searched on this top recently. This analytic tool also includes statistics regarding the amount of searches by country and the change in search frequency in time over several years categorized by region. Google Trends also includes related searches and frequencies of each subject.

The opera singer can utilize this tool to research current trends and investigate which subjects are trending by geographic location. The subject matter may not be directly related to opera or opera performance, but the singer can see which regions have the greatest interest in a specific subject. Each piece of information gathered by the opera singer regarding style of delivery and content will assist in the creation of a successful digital persona.

THE ARTIST: DIGITAL PERSONA

One of the appeals of social media is that the information posted is available in real time. For the opera singer, this could include sharing your thoughts on a specific opera, a quick picture in costume before opening night, or a small video about the rehearsal process. Content that is personalized and genuine stands out from the online noise being generated by millions of users.

Rowles discusses the importance of authenticity in a company's marketing strategy and which content is shared on social media. "Our ability to utilize social media

effectively will come down to having interesting and useful content to share, and being willing and able to engage in an open and authentic way.” He also discusses the importance of strategic research with a focus on the interest and responses of the target audience. “Before we start any social media activity we need to start by listening. We need to understand what our audience is interested in and passionate about in order to inform our approach in providing value.” (Rowles 2014, 47)

An example of what a digital persona may look like for the opera singer using these principles, is mapped out in Image: 13.

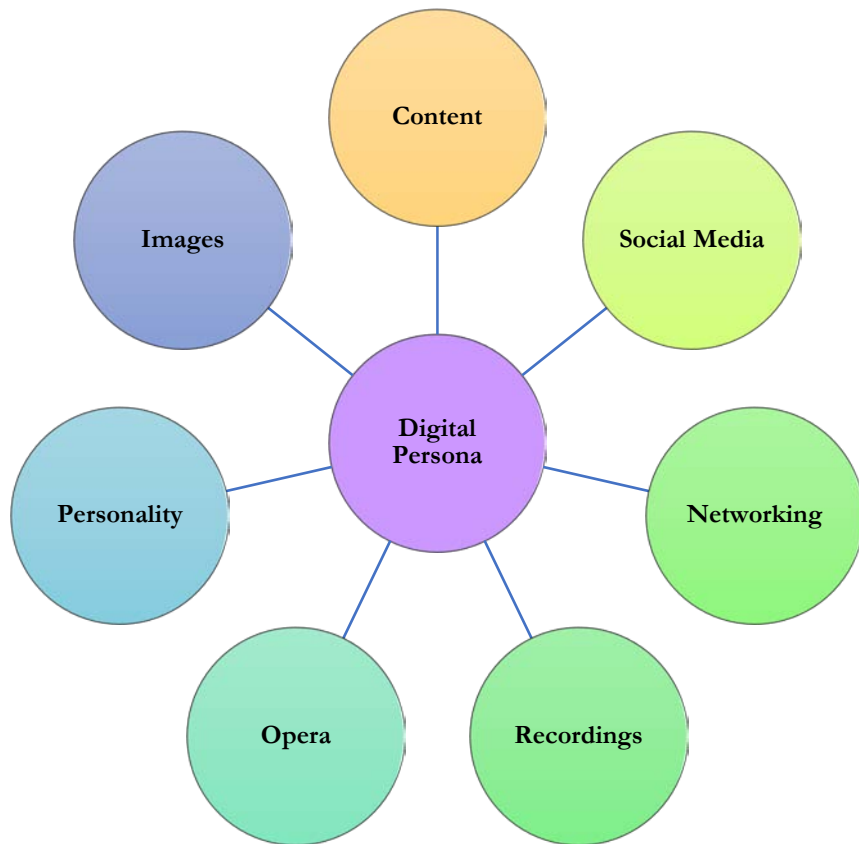


Image 13: Digital Persona

In her book, *Marketing in the Participation Age: A Guide to Motivating People to Join, Share, Take Part, Connect, and Engage*, Daina Middleton discusses the subconscious drive to connect with other people. “The emphasis to connect comes from the relatedness attribute of the self-determination theory and refers to the need to feel connected to others. ... Humans are social creatures with an intrinsic need to be a part of something bigger, and this includes relationships. Recent technology obviously helps facilitate this by allowing individuals with like minds and similar interests to connect anytime, anywhere, virtually or in person.” (Middleton 2012, 121)

Barefoot and Szabo also discuss the importance of focusing the type of content presented. “Think critically, and focus on a specific feature that will capture the recipient’s attention. Ideally, that feature should be unique.” Brand creation is not a process that can be completed once and ignored, it must be cultivated and refreshed. To achieve success, this strategy must also be fluid and adaptable. “You must first post valuable information and then seek out interested parties to invite into the conversation. This all takes time. As with any relationship, patience is key... Keep building those relationships and prove that you’re a reliable source of valuable information.” (Barefoot and Szabo 2009, 80-117)

Keeping a narrow and focused message format is vital to attracting an interested and engaged audience. It is important to pair messages and content with the singer’s marketing strategy. There is a fine line between engaging content and content for content’s sake. Over sharing is defined as the act of giving away too many details online. An example is taking a picture of every meal and posting about it. The type of content posted is more important than the volume. It is a balancing act, limiting the amount of the

information presented while also including something personable and focusing on engaging content. “Social media, at its very basic, is a communication tool. As such, it should be addressed as would be any other communication channel. The organization must develop strategies around how social media will (or will not) be used.” (Scott and Jacka 2011, 106-107) The singer should research other opera singer profiles and borrow ideas to integrate into their own digital persona.

Rowles discusses “Transmedia Storytelling” as a strategy of tying the message posted on each platform into an overall storyline. This concept highlights the interconnected nature of creating and maintaining a digital persona across multiple platforms. The audience may search for a singer on Google and find multiple platforms and touch points that can be used to discover more about the singer. “Transmedia storytelling aims to tie together each of the channels and platforms we use – using narrative. This can lead to extremely memorable and engaging experiences. It also relies on great creative concepts and absolute attention to detail when exploring how the user journey can be understood and managed.” (Rowles 2014, 166-167) Every opera contains a different set of circumstances for the performer, characters, and company, each story presented by the singer can contain the same qualities.

Mitigating Your Risk

Large amounts of data in an easily accessible format regarding a performer or opera company make it possible to develop a perception about a brand that is based solely on digital content. The opera singer must decide which aspects of their life they would like to share on social media and which aspects to keep private. It is also worth

mentioning the importance of filtering your message before you post it. Social media can influence your standing with an employer and potentially affect employment status.

Barefoot and Szabo discuss crisis management as one way to mitigate risk.

“News travels fast, especially bad news and especially online. That means when you’re managing a crisis, you’ve got less time to react than ever before. Today, with so many communications tools like email, YouTube, and social news sites—where a misstep can attract thousands of eyeballs in minutes— the chance that a gaffe will go viral and amass a huge audience is greater than ever.” (Barefoot and Szabo 2009, 133-134)

Professionalism in posted content and online interaction is essential and assists the singer retaining and building a positive reputation. A simple rule to follow, is never post anything online that is damaging or negative regarding a performance, director, conductor, fellow singer, or costume worn in a performance. An opera company may not discuss the ramifications of a negative post with you, but posts of this nature may impact employment opportunities for future seasons. The arts community is a very close knit community. Do not make the mistake of posting something unprofessional.

One example of the damage that can occur by commenting in a public space, without considering the content posted, is discussed in an article by Mike Simpson from the National Education Association (NEA). The website also lists several examples of teachers who faced disciplinary action including losing their employment, due in part to social media posts. Simpson discusses the effects of ill-advised posts on a teacher’s career. “What used to be private is now very public. And that’s the problem, particularly for young teachers: Some seem oblivious to the devastating consequences of posting really stupid things in cyberspace.” (Social Networking Nightmares: Cyberspeak No Evil 2009) Personal sites are not exempt and can impact your public brand. Be mindful of the

content you are sharing. When in doubt, get a good amount of sleep before posting anything online. Controlling the content posted under your account is the responsibility of the performer and should be taken seriously.

Most young singers are not financially able to hire a team to manage public relations. Singers must educate themselves about available technology and investigate current marketing trends. Carol Kirkpatrick, Dramatic Soprano and Voice Teacher, describes the responsibility of the individual artist.

“You are the product, the company, and the person who manages your business, so it is your responsibility to learn how to weave these parts together into a successful venture, learning how best to utilize your time, energy, and money in building your career. Developing a solid foundation, beginning with the product—you, the performer—is the first and most important part of the process.” (Aria Ready 2016)

CONCLUSION

Advances in technology are encouraging companies to present performances in unexpected locations, explore the use of digital projections, and create new performance styles. It will be interesting to see the new ideas that emerge to combine the two fields of technology and opera in the years to come. The amount of information presented in this format will continue to grow and may play a more important role in future marketing practices. As the number of participants in social media increases, the complexity of marketing tools needed to access and leverage these platforms also expands.

There is a marked increase in time spent accessing video content from web platforms or mobile devices. Opera companies should embrace this platform with expediency. Video can highlight the complexity, beauty, and visual elements that are common in this art form. Companies are making progress by adopting new technology;

however, there is room for improvement in utilizing these platforms with a clear, consistent, and dynamic strategy. If opera companies are serious about creating and engaging new audiences, they will need to improve their marketing strategies on multiple fronts as well as invest in training and support for these platforms. Social media can be used to emphasize how, where, and why, opera is a vibrant part of community engagement. Content on these platforms also has the power to impact community engagement in the arts and reach audiences across multiple market regions instantaneously.

The opera singer can implement the same technology, social media strategy, and branding concepts utilized by corporations, to build a successful digital persona. It is in the best interest of the singer to embrace the changes technology is generating in opera performances and develop an understanding of current marketing and social media trends. Deciding on a marketing plan may seem overwhelming, but with a clear strategy the singer can make the most of technological advances and build a strong network. Several benefits of using social media include the opportunity to develop a connection to the community, network with other singers, and support the field of opera performance.

The amount of time and effort devoted to creating a well-executed digital persona also impacts its level of success. The most engaging online content consists of genuine observations, photographs of performances, and experiences that provide a real connection to the artist. An excellent example of using social media to create a strong brand, while also supporting the arts community, is Joyce Didonato. Her marketing strategy consists of several themes including promotion of performances, personal videos

answering questions from other singers, and content that advances the arts. She is very adept at creating a brand that is personable and approachable.

The singer should note that followers or friends from one platform may not directly translate to another. For example @jennjonesopera currently has 993 followers on Twitter. Similar content shared on www.facebook.com/jennjonesopera has 430 friends/followers. While a third option, plus.google.com/+JenniferJonesOpera has 468 followers. There are many strategies for translating or transferring followers between platforms, but the audience will most often respond to content they find engaging, on the platform they found the content on.

Posts to social media platforms can include information regarding new opera, technology and the arts, and performance updates. All content should follow a brand strategy and present a clear and concise message. Avoid material that could be controversial or political in nature. This content may be shared, at your own risk, on a personal page. When posting content, ask the following questions: Does it fit my brand? Is it relevant to my target audience? Does it promote the arts? What information am I sharing?

The field of social media and marketing contains a wealth of sub-topics and categories that are not easily defined, implemented, and researched. Additional research opportunities include creating a profile in a specific platform, a survey of other singers and which platforms they avidly participate in, and researching audio recording software. Another topic that would be very useful to the singer is how to use video recording and editing software to create a unified brand for all video content.

Audiences of the future will expect a robust, dynamic, and unified online presence. As Kirkpatrick stated “You, are the product!” It is the singer’s responsibility to present a polished and engaging brand. Using transmedia storytelling the singer can create a window into the opera performance. Through the singer, the audience becomes an active part of the story from the first rehearsal to opening night. This connection provides another way to build brand loyalty and recognition for the singer. This cycle ties into the question of what it means to be human and provides a common language that can also be used to connect with a digital audience. It also emphasizes the cyclic quality of life; every opera performance has a beginning, a climax of the action/performance, and an end.

New and upcoming advances in the social media and marketing will impact which types of technology will be employed by the singer. As we embrace and use technological advances in opera performance, it is important to keep in mind that without the support and engagement of the audience, there is no music. Technology should be utilized to create new and inventive productions without detracting from the original work of art.

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