

New bums on opera seats

The transition from feudalism to liberal society mirrored in European opera houses 1750–1825

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1. Introduction

The main purpose of this study has been to investigate whether the political and economic evolution in the period 1750–1825 is seen in the constitution of opera audiences and in the numbers of tickets sold. The chosen period starts with the last decades of the Old Regime in France, continues over the French Revolution and ends a decade after the Vienna Congress. The year 1825 is a point in time when the bourgeoisie had established itself in society at large and as a spectator category in opera houses, on par with or outnumbering the aristocracy. The general finding is that the big societal evolution is actually mirrored in the opera audiences. Pull factors for the much-increased bourgeoisie demand are discussed. They include the general economic growth, stable ticket prices, technological evolution, changes in repertoire, the social identification factor, conspicuous consumption, and the new ‘celebrity industry.’ The increased demand for opera is shown in the increased income from ticket sales.

2. Autocratic regimes’ use of opera – *repræsentatio maiestatis* – and their gradual dissolution.

Culture in the time of the Old Regime was representational. According to Tim Blanning, ‘it served to represent the glory of the king by making it visible, tangible and audible. Its primary purpose was to say something about the patron, and to say it loudly’ (Blanning, 2008, p. 76).

My Hellsing (2013, p. 104) characterises how the Swedish King Gustav III and his entourage used the theatre:

The royal family’s urban entertainment with promenades, balls and visits to the theatres was an essential part of the court’s representative duties. The monarchy gained legitimacy by being visible to the people in appropriate contexts, at the right time and in the right company. Despite the challenge of the court in the urban environment, they could maintain control in social interaction through a ritualized manner of meeting the rest of the population¹.

Visibility was not the only factor. What was staged was in line with a general promotion of the monarchs. Most kings let professional playwrights produce pieces that in one way or other made the audience feel positive toward the current state of affairs. King Gustav was a prolific playwright himself with 35 extant plays.

In the Paris opera of Louis XIV, Jean-Baptiste Lully was both the entrepreneur, 1672–1687, and the foremost composer. The prologues to his operas, or *tragédies lyriques*, often contain references to the king’s victories in battles or to politics and personalities at Versailles. However, when these references became less transparently understood in the mid-eighteenth century, during the reign of Louis XV, they were dropped. This happened to the prologues of, for instance, *Thésée* in 1754 and *Alceste* in 1757. Jeffrey S. Ravel (1999, p. 22) claims that ‘these were the first signs of dissolution in the royal presence at the Opéra so carefully cultivated by Louis XIV, an early warning that aristocratic bearings in taste and sociability were shifting from

¹ All translations by the author.

Versailles to Paris'. This occurred soon after the *Querelle des Bouffons*, which was instigated by people like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and a few other 'encyclopedists' who preferred the Italian *opera buffa*. They questioned the French school of which Jean-Philippe Rameau was the contemporary representative composer. The *Querelle* led to a successive acceptance of the Italian school that came to dominate the repertoire before the end of the century. Actually, the *Querelle* was more than a dispute on opera repertoire. It was 'a forum for these philosophers to expound their social and political theories, intermingled with comments on notions of harmony and melody. It served as a convenient mask for the beginnings of a new age of thought' (Bereson, 2002, p. 39).

King Gustav III of Sweden read Voltaire and was aware of the turmoil in France in the 1780s. In terms of programming in his new royal opera, the king strictly kept to *repræsentatio maiestatis* ideals. He favoured a lofty, sententious, and formative repertory based on important events in the national history (Wolff, 2015). However, for society outside the opera he had new ideas inspired by Enlightenment philosophy. At the February 1789 *Riksdag* (parliament meeting) he managed to diminish the power of the aristocracy and somewhat equalise the differences between the aristocracy, the clergy, the urban bourgeoisie, and the rural peasants, i.e., the four *Riksdag* estates. All state appointments became meritocratically open to anyone regardless of family background.

The early eighteenth-century Royal Academy of Music, i.e., the royal opera in London, was already moving away from the objective for promotion of the royal family. Thomas McGeary (2013, p. 65) claims that:

After the Glorious Revolution [of 1688], a court-supported opera, whose role was to serve as outward expression of the majesty of the court and glorify the ruler (as had been the case with many operas of the reigns of Charles II and James II), would have been, even if financially possible, inappropriate, and uncongenial to English sensibilities.

Although McGeary thus sees traces of an early questioning of the *repræsentatio maiestatis* in the opera, he nevertheless finds (2013, p. 226) that early eighteenth-century Britain 'was fully committed to a monarchical system'. The ruler had obligations to the people. Only if these were violated could a popular resistance be accepted. 'Outright consideration of other forms of government is avoided [in librettos] and there are no instances of a change of government from monarchy to democracy or aristocracy ... librettos reinforce the ideal of monarchy by showing the achievements of beneficent, virtuous monarchs.' (McGeary, 2013, p. 237).

James H. Johnson (1995, p. 10) explains: 'In the Old Regime, attending opera was more social event than aesthetic encounter ... Attending the opera was a proud display of identity ... It announced privilege in a society built upon rank and hierarchy.' The occupants of the most prestigious boxes could showcase 'their dress, their behavior ... Their reactions to the performance were every bit as visible to the rest of the audience as were the singers and dancers.' This stood in sharp contrast to the normally overcrowded parterre where only men were allowed: '... perpetually on the verge of pandemonium ... Men stood, strolled, sang and sometimes danced here during the opera.' They were of a kind 'whom the more polished elements of society viewed with disdain: frivolous younger sons of seigneurs, with money and little prudence, pages to the great houses, intellectuals, literary hacks, soldiers on leave.' Hence, in the Paris opera house there were two fractions: the representatives of the Old Regime, who used the opera boxes to showcase their elevated position in society, and the incipient lower bourgeoisie in the parterre.

3. The parterre as the mirror of the nation

The contemporary *littérateur* Jean-François Marmontel (1777, p. 830) commented on the parterre audience:

Here, the parterre (because also the part of the audience who occupies the area of which we have spoken is named after it) is commonly composed of the least rich, the least well-mannered, the least refined in their customs and of those whose nature is the least polite, but also the least altered; of those in whom opinion and sentiment are least attached to the passing fantasies of fashion, to pretensions; from vanity and the prejudices of education; of those who commonly have the least enlightenment, but perhaps also the most common sense, and in whom healthier reason and a more naive sensibility form a less delicate but more assured taste, than the frivolous and capricious taste of a world where all feelings are factitious or borrowed.

What this article suggests is that the big societal evolution is mirrored in the opera audiences. However, Jeffrey S. Ravel (1999, pp. 65–66) seems to propose the opposite causality. Namely, that the theatre audiences, particularly the parterre, more or less ignited the revolution. The popular critique of the feudalism of the Old Regime used the parterres of theatres all over France to vent its increasing rage. Ravel describes in detail how skirmishes between members of parterre audiences and the police started within the theatres to be further escalated in squares and parks. In some cases they lasted for a few days. The brutal and excessive force of the musketeers was, *per se*, opposed as an unacceptable outlet of the autocratic Old Regime. As shown at an event in *Comédie-Italienne* on 26 December 1787, i.e., nineteen months before the storming of the Bastille, there was also a growing opposition toward the repertoire chosen by the theatre managers according to the directives of the Old Regime. Members of the parterre audience stopped the actors from performing a new piece – *Le prisonnier anglais* by Desfontaines (words) and Grétry (music). They simply did not like it. They demanded that the players should, instead, play the alternative play which was always at hand in case the advertised play could not be performed. The parterre argument was that they had paid for their tickets and, therefore, they, not the Regime, had the right to decide what should be performed. Fifty musketeers cleared the parterre, but the rest of the theatre was ‘full of angry spectators throwing food and furniture and yelling insults at them.’ Noting that there was a discussion in the country demanding that the king reassemble the *États généraux* – the three Estates – a spectator claimed that ‘the parterre is the nation which serves as prelude to the Estates-General.’ Ruth Bereson (2002, p. 41) claims that ‘the French Revolution had been essentially spurred on by intellectuals who used the opera as a forum to vent philosophical views on harmony and melody, language, nationalistic concepts and political precepts.’ Their foot soldiers were the parterre vanguard.

The French Revolution had a Belgian counterpart: The Brabantine Revolution. The Austrian Habsburg Regime was challenged in October 1789. A short-lived United States of Belgium was installed, only to be overthrown by the Austrians in December 1790. The parterre of the Tournai theatre, only some ten kilometres from the border to revolutionary France, revolted against the censorship by local authorities. On 7 March 1791 the manager of the theatre announced new terms for audience conduct. ‘This was the signal of a scene of indescribable tumult ... A young infantry officer ... drew his sword and, supported by other officers, swept the whole parterre. A company of hunters came to their aid. Several people were injured’ (Faber, 1879, p.174).²

² 40 years later, at a performance in the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie on 25 August 1830 of an opera banned by the then ruler, King William I of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, a riot broke out which spread into the

In February 1786 a letter to the editor of *Stockholms Posten* by 'The Parterrist' asserts the integrity of the parterre despite its poorer social and economic conditions: 'The parterre, my Benefactor, consists of as good a people as any of the other rows, if not, generally, by descent or wealth, at least by taste, knowledge, sense and sentiment. When one is undressed [i.e., lacking highly respectable attire] and without a female companion the parterre is better than a box' (Skuncke and Ivarsdotter, 1998, p. 31). In 1793, after the assassination of King Gustav III, the minor regency of Gustav IV Adolf was led by baron Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm, whose rule was regarded as strongly repressive and ultra-reactionary. The future Queen Charlotta wrote in her diary that young merchants and shop assistants were frequent opera goers and formed the parterre in Stockholm. They applauded every time the word 'liberty' was mentioned on stage (Wolff, 2015).

John Rosselli (1984, p. 96) has similar examples from Italian opera houses. In 1794 a Padua audience forced

... the representative of the Venetian Republic in the opera house to allow an encore of the overture in spite of large placards forbidding such things; when he refused them an encore of a duet they booed and whistled for half an hour, the performance was suspended, and soldiers were brought in.

The strong governmental hold on Italian opera houses, contrary to the opera houses on which this study has focused, lingered well into the nineteenth century. Rosselli (1984, p. 96), furthermore, finds that 'the sense remained of a drama being enacted in the auditorium between authority and public as well as on stage.'

4. Findings

No data on ticket buyers at the entrance box office have been found for the period studied here. However, the people who rented boxes were registered and some lists of box tenants remain in the opera archives in Paris, Brussels, Turin, Stockholm, and Berlin visited by the author. Similar secondary data have been found for London. It would have been preferable if data had been archived for all opera houses for the full period covered in this study. However, as yet, it has not been possible to find continuous longitudinal data from any of the opera houses except for up to a few decades. Hence, the narrative is based on data from various periods from various opera houses/archives. For 1789–1815 data were found only for Paris and Stockholm. As the Paris archives are the most extensive, Paris opera data occur in all periods. The same goes for Stockholm. Some archives have data only for some years and not for the entire period studied. Nevertheless, such data will be presented as all data in combination will reveal a common pattern.

4.1 Before 1789

4.1.1 Paris

During the Paris opera's first decades, spectators paid a fee at the entrance for access to the venue. Tickets could alternatively be bought the same morning at the box office. In 1707, a system for subscriptions of long duration was introduced. The long-term lease could be for every performance or for every other, every third or every fourth event.

When the City of Paris took over the administration of the *Académie royale de musique*, i.e., the Paris opera, in 1750, a vast majority of the boxes were let for the full year to, predominantly, the aristocracy. With the inclusion of individuals who were registered as royal

streets, culminated in the Belgian Revolution and, eventually, led to the creation of the present Kingdom of Belgium.

councillors or royal employees of other kinds, most of whom, it seems, bore aristocratic titles, approximately 75% of the box holders belonged to the nobility (see Table 3 in the Appendix). The remaining 25% are listed as Monsieur, Madame or Mademoiselle. Generally, with a few exceptions, the latter rented cheaper boxes further away from the stage and the royal family (the king and the queen had separate boxes on opposite sides of the stage). Box holders were allowed to let guests use their boxes. Crude, handwritten warrants would suffice as entry requisites. How often the seats rented per year were actually used is not possible to tell from the data. The income from boxes rented per year, 96,258 *livres*, amounted to 24% of the total income from seats, i.e., including all other ticket sales (Albinsson, 2018, Table 4).

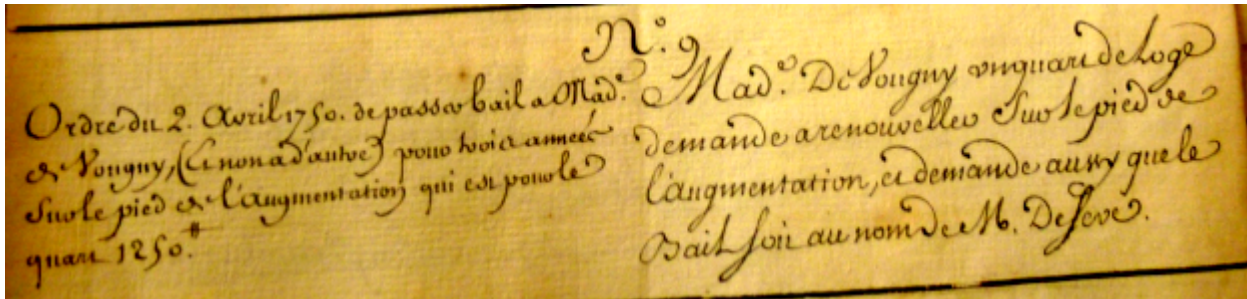


Figure 1. Order of 2 April 1750 to let Madame de Voungny rent box no 9, King's side; annual fee: 1,250 livres for every fourth performance. Source: Archives Nationales de France, code AJ/13/13.

Of the 1,270 seats in the Salle du Palais-Royal in Rue Saint-Honoré, 600 were located in the parterre, 120 in an amphitheatre and the remaining 500 in balcony boxes. The total income from ticket sales during the 1750–1751 theatrical season amounted to 304,545 *livres*.

According to a royal ordinance signed by Marquis d'Argenson at Versailles 31 March 1750, boxes not rented out were available for those who were allowed free entrance to the performances (Archives Nationales de France, henceforth AN, code AJ/13/3). Agnès Terrier (2000, p. 7) claims that 'the too big proportion of free entrance' created problems for the ticket management. More than 200 individuals were on the free entrance list. 40 of them were officers. Eight brigadiers were given access to the parterre. Unlike the other listed individuals – Voltaire and Turgot, for instance – the musketeers and brigadiers were given a maximum number for each category and no names are listed. It is possible that the free entrance was provided as a benefit for their service to the crown – a bonus in kind. But it is also likely that, as they were listed with their military function and not their names, they were also on duty. This applies specifically to the eight brigadiers in the parterre. Two named individuals were listed under the title 'police.' The incidents reported by Ravel were especially conspicuous. But it seems that more or less unruly behaviour in the parterre was an everyday occurrence ever since Louis XIV started his public theatres. Musketeers and members of the police were present at all performances.

4.1.2 Brussels

The first theatre on the former mint site, for which both the opera house and the company name are *Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie*, or *La Monnaie* in short, was initiated in 1700 by Maximilien II Emmanuel of Bavaria, governor of the Spanish Netherlands (Isnardon, 1890, p. 4). It seems that the theatre was not actually 'royal' as there was no funding from the monarch (or the governor). However, the monarch issued octroys for theatre entrepreneurs. The *La Monnaie* theatre was built and first led by the architect Paul de Bombarda who employed several successive directors. In 1771 the octroy was given to maestro Ignaz Vitzthumb (often called Fiston) together with singer and playwright Compain Despierrières who succeeded to stay afloat

until February 1777. They managed to leverage the theatre to a high qualitative standard (Isnardon, 1890, p. 60). Frédéric Faber (1878, p. 260) claims that ‘the theatre of Brussels could only prosper in such hands, so this management was one of the brightest in terms of the merits of artists and the execution of the plays.’

Vitzthumb and Despierrières used the contemporary system of renting out boxes for the full theatrical season. In their last year, 1776–1777, a much larger share of boxes, 57%, than in Paris were held by persons identified as Monsieur, Madame or Mademoiselle, see Table 4 in the Appendix. The remaining 43% were held by the royal family and its local representatives, together with members of the titled aristocracy. One reason for the smaller share of aristocracy might be that the primary court, where the nobility paid their respect to the monarch, was located elsewhere – not in Brussels. As industrialisation began relatively early in Flanders and Wallonia, it is likely that there were wealthy families in Brussels who did not belong to the old aristocracy but nevertheless had the means to enjoy frequent visits to the theatre. The theatre also offered the possibility to rent parquet seats (24 persons, of which ten were aristocratic) and *passerpartout* cards to the parterre (23 persons, of which one was aristocratic). Several individuals bought subscriptions for one or more months. Some box holders in the circles paid extra for access to the parquet. The garrison paid for several free entrance possibilities for its officers.

The income from boxes held per year amounted to 33,109 *florins de Brabant*, 44% of the total revenue from ticket sales.

4.1.3. Turin

The *Teatro Regio di Torino* was built during the reign of Charles Emmanuel III, King of Sardinia and Duke of Savoy. It was inaugurated in 1740. It had 1,500 seats – some of which were in the 139 boxes. Which families should be allowed to rent boxes was an affair of state. The king himself saw to this matter each year. If boxes were sublet or if tenants did not use their boxes, the king reallocated them (Rosselli, 1984, pp. 41–42).

It seems that 80 boxes in the four lower rows were let out per year (see Table 5 in the Appendix). The share, 94%, occupied by the aristocracy and top-ranked royal officials far exceeds that in Paris 1750–1751. They paid a total rent of 5,158 *scudi*. Revenue from tickets per day totalled 17,031 *scudi*, making box rental share, 30%, of total income from seats somewhat higher than in Paris. Of the 422 persons with ‘perpetual tickets’ a quarter were army officers. Most of them were – like the rest of the holders of perpetual tickets – titled *conte*.

4.1.4 London

Although the staff at the Royal Opera House claim that they lack relevant data for this study, earlier studies have found data elsewhere. David Hunter (2000) claims that there were two kinds of subscriptions to Handel's opera company (located in King's Theatre, Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent Garden): 1. a subscription to the opera company for £200, either as a director/shareholder or as a supporter, and 2. a subscription for a season-ticket (15–20 guineas). According to Milhous and Hume (1978), providing samples from the Harvard theatre collection, four performances of Handel operas in May and June 1733 were attended to 43% by subscribers and the remaining 57% by ticket buyers. Among subscribers we find Ladies Bruce, Burlington, Walpole, Walsingham and Chesterfield and Dukes Montague, Newcastle and Buckinghamshire. However, it is not certain that they, themselves, attended. In the accounts the entries are for, for instance, Lady Bruce's ‘T.’ – perhaps indicating the Tickets that Lady Bruce could just as well pass on to friends. Carole M. Taylor claims that the percentage of titled subscribers to Italian operas in London increased from 79% in the 1720s to 86% in the 1740s. Handel abandoned subscriptions in 1747 (Taylor, 1991, p. 66).

Jennifer Hall-Witt (2007, p. 63), in her tour-de-force narrative on opera audiences in London 1780–1880, has found a chart depicting subscribers at the King’s Theatre for the 1782–1783 season, see Table 6 in the Appendix. If in Turin all box holders were male, here we see predominantly female subscribers. However, in a private e-mail communication (10 December 2020) Hall-Witt clarifies that the ladies were the primary subscribers but male aristocrats signed up as ‘secondary’ subscribers. Hall-Witt sees the female reluctance to sit in the unruly pit and their enthusiasm for large headdresses or hats not suitable for the pit as the reasons for their box preference. During this season a quarter of all English peers subscribed to the opera. 66 % of box subscribers are listed as royal family members, ladies or honourables.

4.1.5 Stockholm

Crown Prince Gustav sat in a box at the newly erected second *Salle du Palais-Royal*³ in Paris enjoying François Francœur and François Rebel’s opera *Pirame et Thisbé* (according to chronopera.free.fr) on 1 March 1771 when he was informed of his father’s demise. Two years later, as King Gustav III, he started the royal opera company in Stockholm (formal name: *Kongl. Hof-Capell och Spectacler*). The purpose-built Gustavian opera house was opened in 1782. It had a parterre capacity of 900 standing spectators. Boxes were located in four rows (Rotter-Broman, 2016, p. 92); see Picture 3. It seems that the king and his opera manager, Carl von Fersen, put aside a large share of the boxes to top-ranked foreign, royal, state and city officials (see Table 7 in the Appendix). This kind of tenants paid for almost 50% of the income from boxes. However, most such officials also belonged to the aristocracy. It seems thus that approximately 70% of the boxes were held by the aristocracy. The income from boxes amounted 1787 to 58% of the total ticket sales revenue.

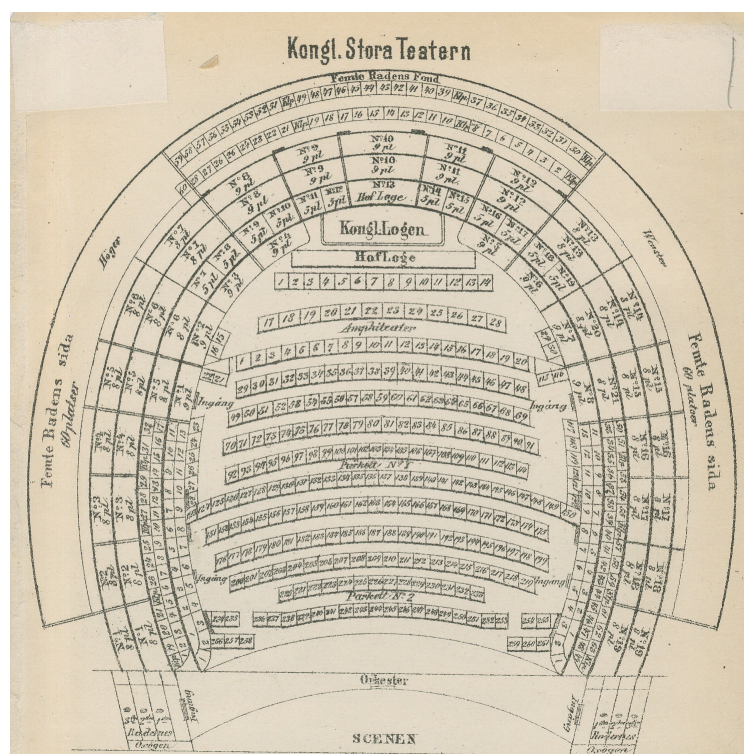


Figure 2. Plan of the interior of the Gustavian opera house. Photo: Stockholm City Museum.

³ It was built after the first *Salle du Palais-Royal* was destroyed by fire in 1763. It was, however, short-lived; in 1781 it, too, was destroyed in the same way.

4.1.6 Berlin

Frederick the Great built his opera house in Berlin in 1742. As a consequence of his wish to establish a Germanic (rather than only ‘Prussian’) culture on par with that of older European kingdoms and of his love for music, Frederick was intensely involved in both the construction of the building and what was performed there. Christoph Henzel (2014) claims that as a consequence of the location of the opera house in a public space, away from the courtly habitat in *Berliner Schloss*, it was more of a *Staatsoper* (State Opera) than a *Hofoper* (Court Opera). Claudia Terne (2009, section <4>) quotes a newspaper article from the opening of the Berlin Carnival of 1743: ‘Strangers as well as locals, of whatever standing, will be allowed, without entrance fee, to find themselves at its operas, comedies, and masquerade balls.’ Hence, Frederick, influenced by Enlightenment ideas, tries to set a new political standard for opera as an art form. However, although the entry to the opera was free of charge, it was, according to Terne, based on tickets. The distribution of them was decided upon by the theatre management. ‘Strangers’ seem to have been favoured. Many Berliners were left empty-handed. There are contemporary reports of a buoyant ticket trade from the early days of the opera until the very last years of Frederick’s reign. This system continued under the reign of Frederick William III (Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, code BPH, Rep. 19, no. 12).

Despite the seemingly more democratic policy regarding free entrance to the opera, the use of boxes was equal to other royal operas. The first circle was reserved for the royal family and the court nobility. The second circle was occupied by ministers and other high officials. The bourgeoisie and the lower-class audience sat in the third circle or parterre boxes. The musician-king Frederick sat close to the orchestra as an understudy *Kapellmeister*.

	Paris 1750	Brussels 1776–1777	Turin 1776–1777	London 1782–1783	Stockholm 1787
Share of nobility in the boxes	75 %	43 %	94 %	66 %	70 %
Share of total ticket revenue	24 %	44 %	30 %	50 %	58 %

Table 1. The nobility share of box seats and ticket revenues. Sources: see the respective table in the Appendix. For London: Hall-Witt, 2007, pp.152 and 179,

4.2 1789–1815

4.2.1 Paris

In 1790, soon after the revolution, it became possible to book a box for a single performance several days before the event. A subscription could start any month but not exceed a year. The lease was for a specific evening of the week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Saturday) or for the first three evenings of a new production, which were reserved for subscribers (Terrier, 2000, pp. 25–31).

Shortly after the storming of the Bastille, the new *Assemblée nationale* decided on the abolition of all feudal privileges. However, the nobility was allowed to keep their titles and far from everyone was guillotined. Many survived the revolutionary terror while keeping a low profile. The Paris opera continued to perform in *Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin* and, from July 1794, in the *Théâtre National de la rue de la Loi*. Both had twice the audience capacity of the 1750 *Salle du Palais-Royal*. During the *Consulat*, in the beginning of 1804 just before Napoleon declared himself emperor, boxes were still let for one or several months up to a full year, see Table 8 in the Appendix. No aristocratic titles were used. Everyone was labelled Monsieur or Madame. It seems that Napoleon used the theatre boxes in a similar way as the Old Regime. He had the firm view that the enhancement of all the arts would serve the glory of the empire that he had founded. A policy followed that supported the prestigious cultural venues in the capital,

of which the opera was the first choice (Barbier, 2003, p. 14). Many box holders belonged to the new political power system and they were put on display for the parterre audience. 362 persons were on the free entrance list.

4.2.2 Stockholm

After the murder of King Gustav III by members of the aristocracy, his infant son became King Gustav IV Adolf. During the regency nothing much happened concerning the opera. After he took power the new king started to show a severe disdain for the art of opera in general and especially the Royal Swedish Opera. In the autumn of 1806 he closed it and disbanded the troupe. However, some operettas and dramatic performances were still allowed in the *Mindre theatren* (smaller) *theatren*. Boxes were open to subscriptions. The share of aristocracy decreased radically in comparison with the main opera in 1787 (see Table 1 above). In the *Mindre theatren* only 30% of the boxes were held by people from the aristocracy, see Table 9 in the Appendix. The majority of tenants were people from the wealthy bourgeoisie.

In 1808 King Gustav IV Adolf declared war on Russia, which led to the loss of Finland and his dethronement in the following year. His uncle, King Karl XIII, took over, re-opened the opera house and reinstalled the ensemble. The ensemble and its house were to be used for representative performances as well as for entertainment. French *opéra comique* constituted an important part of the repertoire (Hallgren, 2016, p. 111).

4.3 After 1815

4.3.1 Paris

The Paris opera budget for 1816, the second Restoration season, depicts a continued renting out of boxes for full theatrical years (AN, code AJ/13/144). The anticipated income of 80,000 francs was 15% of the total income from seats (24% in 1750). The new Bourbon king, Louis XVIII – the brother of the executed Louis XVI – balanced the idea of monarchy with some of the new ideas that were presented during the Revolution and the First Empire. He largely accepted the powers of liberals and the bourgeoisie. The new aristocracy, given their titles by Napoleon based on their merits, still held sway. However, of the 39 persons who appear on the list of box holders for the year 1816, the number of domestic titled nobility is only 12, i.e., 31% in 1816 while it was 75% in 1750 (AN, code AJ/13/144). Seven box holders represented the victorious nations in the Napoleonic wars. Among them were the Duke of Wellington and Count Orloff. *Madame la Princesse de Suède*, Désirée, the consort of the Swedish crown prince (from 1818 king) Charles John (born Jean Baptiste Bernadotte), also held a box. She did not move to her husband in Stockholm until 1823.

Although the manuscript pages for the 1828 budget are somewhat difficult to decipher, it seems that the aristocracy had slightly increased their share of boxes rented per year (AN, code AJ/13/146). The tentative percentage is approximately 40%, still very much less than in 1750.

4.3.2 London

Hall-Witt (2007, p. 145) sees the same breakdown of the system with rented boxes in London. She regards opera performances in London before circa 1830 as public ‘events’ not only, or even primarily, based on the repertoire. The gentry visited them ‘to see and to be seen.’ Thereafter the idea that you go to the opera to experience an artistic ‘work’ was the dominant factor.

4.3.3 Stockholm

Already as crown prince, from 1810, Bernadotte started to help the re-established royal opera financially. In the accounts for the 1818–1819 season there is no mention of income from box holders or subscriptions (Kungliga Teaterns Arkiv, henceforth KTA, code G 1 vol 11). It seems

that all tickets to all seats were sold for each separate performance. However, in 1820, 6% of the total box office revenue came from subscriptions. Nevertheless, this is in sharp contrast to, for instance, the *Kongelige Teater* (the royal theatre) in Copenhagen, where the share of subscriptions was 45% of total ticket sales in the 1821–1822 season (Rigsarkivet, fond 220, vol. 914–918). In Stockholm, subscriptions were sold only for 25 of the 156 performances given in 1820. All subscription offers were in the Gustavian opera house – none in the smaller *Mindre theatren*. Given the data from Table 10 in the Appendix, we can presume that subscriptions were sold for one or two months. In 1837 the revenue from subscriptions in the Stockholm theatres had decreased to 2.6% of the total box office income (KTA, code G 2 AA vol 1). Is it far-fetched to think that the Swedish monarch was not only new but also different? He was brought up in a *petite bourgeoisie* home, with a magnificent meritocratic career as officer in the French revolutionary army, made brigadier general at the age of 30. Reasonably, he must have been influenced by the revolutionary motto ‘*liberté, égalité, fraternité*.’ At least, we can observe that he as King Charles XIV John did not seek to re-establish the kind of aristocracy on display in the theatre that was the hallmark of the French Old Regime and was also the case in the Gustavian opera house before its closure in 1806.

4.3.4 Berlin

The very generous free entrance policy under Frederick the Great was later abandoned. The *Königliche Hofoper* seems to have undergone an evolution contrary to the other operas. Here the system with boxes rented per year seems to have been installed when other royal operas left it behind. However, boxes and seats were held by the new bourgeoisie rather than the old gentry. The list of box and seat holders for 1824, see Table 11 in the Appendix, includes no member of the local aristocracy as registered in the list of nobility families in the German-speaking countries⁴. In contrast, we find several merchants, two accountants, one innkeeper and one coppersmith.

Loge N ^o	Zweiter Rang à Person 10 nd ...
13.	Herrn Kaufmann Neubekent zu 6 Thalers
15.	" " Hinsekorn zu 6 Thalers
23.	" " Borchard zu 5 Thalers

Figure 3. Boxes in the *Königliche Hofoper* in 1824: two merchants and one accountant. Source: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, code I. HA Rep. 36, nr 2413.

4.3.5 Le beau monde of opera subscribers

It is obvious, especially in the Berlin case, but also in the other operas, that there had been a change in who attended the opera. William Weber (2008, pp. 83–84) finds that ‘musical culture has derived its structures most fundamentally of all from demographic factors, that is, from the size and structure of the musically active population and the social classes to which they belong.’ During the period studied here, *le beau monde* played a crucial role as opera patrons and goers. But there was a transition as to who constituted this group of people – from

⁴ de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_deutscher_Adelsgeschlechter

only the 'first aristocracy' to an inclusion also of the 'second aristocracy' (individuals who were given their nobility titles based on personal merit), 'leading bourgeoisie, and diverse professional people, from lawyers to high-level mistresses.' Weber (1975, p. 54) also claims that hierarchical lines between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy lingered. However, those in both categories who favoured the high-status classical music scene over low-status popular music venues formed a unified camp. 'The pride in belonging to music's high culture was such a powerful force that its adherents would attack members of their own class in the other [low-status popular culture] public.' As a consequence, in London 'bourgeois and aristocratic groups would work together in the construction of a new classical-music regime' (Weber, 2006, p. 516).

5. Changed audience behaviour

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, the noisy interplay between, especially, the parterre and the stage and the non-attentive socialising in the boxes were questioned. Eventually benches were placed in the parterre and the standing audience, if it remained, was placed in more remote parts of the venues. This seems to be not only a result of the earlier politically coloured parterre unrest, but also of a gradually changed attitude toward 'listening'. The bourgeoisie distanced itself in the opera houses and concert venues from the revolutionary idea of *liberté* which promoted individualism. A bourgeois position was something that could be won through hard work, some talent and, preferably, a bit of luck. But, unlike aristocratic titles, this position could be lost. Hence, the bourgeoisie was very sensitive to proper conduct. One essential idea was not to bother others. In the theatres and concert halls this meant that silence became the ideal conduct. Those who did talk or otherwise did not conform to the new ideals were looked down on. Collective conformity replaced individual liberty (Johnson, 1995, chapter 13).

Jürgen Habermas (1984, p. 36) describes how the new, extremely popular, bourgeois novels (foremost: Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse*, 1761; Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, 1774; Richardson's *Pamela*, 1790) changed the relationships between the author, the work and the public: 'They become intimate relations between individuals psychologically interested in "the human", of self-awareness just as well as of empathy... Also, the drama of the time becomes a fiction in the proscenium stage theatre.' For this type of performance, a silent audience was preferable. Blanning (2008, p. 94) states that 'by this time, it had become fashionable for stiff upper lips to tremble not just in response to lachrymose novels like *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Werther* but to all cultural media.'

Enlightenment philosophers saw a need for theatres to not only cater for the social and entertainment needs of the audience. Well used theatres could also support the formation of good conduct and societal progress. Such ideas spread into the theatres themselves. In 1776 the actor Johann Christian Brandes, when discussing the situation in the Munich theatre, claimed that a good national theatre forms the inhabitants in the language, in the manners, in the way of thinking, diminishes the luxury in the middle class, enriches the citizens and makes morally good people. The contributions, Brandes claimed, of the prince, the well-to-do inhabitants and the foreigners pass through their hands into the hands of the poor; money gets circulated and stays in the country (North, 2003, pp. 173-174).

6. Opera demand analysis

During the studied period, a new audience turned up at the operas. A visit to the opera was a possibility for more people than before. There are several possible reasons for the increased opera demand. Some will be suggested: the disappearance of opera music from concert programming causing the demand for opera to be directed to opera houses, requirements for

increased revenue, a general growth of the gross domestic product (GDP), attractive ticket pricing, the impact of new technology, enhanced audience experience from new artistic innovations, the demand for places to socialise, and a new craving for celebrities.

6.1 Arias expunged from concerts

William Weber (2006, p. 508) finds that ‘between about 1750 and 1800, a concert of any great stature usually had several numbers from opera.’ He presents two examples, one from London and one from Leipzig. However, this had become challenged at least in Vienna where Gottfried van Swieten, royal chief librarian, introduced a new dogma. Practically all major works authored by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven after circa 1780 were performed with the aid of van Swieten and his *Gesellschaft der Associierten*. Its aim was to elevate the taste for qualitative music among society’s mostly aristocratic members. Weber (2006, p. 512) continues: ‘Romantic and utopian thinking undergirded the new order of idealistic values that arose in music after 1800.’ A new format of chamber-music concerts without excerpts from operas was introduced in Vienna and in Beethoven’s ‘Akademien’ in *Burgtheater* and *Theater an der Wien* in the first decade of the nineteenth century opera arias were absent. Instead, his symphonies, his piano concertos and some of his choral works were programmed (Albinsson, 2012, p. 281). It seems that the long-term trend was a division of opera and concert music. If your mind was set on opera music, the opera house became the only option.

6.2 Requirements for increased revenue

The Paris opera, then in *Salle du Palais-Royal*, had a total income from tickets sales of 304,545 *livres* in 1750. That income covered 61% of the total costs (AN, code AJ/13/8). In the 1792–1793 season the box office revenues at 855,837 *livres* had more than doubled (AN, code AJ/13/47). The opera resided in *Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin*, which had twice the audience capacity of *Salle du Palais-Royal*. The opera could put on more costly performances. It covered 57% of its costs from box office revenues. In the 1801–1802 season, after the move to *Théâtre National de la rue de la Loi* and with Napoleon as the first consul, the situation was similar. The box office revenue of 727,534 *francs* covered 47% of the costs (AN, code AJ/13/70). Although there was a slight decrease of ticket sales revenues during the 1816–1817 Restoration season, the opera was established on a new level which far exceeded what had been the standard before the Revolution. Part of it can be explained by the earlier limited audience capacity. The new venue had to be filled with much larger audiences. As the number of both ‘first’ and ‘second’ aristocracy was limited, audiences were recruited from the new bourgeoisie and the new upper-middle class.

After the demolition of the *Théâtre National de la rue de la Loi* in 1820, the *Salle Le Peletier* was erected in haste. It had roughly the same audience capacity but the boxes were reshaped. In their front part the boxes were no longer separated from each other. Now they could be secluded by curtains only in their rear section. Even there, it was no longer possible to have an intimate rendezvous or sophisticated conversations. The *stalles de l’amphithéâtre* and the *stalles d’orchestre*, which were only accessible to males, were among the most expensive seats. Also, the intervening standing parterre cost more than the box seats of the upper circle (Gerhard, 1992, p. 31).

The Brussels opera managed to cover 71% of its costs during the 1773–1774 season from box office income (Archives générales du Royaume, fond 608, vol. 134).

In Stockholm the income from ticket sales only covered 5% of the total costs in 1799 (KTA, code G1 vol. 2). After Charles XIV John was installed as king, his new opera regulation put a much-increased emphasis on audience contributions to cover the costs. In the 1818–1819

season, 64% of the total costs were covered from ticket sales in the same venue as 1799 (KTA, code G 1 vol. 11). Now people with money had to be attracted to the opera.

6.3 GDP growth

The Maddison Project Database 2018 provides longitudinal GDP statistics for the period studied here and for several European countries, see Table 2 (Bolt et al., 2018).

	Belgium	Germany	France	Britain	Italy	Sweden
<i>Year range</i>	1750–1812	1750–1800	1750–1830	1750–1830	1750–1830	1750–1830
<i>Growth in %</i>	8.56	–6.80	13.04	35.18	–1.79	–4.29

Table 2. GDP per capita growth 1750–1830

The data from opera archives, section 4, are not directly related to the countries in Table 2. For instance, the Turin opera was the royal opera in the Kingdom of Sardinia-Savoy of which some parts are now French and some Italian. Sweden, at the outskirts of Europe and as a result of unsuccessful warfare causing the loss of Finland in 1809, regional famines and political unrest, experienced a decrease in GDP per capita. The declining royal household and state budgets (in combination with a disdain for the art form) made King Gustav IV Adolf close the Gustavian opera house. In France and Belgium, the GDP per capita grew substantially during the studied period. They were in a first phase of the Industrial Revolution that was spearheaded by Britain.

The GDP per capita provides indications of potential individual incomes. However, actual incomes are quite another story. The general estimation is that the aristocracy represented 1–2 % of the population in France 1789. The second estate, the clergy, represented 1%. The third estate represented everybody else. Thomas Piketty (2014, p. 251) maintains that ‘the top decile claimed as much as 50% of national income (with about 20% to the top centile)’ in eighteenth-century Britain and France. These were societies which Piketty (2014, pp. 263–264) calls ‘hyper-patrimonial.’ Inherited wealth was then very important and the concentration of it reached extreme levels. This is the kind of society depicted by Jane Austen and Honoré de Balzac. Wealth was much more interesting for matrimonial matchmakers than income. Although this attitude lasted long after the French Revolution, measures were nevertheless introduced to implement meritocratic ideas. Napoleon had the view that ‘the most capable and talented individuals ought to be able to live on their salaries with as much dignity and elegance as the wealthiest heirs’ (Piketty, 2014, p. 417). France was equipped with a small number of very well paid and high-ranking civil servants who received a paycheck of 50–100 times that of the average income. The mercantilistic economic control of the Old Regime was left behind after 1789. It was replaced by the self-regulating market economy governed by Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’. The new industrialists started to gather both direct income from their labour and income from capital.

Morrisson and Snyder (2000) have calculated the income inequality of France during the period of this study. For the late eighteenth century, they present a Gini coefficient, the most common measure of income (in)equality, of 0.59. This is similar to what Lindert and Williamson (1983, p. 102) have calculated for Britain for the same period. Gini coefficients of this magnitude are common in today’s developing countries, while France’s Gini coefficient for 2017 was 0.295 according to the OECD. Moreover, Morrisson and Snyder claim that ‘the degree of inequality that existed prior to the Revolution was decreased by changes that benefited the lower classes. It seems likely that this redressing of the income distribution continued from the last decade of the eighteenth century until about the third decade of the nineteenth century.’

Weber (1975, p. 12) finds that '[t]he increasing centralisation of affairs in most professions made the capitals the drawing-point for ambitious individuals in all fields... the growing function of the cities and their wealthy elites stimulated a large lower-middle class of shopkeepers, clerks, and lower-level professionals.'

Rodney Edvinsson and Johan Söderberg have calculated historical consumer price index/CPI values for Sweden. They estimate that the CPI value for 1831 was 2.56 times higher than for 1799 (Edvinsson and Söderberg, 2010). Wages for musicians at the Stockholm opera increased much more during the same period. Bass players, for instance, had a wage increase of 345% (unpublished dataset for Albinsson, 2016). Söderberg (2010) has found that daily wages for unskilled labour in Stockholm rose slightly less: 337%. It is likely that more privileged strata of the population saw an even more favourable increase in living standard. There was a growth in the number of people who could afford an opera ticket.

6.4 Ticket pricing and sale

Thomas Piketty (2014, p. 103) claims, that 'if we look at average price increases over the periods 1700–1820 and 1820–1913, we find that inflation was insignificant in France, Britain, the United States, and Germany: at most 0.2–0.3 percent per year.' This calls for stable pricing of opera seats. That is exactly what Hall-Witt found regarding pit and gallery tickets to the King's Theatre in London between 1786 and 1826. For instance, a ticket to the lower gallery cost 5 shillings during the whole of that period. For boxes there was, however, a rather steep price increase. What Hall-Witt identifies as 'general subscription for whole box' went from 120 guineas in 1786 to 285 guineas in 1818. Obviously, the price for the possibility 'to see and to be seen' was more than doubled. This would have been an impossible pricing policy if there had not been a corresponding increase in demand.

In Paris on 1 June 1818, 14 tickets to the balcony boxes not let for the season were sold at 10 francs per seat. 259 tickets were sold to the '*Parterre, Quatrièmes et Cinquièmes*' for 3.60 francs (AN, code AJ/13/151). When it comes to the most prestigious boxes let per year, the situation is more complicated due to changes of venues for the opera. For the 1750 season, the second box on the king's side in the first *Salle du Palais-Royal* venue was rented by Count de Charolois for 5,000 *livres* (AN, code AJ/13/37). A similar box in the second *Salle du Palais-Royal* cost only 3,600 *livres* in 1775 (AN, code AJ/13/37). For the year 1818, the Duke of Wellington rented a similar box with six seats in the *Théâtre National de la rue de la Loi* for 5,000 *francs* (more or less equal to the prior *livre*). The Duc d'Orléans paid 7,500 *francs* for his box with 12 seats (AN, code AJ/13/144).

The Paris opera was partly funded by the royal household. The king donated 150,000 *livres* per year from 1780. However, these grants were given to cover the costs of twelve performances that the opera was committed to give each year in the court theatres at Versailles and Fontainebleau (Troplong, 1854). The rest of the revenues were based on a commercial logic. The Stockholm opera was in an infant state during its first decades. In the fourth quarter of 1798 the royal subsidy was 95% of the total income (KTA, code G 1 vol. 2). In 1821 the royal household and Riksdag subsidy was reduced to 31% (KTA, code G 1 vol. 11). Opera companies had to rely on audience revenues.

6.5 Technology

James van Horn Melton (2001, pp. 163–164) puts forward the idea that the introduction of streetlights in Paris and other major European cities in the late seventeenth century played a huge role in the increased demand for theatre. By 1750 the streets of central Paris were lit up by 8,000 candlelight lanterns. In the 1760s more refined oil lamps with lenses and reflectors spread the light even more. Some 150 years earlier a royal decree ordered that plays should end

no later than 4:30 p.m. During the course of the eighteenth century, theatres opened progressively later, which made the access to them easier for those who earned their daily bread during sunlit hours. In 1793 the performances commenced at 5 p.m., between 1793 and 1799 at 5:30 p.m., between 1799 and 1803 at 6 p.m., and after 1803 at 7 p.m. The fixed hours of performance starts were abandoned in 1831 (Gerhard, 1992, p. 38). The improved street illumination was introduced by Louis XIV as a personal security measure for the general Paris population. Maybe Louis XVI had to pay the price for the urban sociability that the streetlights made possible. People had the chance to meet safely to discuss, among other things, the politics of the Old Regime.

In both London and Paris, the royal opera houses, as several other theatres, were enlarged or rebuilt during the eighteenth century to cater for more patrons. The Royal Opera in London moved into King's Theatre in Haymarket, where the capacity grew to 2,500 after a renovation in 1818. The first *Salle du Palais-Royal*, which housed the Paris opera, was destroyed by fire in 1763. When the new purpose-built second *Salle du Palais-Royal* was opened in 1770, it had a capacity of more than 2,000 spectators – a 57% increase. The architect Victor Louis used wrought-iron-reinforced roofs for the new *Théâtre National de la rue de la Loi* of 1793 (housing the Paris opera from 1794 to 1820). It had a capacity of 2,300 spectators. This new invention made even larger venues possible and was later further refined in, for instance, Royal Albert Hall from 1871, which had a capacity of 5,272 seats.

6.6 The artistic experience

All through the history of opera *aficionados*, *Liebhaver* and *connoisseurs* have adored the art per se. Their pull factor is obvious. During the studied period, many others were less frequent visitors but still drawn to the venue for the artistic experience. They, too, wanted to consume high-standard cultural experiences. Before film, radio and television, the performing arts had to be consumed where, and simultaneously as, they were produced – as live events.

The dependence on the 'box office composers' that Roseanne Martorella (1977) describes for the Metropolitan Opera in NYC of the 1970s is the current American extreme of a development that started in Europe much earlier.

What was demanded as artistic experiences was fundamentally altered during the period of this study, not least in Paris. In most other countries, the Italian *opera buffa* was already well established. During the Revolution, directives from the new powers became more blurred than during the centralised Old Regime. There were rival demands from the City of Paris, the police, and the legislative body and its committees. Those making programming decisions at the opera experienced uncertainty and insecurity. They sought stability in both continuity of service and repertoire. There seems to have been no immediate 'revolutionary' programming, rather the opposite. As the tendency during the decades prior to 1789 had been to better accommodate the 'urban taste' rather than *repræsentatio maiestatis*, there had already been a shift to a repertoire that was based in the contemporary modernity (Darlow, 2012, pp. 33–34). Luigi Cherubini, after his move to Paris in 1787, provided new operas during the Revolution, the First Empire, the Restoration and the July Monarchy. His operas were performed in all corners of Europe. Nicolas-Marie Dalayrac, François-Adrien Boieldieu and Daniel Auber, Parisian composers of comic operas, also had international careers. At the end of our period, Gioachino Rossini and Giacomo Meyerbeer were extremely popular opera composers all over Europe. From 1825 both were based in Paris. Meyerbeer preferred grand scaled operas. Rossini's last opera, *Guillaume Tell*, was also composed according to this '*grand opéra*' format.

The operas bear witness to a progressive accommodation to the taste of large audiences. The supply of performances had to attract the demand of big crowds from many walks of life. The

then often used system with at least parts of salaries to leading singers as shares of the box office revenues put additional internal pressure on the opera managements to program performances with great popular appeal.

6.7 Socialising – social identification – conspicuous consumption

Henrik Knif finds that Thorstein Veblen's concept of 'conspicuous consumption' can be used to understand the attraction that opera had on the London elite during the first half of the eighteenth century (Knif, 1995, pp. 205–209; Veblen, 2009 [1899]). With several historical examples, Veblen explains why expensive, exquisite and time-wasting ways to make one's exclusive tastes known to the world have meaning in a 'prestige economy'. The opera goer has the time and money to waste on this activity rather than on work and productive investments. He probably regards the opera visit as an investment with a social return. Based on Veblen, Knif identifies two interactive processes in the opera: 1. that between the stage and the audience, and 2. that taking place on the audience's side and also close to the opera house.

Of course, this kind of reasoning can be applied also on opera history after the Napoleonic wars. The view of the self as belonging to a special social class or subgroup has to be created, established and maintained. One way is to attend events with a high social status – where the people with whom one wants to identify are. Operas – or at least, as we have seen above, some parts of the venues – provide this kind of opportunity for conspicuous consumption. For some, this may be felt as a push factor. You must sit in your opera box whether you like it or not to cultivate and maintain your social position. For the bourgeoisie and the upper-middle class of the early nineteenth century the opera visit may have had more of a pull factor. They were drawn to the opera for the good it might do for the identification of them as members of the new elite. Hall-Witt (2007, p. 147) declares that people in London with wealth and social ambitions 'by aping the behaviors and tastes of the aristocracy, ... differentiated themselves from the smaller public who attended the opera not for social reasons but primarily for a love of music.'

The opera manager immediately after the July Revolution of 1830, Louis-Désiré Véron, wrote in his memoirs:

The July Revolution is the triumph of the bourgeoisie: this victorious bourgeoisie wanted to enthrone itself, to amuse itself; the Opéra became her Versailles, she came in crowds to take the place of the great lords and the exiled court. (Gerhard, 1992, p. 33)

6.8 Craving for celebrities

The celebrity business is booming. Those who criticise it often see the celebrity cult as something new for our time. However, Antoine Lilti traces its roots far back in history and depicts its growth in the eighteenth century. This 'was linked to these two phenomena: the development of publicity and a new concept of self. Far from being opposite, these two evolutions constituted the two sides of modernity' (Lilti, 2017, p. 11). The media industry,

...which invests the public sphere with celebrity figures, had its origins in the eighteenth-century world of urban spectacle which produced the first stars. Actors, singers, dancers, were created by performing in public and owed their social existence to these performances. Those with the highest exposure became veritable public figures, even outside the theatre hall: their names became known, their faces reproduced, their private lives the object of curiosity. (Lilti, 2017, p. 25)

Literacy grew during the Enlightenment. Newspapers multiplied. Romanticism focused on the artist. Performances were not evaluated according to classical rules or the social hierarchy of the Old Regime. Instead 'public pleasure' was the yardstick.

Gaëtan and Augustin Vestris, father and son, were the celebrity dancers of the second half of the eighteenth century. After a long service at the Paris opera, Augustin signed up for a six-month engagement at the King's Theatre in London, where he was a tremendous success. 'The newspapers ... were tireless in recounting anecdotes about Vestris' visit and didn't hesitate to spread rumours about his feminine conquests' (Lilti, 2017, p. 28).

François-Joseph Talma was the leading French actor after the revolution. He broke with the contemporary style of acting and introduced a naturalistic, psychological way of depicting character. Although a close friend of several revolutionists and of Bonaparte, his celebrity was of a kind that made him remain the dominant personality at the *Comédie-Française* well into the Restoration period.

The Italian soprano Angelica Catalani was considered the *prima donna assoluta* during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. She sang in many opera houses, but she was also one of the first touring virtuosos. Her fees would have provided her with a handsome fortune had it not been for her wasteful and extravagant husband.

6.9 The present and future opera demand

The exclusion of operatic music from concert programming principally still applies. In opera house programming there has been a fundamental shift, from focusing almost entirely on the production of contemporary works in the former period to a focus today on repertory, or historical works, to the exclusion of new ones. If during the studied period almost only living composers were represented, now no contemporary composers are found on the list of the 50 globally most played titles in the 2018–2019 season (Albinsson, 2020). Obviously 'novelty' previously guided the opera business. This aspect is now hardly even secondary.

It is much less likely that the growth of workers' incomes during the twentieth century has led to a similar increase in working class demand for opera as it did for the bourgeoisie during the period studied. In Sweden, for instance, average incomes, adjusted for inflation, have risen fourfold after the Second World War while the Gini coefficient decreased, indicating a more equal income and wealth distribution (Johansson, 2006). Already in 1954, a Swedish government investigation made a statement that seems to hold sway in our present situation, as well:

One cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that the working class largely does not belong to the concert audience... If economic factors alone were decisive, this limitation could not be so pronounced. Undoubtedly this is a psychological problem which has not yet been satisfactorily analyzed. Furthermore, it seems that there is a lingering attitude, which in the higher music is inclined to see something of an exclusive luxury, which does not belong to everyone.

Counteracting this misconception is important in order to promote the participation of the working class in the overall cultural heritage. (*Musikliv i Sverige*, p. 109)

If opera demand increases in the near future, this will possibly be based on the growth of income for population segments that already constitute opera audiences.

Many of the opera companies that currently operate in Europe were started by monarchies which remained their primary funders – apart from tickets sales – well into the nineteenth century. In the beginning they controlled the programming. Today no royal contributions are found in the annual reports of the opera companies in Stockholm and Copenhagen, although both claim to be *Kungliga/Kongelige*, i.e., 'royal' (Kungliga Operan, 2019; Det Kongelige Teater, 2019). The funding is provided by taxpayers via national parliaments. Monarchs have no say in the choice of repertoire. The use today of the totally imaginary connection to the royal court is probably based on tradition and perceived marketing advantages. Royal boxes remain in rare use in the opera houses in the Scandinavian capitals. Although the former Scandinavian

court opera ensembles are now included in the same national Cultural Policy Acts as are other opera companies, they still have a much higher degree of state funding. In fact, contrary to other opera companies, they receive no funding from their host regions and cities.

Technological innovations still play a part for increased opera attendance. Building technology has developed further after the introduction of wrought-iron-reinforced theatre roofs. With the introduction of the phonograph, radio and television operas could be enjoyed in homes, which may have strengthened demand also for attendance at live performances. During the twenty-first century streamed online opera performances have been introduced. Due to the lockdown of public performances during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, online means of diffusion have been adopted by many opera companies.

Technological innovations such as electricity and digitisation have fundamentally changed what is produced on stage. The audience experience is probably intensified. What was stunning and amazing during the studied period is now quaint and historical. The use by composers of greater numbers of both onstage singers and orchestral musicians, starting in the French *grands opéras* of the 1830s, continuing in the Italian *verismo* operas and reaching a peak in the late romantic era of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, reinforced the spectator experience as well.

Swedish sopranos Jenny Lind (1820–1887) and Kristina Nilsson (1843–1921) were global household names to an extent that is hard to imagine for any “unplugged” (i.e., not using a microphone) singer of today. London experienced a ‘Lindomania’ when ‘the Swedish Nightingale’ was the box office favourite during her stint there in 1847–1849. P.H. Barnum engaged her for 93 concerts in America in the early 1850s, for which she earned approximately \$350,000 (equal to approximately \$11 million in 2019). Today an average fee of \$120,000 is, imaginable, if at all, only for the most famous pop music celebrities; it is inconceivable for the opera business. At a return visit to Stockholm, the soprano Kristina Nilsson, who had a career similar to that of Lind, sang from the balcony of the Grand Hôtel in front of an estimated 50,000 spectators. The event turned out to be a disaster: 16 women and two girls were crushed to death. Today this kind of tragedy happens only at major rock music festivals; for instance, at Roskilde in June 2000 when nine young Pearl Jam fans were killed. The celebrity status of Lind and Nilsson is unobtainable for opera singers of today. At most, today’s singers can reach a level of global prominence only in the niche genre that opera now is.

7. Conclusions

A change from there being a large share of the opera boxes rented out per year to the aristocracy during the last decades of the Old Regime, before the French Revolution, to a majority of tickets, including to boxes, sold to commoners after Napoleon I has been found for the Paris opera. Although the monarchy was restored, feudalism was permanently replaced by *liberté, égalité et fraternité*. The French Revolution, both generally and in the theatres, influenced what happened in other countries as well.

Generally, for all the studied opera houses, if the possibility of renting boxes per year remained, the share of people without nobility titles was radically increased at the beginning of the nineteenth century. But overall, the rented box system was left in favour of various forms of what is still the box office standard, namely a mix of subscriptions and tickets sold for single performances.

In Paris and London the new large opera venues with doubled audience capacity put extra pressure on the creation of demand from a broader variety of ticket buyers. Of course, the artistic evolution from the late baroque music of Rameau, via Gluck’s reform operas and Grétry’s and Rossini’s *opéras comiques* to the *grands opéras* of Meyerbeer, Auber and Halévy continuously changed the supply of ever more attractive operas. Many more spectators could

afford tickets due to a leveraging of financial status. The opera remained as a place for ‘conspicuous consumption’ but the *beau monde* who wanted to both see and to be seen in the opera changed from only the ‘first’ aristocracy to also include a new, meritocratic ‘second’ aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Celebrity artists were promoted by the new media industry and, as today, drew huge numbers of spectators.

Despite increasing working class incomes and decreasing economic inequality, it is not obvious that there has been a similar increase in demand for opera on their part. Money alone does not foster operagoing by all and sundry. The massive use of digital means by opera companies during the 2020 pandemic will, most likely, play an important role in the diffusion of opera performances to areas far from the opera houses. Although the streamed opera performance impact is far from what can be experienced live, the walls of the opera houses have become semipermeable. The subsequent osmosis process will, hopefully, contribute to the diffusion and democratisation of the demand for opera.

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Appendix: Tables 3–11

Table 3. Boxes rented per year: L'Académie royale de musique, Paris, 1750–1751, amounts in *livres*.
Sources: AN, AJ/13/12 and AJ/13/13

No.	Part of box	King's side	Fee	No.	Part of box	Queen's side	Fee
1	third third third	M. Le Comte d'Argenson, Ministre M. Le Duc de Gervre M. de Bernage, Prevôt des Marchands	4,000	1	entire	M. Le Duc de Luxembourg	3,000
2	entire	M. Le Comte de Charolais	5,000	2	entire entire	Mlle de Sens (not Fridays) Mme La Duchesse de Maine (Fridays)	2,500 1,000
3	half half	M. Le Comte de Clermont Mlle de Roche-sur-Yon	2,500 2,500	3	entire	M. Le Duc de Chartres	
4	half half	M. Le Duc de Nevers M. de Villemur	2,500 2,500	4	entire	M. Le Comte d'Argenson, Ministre	
5	quarter quarter quarter quarter	M. Le Duc de Valentinois M. de Mondorge M. le Vidame de Vassé M. Le Comte de Caraman	1,250 1,000 1,000 1,250	5	entire	M. Montaman, Palace concierge	
6	quarter quarter quarter quarter	vacant M. Marguet M. de Beaupré M. Le Comte de Caraman	1,250 1,250 1,000 1,250	6	half quarter quarter	Mme Dauriac M. de Bersin M. Caze	2,000 1,250 1,250
7	half half	M. Le Duc de Richelieu Mme de Fontanieux	2,500 2,500	7	half half	M. Dodun M. Le Président Dupuy	2,500 2,000
8	quarter quarter half	vacant Mme Marquise d'Ambre et M. de Broux M. Le Duc de Luxembourg	1,250 1,250 2,000	8	half half	Mme La Comtesse de Choisenil M. Le Duc d'Agenvis	2,500 2,500
9	quarter quarter quarter quarter	M. Le Prince de Soubise Mme de Vouigny M. Gaultier Mme de Lepinau	1,250 1,250 1,000 1,000	9	quarter quarter quarter quarter	vacant M. Marquis Delachenelay M. Le Duc de Losge M. de la Peynieres	1,250 1,000 1,000 1,250
10	quarter quarter quarter quarter	Mme La Marquise de Polignac M. Le Prince de Soubise M. Le Marquis d'Argenson et M. Dangers Mme La Comtesse de Valdenaire	1,250 1,000 1,250 1,250	10	quarter quarter quarter quarter	M. Le President de Lamoignon vacant Mme de Meulan M. Bignon	1,250 1,250 1,250 1,250
11	half half	M. Le Marquis de Gouffier M. de Gonteau	750 750	11	entire	M. de Livry d'Etreaux et Deflavacourt	1,500

<i>Cintre</i>				<i>Cintre</i>			
12	quarter	Mme Presidente de Bernière	150	14	entire	M. Lamonroux	1,000
	half	Mme de Beaufremont	300				
13	quarter	Mme Dagu	150	15	half	M. de Douxmenil	500
	entire	M. de Bernage, Prevôt des Marchands			half	Mme de Granville	500
<i>Stalls, primary</i>				<i>Stalls, primary</i>			
1A	half	Mme La Duchesse de Boufflers	1,500	3 A	quarter	Mme La Marquise de Villeroy	625
	half	vacant	1,500		half	Mme La Presidente de Lamoignon	1,250
2A	quarter	Mme Hesse	625	4 A	half	M. d'Argental	1,500
	quarter	Mme La Marquise de Cursé	625		half	Mme La Princesse de Roubecq	1,400
	quarter	Mme La Marquise de Prulay	625				
	quarter	Mme La Marquise de Chabanay	625				
<i>Stalls, secondary</i>				<i>Stalls, secondary</i>			
1 B	half	Mme La Marquise de Chaumont	1,200	2 B	half	M. Bernard, supervisor of the queen's residence	1,200
	quarter	Mme d'Averne et Mme de Ximenez	600		quarter	Mlle Descouserant and her mother Mme Ferrand	600
	quarter	Mme La Presidente Portail	600		quarter	vacant	600

Note: The long-term lease could be for every performance (entire) or for every other (half), every third or every fourth (quarter) event (Terrier, 2000, p. 28).

Table 4. Boxes rented per year: Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels, 1776–1777, amounts in florins de Brabant. Source: Archives générales du Royaume, fond 608, vol. 129.

First row

Box no.	Tenant	Rent
Balcony	His Majesty the Minister	1,100.00
Lorgnette	Countess du <i>nn</i>	403.20
1–2	His Majesty the King	9,600.00
3	Countess de Cruijkenbourg	604.80
4	Count Colorado	200.00
5	Milady <i>nn</i>	225.00
6	vacant	
7	M. Romberg	604.80
8	M. Walkiers Gammarage	604.80
9	Princess de Ligne	806.40
10	Baron de Werde	604.80
11	Baron de Celles	604.80
12	Mme Kerrembroeck	604.80
13	Mr. Mills	604.80
14	M. Vandenmeulen	604.80
15	Mme Bustoumy	604.80
16	Mme Sambergen	604.80
17	Countess d'Oremberg	806.40
18	Prince de Gavre	403.20
19	Mlle Cardos	806.40

Second row

Box no.	Tenant	Rent
Balcony	Count de Neuij	806.40
Lorgnette	Mme Vanden Broeck	403.20
1	Princess Stolberg	806.40
2	Baron de Hop	453.60
3	Mme Termeren	453.60
4	Baron de Fraudendintz	453.60
5	Mme de <i>nn</i>	453.60
6	Baron de Renette	453.60
7	M. Walkiers Tronehiennes	453.60
8	Viscountess de Cutta	806.40
9	Countess de Woestenraedt	453.60
10	Mme de Wargemont	453.60
11	Mme Mals	453.60
12	M. de Crumpipen	453.60
13	Mme de Beijer	453.60
14	Countess de Ribaucour	453.60
15	Countess de Raest	453.60
16	Count Vandemoot	453.60
17	Marquis de Wemmel	806.40
Lorgnette	Countess de Croli	403.20
Balcony	Mme <i>nn</i>	705.60

Third row

Box no.	Tenant	Rent
Balcony	Mlle Departs	504.00
Lorgnette	M. Vandendieft	189.00
1	Mme Hellin	378.00
2	M. Huijsman d'Aucroix	378.00
3	Mme de Berg	378.00
4A	Mme Cruikbeck	152.25
4B	Mme Simons	189.00
5A	Mme Haegens	189.00
5B	Demoiselle de Reijnegem	189.00
6	Mme de Reijnegem	378.00
7A	Mlle van Wettere	189.00
7B	M. Garnier	189.00
8A	Countess d'Epinoy	189.00
8B	M. Vaes	189.00
9A	Countess de Maedegem	189.00
9B	Marquis Grandhomme D'Ailly	220.50
10	Coount Charles de Croli	378.00
11	M. de Busschere	278.00
12A	M. de Cape Warbecy	189.00
12B	Cavalier de Celles	189.00
13	Mme de Kesselaer	387.00
14	M. De Limpens	278.00
15A	Countess de Hallberg	180.60
15B	Mme Catin	189.00
16	M. Cangaert	378.00
17	M. Van Casteel	378.00
Lorgnette	Mlle Agathine	189.00
Balcony	Mlle Scoutens	504.00

Note 1: Some of the names may have been subject to misinterpretation.

Note 2: Many seats in the parterre and the amphitheatre were also held by yearly or monthly tenants.

Table 5. Boxes rented per year: Teatro Regio, Turin, 1782–1783. Sources: Archivio di Stato di Torino, Collezione IX, vol. 67.

ORDINE PRIMO

<i>Parte sinistra</i>				<i>Parte destra</i>			
No.	Box holder	Spring	Autumn	No.	Box holder	Spring	Autumn
1	Marchese di Paressio	30.00	48.75	1	M. di Cresentino	30.00	48.75
2	Marchese Pallavicino	30.00	48.75	2	Min. dagli affari esteri	30.00	48.75
3	Conte di Vallesa	30.00	48.75	3	Conte di Cané	30.00	48.75
4	Marchese d'Ozá	30.00	48.75	4	Conte d'Alpignano	30.00	48.75
5	Marchese di Cirié	30.00	48.75	5	Conte de Barvassano	30.00	48.75
6	Conte di Levaldiggi	30.00	48.75	6	Maarchese Parella	30.00	48.75
7	Conte d'Orbassano	30.00	48.75	7	Conte Provana	30.00	48.75
8	Conte di Revello	30.00	48.75	8	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00
9	Conte Barbaresco	30.00	48.75	9	Conte di Pertengo	30.00	48.75
10	Conte Salmatoris	30.00	48.75	10	Marchese Graneri	30.00	48.75

ORDINE SECONDO

<i>Parte sinistra</i>				<i>Parte destra</i>			
No.	Box holder	Spring	Autumn	No.	Box holder	Spring	Autumn
1	Il Gov. Della Città	0.00	0.00	1	Marchese d'Entraque	30.00	48.75
2	Marchese di Barolo	30.00	48.75	2	Conte di Frinco	30.00	48.75
3	Marchese d'Ormea	30.00	48.75	3	Conte di Guarene	30.00	48.75
4	Marchese de St. Marzano	30.00	48.75	4	Conte di Carpené	30.00	48.75
5	Conte di Perrone	30.00	48.75	5	Conte di Birolo	30.00	48.75
6	Marchese di St. Tommaso	30.00	48.75	6	Marchese di Voghera	30.00	48.75
7	Conte di Robilant	30.00	48.75	7	Conte di St. Gilli	30.00	48.75
8	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00	8	Conte di Sartirana	0.00	0.00
9	Conte di Masino	30.00	48.75	9	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00
10	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00	10	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00
11	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00	11	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00

ORDINE TERZO

<i>Parte sinistra</i>				<i>Parte destra</i>			
No.	Box holder	Spring	Autumn	No.	Box holder	Spring	Autumn
1	Marchese della Chiusa	30.00	48.75	1	Conte Martini	30.00	48.75
2	Marchese d'Aix	30.00	48.75	2	Conte di Castelengo	30.00	48.75
3	Marchese del Borgo	30.00	48.75	3	Conte Richelmi	30.00	48.75
4	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00	4	Conte di Scarnafiggi	30.00	48.75
5	Marchese di Cavaglia	30.00	48.75	5	Conte de Collegrio	30.00	48.75
6	Conte di Lascagno	30.00	48.75	6	Cavaliere di Salmour	30.00	48.75
7	Conte di Borgaro	30.00	48.75	7	Marchese di Grozegno	30.00	48.75
8	Conte Provana del Sabbione	30.00	48.75	8	Conti di Pralormo	30.00	48.75
9	Marchese d'Angennes	30.00	48.75	9	Marchese Berggiamo	30.00	48.75
10	Conte d'Aglié	30.00	48.75	10	Conte Balbiano	30.00	48.75
11	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00	11	S. A. Ssma	0.00	0.00

ORDINE QUARTO

<i>Parte sinistra</i>				<i>Parte destra</i>			
No.	Box holder	Spring	Autumn	No.	Box holder	Spring	Autumn
1	Gli figuranti della sala	0.00	0.00	1	Gli figuranti della sala	0.00	0.00
2	Gli figuranti della sala	0.00	0.00	2	Gli figuranti della sala	0.00	0.00
3	Donaudi Amedeo	20.00	39.00	3	Gentile	20.00	39.00
4	Impressario delle Opere Buffe	20.00	0.00	4	Impressario delle Opere Buffe	20.00	0.00
5	Marchese di Voghera	20.00	39.00	5	Borbonese Spirito	20.00	39.00
6	Conte di Chalant	20.00	39.00	6	Barone della Turbia	20.00	39.00
7	Conte Palma	20.00	39.00	7	Boissier	20.00	39.00

8	Conte Lasero	20.00	39.00	8	Marchese di St. Tommaso	20.00	39.00
9	Marchese d'Entraque	20.00	39.00	9	Conte della Rocca	20.00	39.00
10	Conte di Salmatoris	20.00	39.00	10	Conte Favetti	20.00	39.00
11	Conte di Revello	20.00	39.00	11	Maarchese d'Ozà	20.00	39.00

Table 6. Boxes rented per year: King's Theatre, London, 1782–1783. Source: Hall-Witt, 2007, p. 63. She credits Anonymous (1783) as the primary source.

First circle

Box no.	King's Side
1	Lady Harland
2	Lady Cadogan
3	Lady Aylesbury
4	Mrs. Boone
5	Lady Pelham
6	Miss Pelham
7	Lady Craven
8	Miss Willis
9	Lady Younge
10	Lady Essex
11	Lady Salisbury
12	Duchess of Argyll
13	Lady Shelburne
14–15	H.R.H Duke of Cumberland

First circle

Box no.	Prince's Side
28	Lady Mary Duncan
27	Lady Rocking
26	Lady Mary Churchill
25	Lady B. Tollemache
24	Mrs. Hobart
23	Lady Townsend
22	Duchess of Ancaster
21	Lady Talbot
20	Lady Horton
19	Lady M. Fordyce
18	Lady Grimstone
16–17	Lady Melbourne

Second circle

Box no.	King's Side
58	Mrs Crewe
57	Lady Seston
56	Lady Weymouth
55	Lady Fembroke
54	Lady Jersey
53	Mrs. Broadhead
52	Miss Damer
51	Lady Mary Bowlby
50–49	Duchess of Richmond
48	Lady Maynard
47	Lady Stawell
46	Lady Rumbold
45	H.R.H. Prince of Wales
44	Lady Taylor

Second circle

Box no.	Prince's Side
29	Lady Spencer
30	Mrs. Meynell
31	Duchess of Marlboro
32	Duchess of Bedford
33	Lady Clarges
34	Lady Geo. Cavendish
35	Lady Brudenell
36	Hon. Mrs. Stewart
37–38	Mrs. Hampden
39	March. of Grey
40	Lady Hume
41	Duchess of Buecleugh
42	Lady Carlisle
43	Lady Charl. Dundas

Third circle

Box no.	King's Side
59–60	H.R.H. Duke of Gloucester
61	Lady Dyfart
62	Lady Beauchamp
63	Mrs. FitzGerald
64	Lady Turcornell
65	Lady Vere
66	Lady Bulkley
67	Mrs. Armstead
68	Lady Warren
69	Mrs. Robinson
70	Lady Charlotte Tuston
71	Lady Grosvenor
72	Countess Kageneck
73	Lady Lincoln

Third circle

Box no.	Prince's Side
88	Mrs. Sheridan
87	Lady Betty Delme
86	Lady Anstruther
85	Lady Fleming
84	Lady Broughton
83	Lady Griffin
82	Mrs. Sawbridge
81	Mrs. Murray
80	Mr. Taylor
79	Sir John Lade
78	Mr. Harris
77	Mrs. Graham
76	Lady Archer
75	Mrs. Payne Galway
74	Mr. Boothby

Fourth circle

Box no.	King's Side
100-97	Vacant
96	Mrs. Davis
95	Mrs. Mahon

Fourth circle

Box no.	Prince's Side
89-92	Vacant
93	Mrs. Yates
94	Vacant

Table 7. Boxes rented per year: Kungliga theatern, Stockholm, 1787, amounts in *Riksdaler*. Source: KTA, G 1, vol. 1.

<i>First circle</i>			<i>Third circle</i>		
Box no.	Box holder	Per year	Box no.	Box holder	Per year
2	Russian minister	80.00	1	Mrs. Olin	
3	Spanish minister	80.00	4	French ensemble	
4	Royal Councillor Oxenstierna	80.00	6	City Governor of Stockholm	16.00
5	Count Ridderstolpe	44.00	7	Lieutenant Rosenschütz	60.00
6	Royal Household Superintendent	66.67	8	Herrn Passau	27.00
7	City Governor of Stockholm	66.67		Mrs. Kihlgren	33.00
11	General Taube	60.00	9	Mr. Collin Mr. Schinkel	27.00 33.00
12	Royal Councillor von Fersen	66.67	10	King's pages	
			11	Mr. Meijer Judge Liljensparre	27.00 33.00
			12	Mr. Groth	33.00
			15	Royal Opera	
			<i>Amphitheatre</i>		
			Box no.	Box holder	Per year
			8	Baron Mandeström	
			9	General Horn	13.33
			10	Dep. City Governor of Stockholm	
			11	General Aminoff	
			12	Royal Councillor Zibeth	
			13	Royal Intendant Rehn	
			14	Chamber secretary Clevberg	
			15	Councillor Hallman Councillor Wedenberg	
			24	The Royal Guards Major	
			25	Baron Armfelt	
			26	Lieutenant Rosenschütz	
			29	Monsieur Depresse	
			30	Professor Sergel	
			33	Librarian Leopold	
			34	Chamber secretary Kiellgren	

Table 8. Boxes rented per year: L'Académie royale de musique, in Théâtre National de la rue de la Loi, Paris, Month of Pluviose, an 12 (late January of 1804), amounts in *francs*. Source: AN, fond AJ13, vol. 70.

Rez de Chaussée

Box no.	Box holder	Duration	Part of box	Rent
1	First consul (Napoléon)	year	full	5,000
2	M. Roederer	year	full	2,400
3	M. Andrieu	six months	quarter	450
11	Mme de Vandemont	three months	quarter	250
12	Mme de Vandemont	three months	quarter	250
12	Mme de Levie	six months	quarter	450
12	M. Charles	six months	half	750
13	M. Darnay	year	full	2,400
14	M. Lajard	year	full	3,000

Premières

Box no.	Name	Duration	Part of box	Rent
1–	First consul (Napoléon)	year	full	10,000
14	M. Talon	year	full	1,200
16	Mme d'Esquelberg	six months	quarter	700
17	M. Imperiale	six months	full	720
19	M. de Wurtemberg	three months	full	1,500
20	M. Marescalky	six months	half	1,400
21	M. Demidof	eight months	full	3,533
22	M. Sapeka	three months	full	1,500
23–24	M. de Gallo	year	full	8,500
26	Mme Perrin	five months	half	1,166
26	M. Saladin	six months	quarter	700
27–28	M. de Talleyrand	year	full	5,000
29–30	Mme Recamier	six months	full	5,600
31	M. Colin	year	full	1,200
43	M. le Contenty	six months	half	1,200
44	M. de Runan	year	full	4,400

Secondes

Box no.	Name	Duration	Part of box	Rent
1	M. de Fuente	one month	full	350
14–15	The War Minister	year	full	5,700
16–17	The Grand Judge	year	full	4,500
18	The Prefect of the Police	year	full	4,500
19	M. Divoff	one month	full	500
20	M. le Missier	six months	quarter	600
22	Mme Filtz-Gerald	six months	quarter	600
24	M. Tibergien	six months	half	1,200
27	M. de Waetches	six months	half	1,200
28	M. Michel	six months	half	1,200
29–30	Second consul	year	full	4,500
31–32	Third consul (Lebrun)	year	full	4,500
43	M. Champilos	three months	full	1,200

Troisièmes

Box no.	Name	Duration	Part of box	Rent
14	M. Mathieu	five months	full	500
17	M. Joseph	year	half	500
17	M. d'Angosse	three months	half	180
29	M. Dufan	year	full	1,000
34	Mme de Lurieux	three months	quarter	200
34	M. de Visionty	year	eighth	300

Table 9. Mindre theatren, Stockholm, 4th quarter 1806, subscriptions, amounts in *Riksdaler*. Source: KTA, code D 7 AB.

Person	Amount	Person	Amount
Wholesaler Falk	144.00	Major Arvedson	20.50
Court Counsellor, baron Fock	140.00	Kammarjunkare Gyllenpalm	20.00
Count Stackelberg	136.00	Count Piper	20.00
The King Mother	120.67	Miss Hellding	18.50
Manufacturer Tillander	120.00	Mrs. Burgman	18.00
Major Berger	120.00	Furniture merchant Palin	17.50
His Excellency, count Brahe	120.00	Cavalry captain Silfverstolpe	17.33
Countess Hamilton	120.00	Wholesaler Wulff	17.00
Baron Falkenberg	120.00	Wholesaler Sederholm	17.00
Ironworks patron Lorichs	112.00	Baron Friesendorff	17.00
Ironworks patron Wegelin	88.00	Baron A. Adelsvärd	16.50
Ironworks patron Björkman	88.00	Wholesaler Noer	16.00
Colonel Adelsvärd	88.00	Ironworks patron Wahrendorff	16.00
Ironworks patron John Hall	84.50	Ironworks patron Bjuggren	15.00
His Excellency, count Wachtmeister	67.50	Brewer Richnau	15.00
Royal Counsellor Levin	60.00	Wholesaler Smedberg	14.67
Cavalry captain Hisinger	60.00	Captain Biörnstierna	14.50
Wholesaler Philipson	48.00	Commerce Counsellor Koschell	14.00
Wholesaler Moll	46.67	Count (?) Lindqvister	13.33
Royal Council President, count Fersen	44.00	Her Majesty the Queen	12.50
Baron Uggla	42.50	Merchant Ek	8.00
Brewmaster Hardtman	40.00	Mrs. Strömberg	7.00
Ironworks patron Gödecke	39.00	Mrs. Dislin	7.00
Ironworks patron Arvedson	36.00	Miss G. Lind	5.00
Mrs. Widström	32.00	Merchant Collin	4.50
Captain, baron Liljencrantz	32.00	Commerce Councillor Schinkel	4.00
Admiral, baron Lagerbielke	32.00	Brewer Lindgren	1.50
Wholesaler Mellroth	25.33	Royal Secretary Westberg	1.33
Count Ugglas	22.00		

Table 10. Gustavian opera house, subscription income 1820.

Date	Play	Subscriptions	Box office	Total
4 Jan	Zauberflöte	71.00	413.75	484.75
12 Jan	Aline	110.00	413.75	523.75
19 Jan	Joconde	140.00	515.25	655.25
26 Jan	Sargines	153.50	507.75	661.25
2 Feb	Joconde	155.00	503.25	658.25
16 Feb	Sargines	155.00	461.00	616.00
23 Feb	Jean de Paris, Figaro	155.00	508.75	663.75
1 Mar	Le porteur d'eau, Skogsflickan	155.00	563.50	718.50
8 Mar	L'auberge de Bagnères, La fille mal gardée	155.00	311.75	466.75
22 Mar	L'Auberge, Les deux petits savoyards, Narcisse	52.50	330.50	383.00
5 Apr	La famille Suisse, A Turkish Divertissement	52.50	392.25	444.75
12 Apr	Aline, Roland et Morgane	52.50	554.00	606.50
19 Apr	Romeo et Juliette	52.50	235.25	287.75
26 Apr	Ariodante, Roland	52.50	417.50	470.00
7 May	Hermann von Unna	52.50	691.00	743.50

18 Oct	Cendrillon, divertissement	78.50	620.75	699.25
25 Oct	Zauberflöte	80.00	708.00	788.00
1 Nov	Richard Cœur-de-Lion, divertissement with dance	80.00	741.25	821.00
8 Nov	Le porteur d'eau, Les rendez-vous villageois	80.00	578.50	658.50
15 Nov	Armide	89.00	666.50	755.50
22 Nov	Joconde, Narcisse	105.50	605.00	710.50
29 Nov	L'Intrigue aux fenêtres, Roland et Morgane	120.50	562.75	683.25
6 Dec	Ariodante, Les rendez-vous villageois	122.00	480.00	602.00
13 Dec	Aline. With divertissement	122.00	577.50	699.50
20 Dec	La Maison à vendre, Figaro (ballet)	122.00	345.50	467.50
	Total	2,564.00	12,705.00	15,269.00
	%	17 %	83 %	

Table 11. Königliches Schauspielhaus, Berlin, as of 1 November 1824, subscriptions; amounts in *Reichsthaler* (30 *Silbergroschen* per *Reichsthaler*). Source: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, code I. HA Rep. 36, nr 2413.

Upper Circle (10 rt. per person and month)

Box No.

13.	Merchant	Reubekeul	(for 6 persons)
15.	Merchant	Hirse Korn	(for 6 persons)
23.	Accountant	Borchard	(for 5 persons)

Stalls – right (13 rt. 10 sg. per person and month)

Seat no.

11. 12.	Councillor	Felgentreff
22. 23.	Inspector	Vidal
24. 25.	Merchant	Hartwig
26.	Coppersmith	Paalzow
27. 28.	Postal secretary	Elteston
29. 30.	Accountant	Borchard
31.	War minister	Sinek
32. 33.	Mrs.	Jaquier
34. 35.	Accountant	Henzelmann
36.	Chancellery director	Haase
37.	Merchant	Mewis
38. 39.	Rentier	Maquet
40.	Commissary	Gardemin
45.	Councillor	Weinhold
47. 48.	Mrs.	Ravené
55. 56.	Accountant	Saße
50.	Glass merchant	Krause
49.	Innkeeper	Gläser
53. 54.	Mrs.	Frese
58. 59.	Councillor	Heckstedt

Stalls – left (13 rt. 10 sg. per person and month)

Seat no.

25. 26.	Mrs. Professor	Dettmers
27. 28.	Accountant	Licht
29.	Mrs.	Matton
30.	Merchant	Jondeur
31.	Privy secretary	Schulz
32.	Mrs.	Weisbek
33. 34.	Mr.	Kronheim
35. 36.	Major	von Oesfeld
37. 38.	Rentier	Gubitz
39. 40.	Madame	Hellgräwe
41.	Merchant	Fiocati
46. 47.	Cavalry captain	Veckenstedt

48.	Councillor	Coulon
49. 50.	Mrs. Major	von Heuser
51.	Miss	Heister
55. 56.	Tax minister	Privé
57. 58.	Mr.	Eisemann et Benda
59. 60.	Cabinet member	Neumann
61.	Commissary	Lange
62. 63.	Mr.	Schulze
71.	Cashier	Roth

Abstract

Opera has gone from a cherished vehicle for royal and aristocratic socializing to a forum for cultural experiences open to everybody. At least for those of us who can afford a ticket. This paper presents findings regarding the transition of audience revenues from the renting out of boxes and seats for all performances during one season to the aristocracy to a much larger share of tickets sold for single performances to a more general audience. Although it was a long, drawn-out process, it seems that the French Revolution was a tipping point not only for the French opera houses, but for those in other European countries as well. Possible pull factors for the much increased bourgeoisie demand are discussed. They include the general economic growth, stable ticket prices, technological evolution, changes in repertoire, the social identification factor, conspicuous consumption, and the new ‘celebrity industry’.

This story is told based on primary data collected in the archives belonging to the *Opéra National de Paris*, *Kungliga Operan* in Stockholm, *Théâtre de la Monnaie* in Brussels, *Teatro Regio* in Turin and *Königliche Preussische Hofoper* in Berlin. Secondary sources are used to describe what occurred in opera venues in London. The paper also includes information on how seats were sold, who rented boxes annually, box office revenues and on the share of these revenues in the opera revenues. The study ranges from 1750 to 1824.

Keywords: business history; economic history; opera; cultural economics.

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Staffan Albinsson received his PhD in Economic History from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, in May 2013. His PhD compilation thesis is entitled, ‘Nothing New Under the Sun: Essays on the Economic History of Intellectual Property Rights in Music’. Staffan received his BA at the Lund University in 1976. He studied simultaneously at the Music Conservatory in Malmö. Staffan received his master’s degree in Lund in 2010, after having spent the previous three decades working in music management. In the late 1970s he started the Norrland Opera Symphony Orchestra. After a few years as manager of the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra he served for many years as county music director and production manager with the Musik i Väst (Music in Western Sweden) Foundation in Gothenburg. Before returning to academia he served as Head of Classical Music at the newly established Vara Concert Hall. Currently Staffan is a faculty member of the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the School of Business, Economics and Law of the University of Gothenburg.

