



A moment of decision: opera and co-creation

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Bridging the Gap: Community Music and Community Opera

International Conference

27 October 2021



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 870610

Opera and co-creation



1. Why art matters in democracy
2. Participation as a response to the problems of opera
3. The Traction project: technology and trials
4. What we are learning

Art as a key to democratic participation



This Is Not For You, Graeae, London, 2018

‘Art is the creation of meaning through stories, images, sounds, performances and other methods that enable people to communicate to others their experience of and feelings about being alive.’

Art and human rights



Everyone has the right freely
**to participate in the cultural
life of the community**, to
enjoy the arts and to share in
scientific advancement and
its benefits.

*Universal Declaration of Human
Rights Art. 27*



What does it mean to participate in the cultural life of the community?



The highs and lows of opera



The cultural authority of centuries

Centuries of beliefs, precedents and expectations


An art that inspires passionate enthusiasm

But indifference from the great majority of people

Exceptional artistic, economic and human resources

In whose service, and to what ends?

Opera in the 21st century

A photograph of an opera stage. Three figures in white robes are suspended in the air against a blue background. The stage floor is dark, and the audience is visible in the foreground.

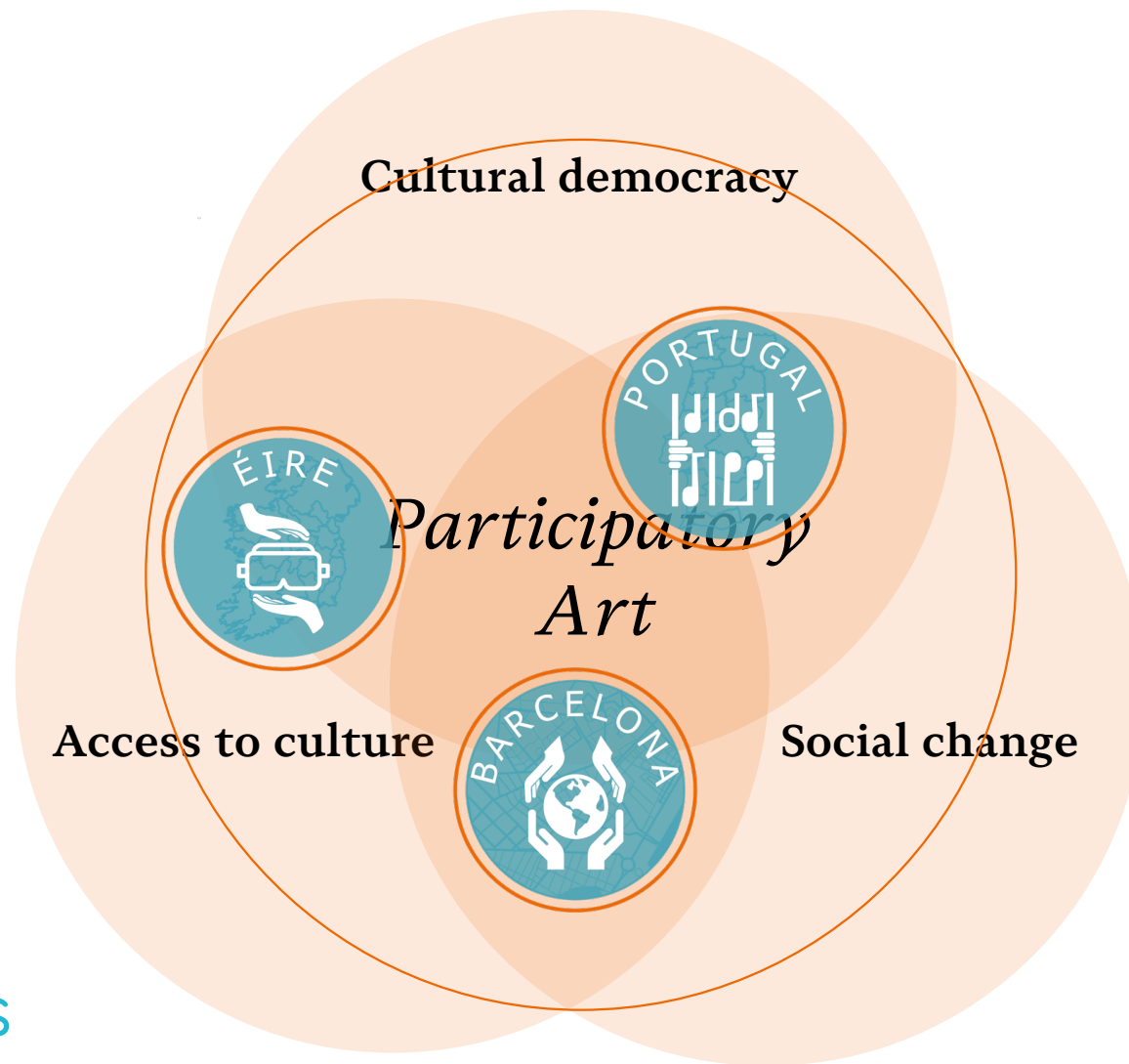
The energy that created Fine Art is dissipating
Culture grows more economically and socially important
But it is changing very fast as the world changes
What is the future of opera in this world?

The rise of participation



But what kind of participation,
and for what purpose?





Intentions



TRACTION

Opera co-creation for a social transformation

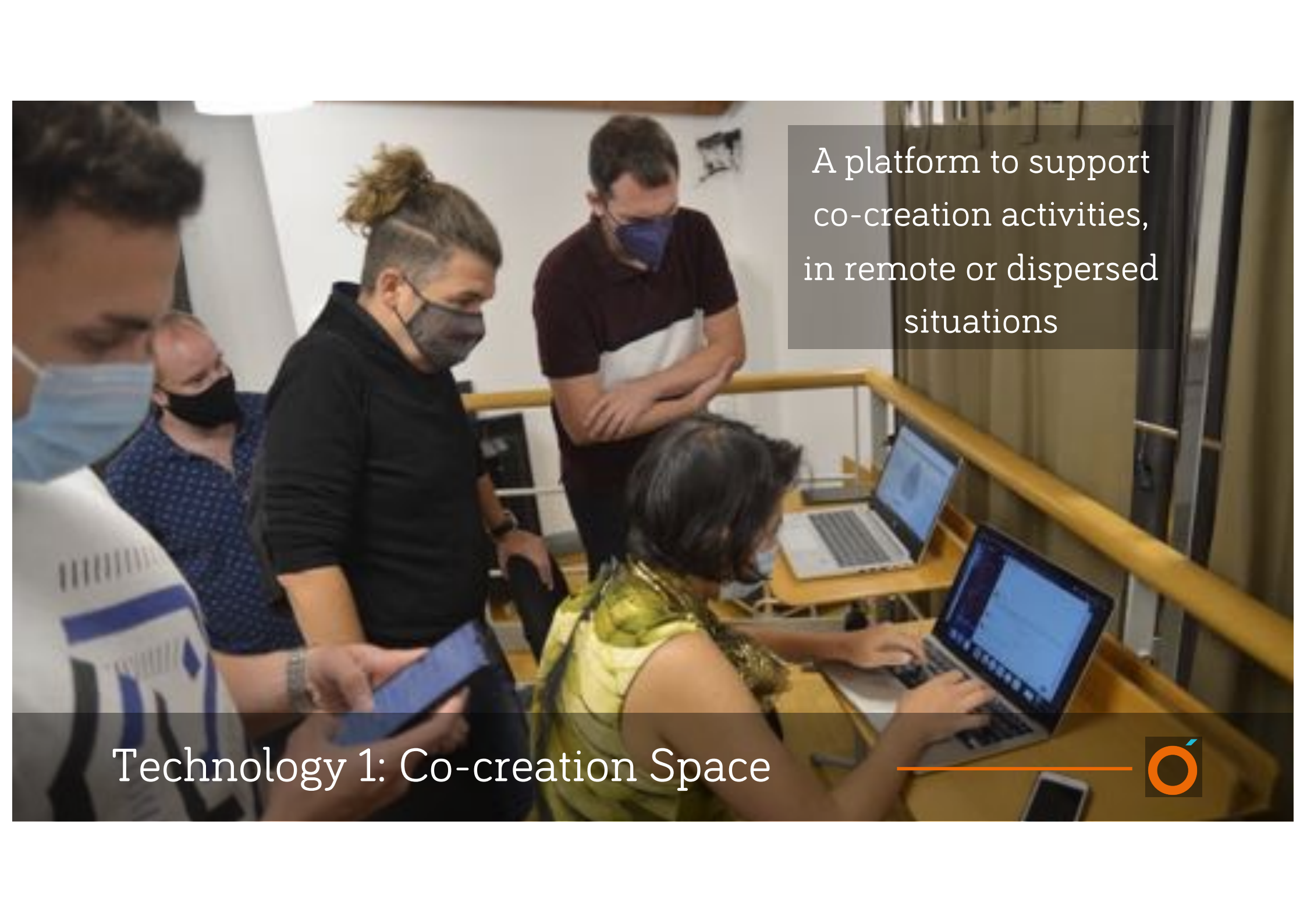


Three elements of Traction



1. New digital technologies to facilitate co-creation
2. Co-creation opera trials in Barcelona, Portugal and Ireland
3. A new approach to understanding and evaluating impact



A group of five people are gathered in a co-creation space. In the foreground, a man with a blue face mask and a white t-shirt with blue graphics is looking down. Behind him, a man in a black shirt and grey face mask is holding a blue folder. To the right, a woman in a yellow sleeveless top is sitting at a desk, working on a laptop. Another man in a black shirt and blue face mask is standing behind her, looking at the laptop. In the background, a man in a black and white shirt and blue face mask is standing with his arms crossed. The space has a wooden railing and a desk with two laptops. The text "A platform to support co-creation activities, in remote or dispersed situations" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

A platform to support
co-creation activities,
in remote or dispersed
situations

Technology 1: Co-creation Space



Technology 2: Co-creation Stage

A photograph of a live production control room. In the foreground, a man in a black shirt and blue face mask is partially visible on the right. Behind him, another man in a green shirt and blue face mask is looking at a monitor. A third person, also masked, is seated at the desk. The desk is cluttered with multiple computer monitors displaying various video feeds and technical data, several laptops, a mixing console with many colored buttons, and other production equipment. The room has a dark, professional aesthetic with wood paneling and stage lights visible in the background.

A tool for live performance from different locations with professionals and non-professional artists.

Technology 3: Virtual Reality



Existing technology being used for
the first time in opera co-creation

El Gran Teatre del Liceu



- Where:* Urban neighbourhood in Barcelona
- What:* 175 year old Opera House
- Who:* People with disabilities, students, people with a migrant experience, former sex workers, residents of Raval
- Venue:* Opening performance of 2022-23 Season
- Technology:* Co-creation Space & Co-creation Stage





Irish National Opera



- Where:* National – remote, rural and peripheral
- What:* New opera producing company
- Who:* Irish speakers living in remote areas, teenagers in rural communities, adults in Tallaght and South Dublin
- Venue:* Virtual Reality – Festivals and all 32 counties
- Technology:* Co-creation Space & existing VR platforms



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Sociedade Artística Musical dos Pousos



Where: Provincial city

What: Music school

Who: Young prisoners, family members, former inmates, guards, residents of Leiria, justice ministry officials

Venue: Prison and concert hall

Technology: Co-creation Space & Co-creation Stage





Co-creation



The creation of a work of art by professional and non-professional artists



Co-creation



The creation of a work of art by professional and non-professional artists





What are we learning?

Co-creation changes the form and aesthetics of opera



Working for social inclusion changes how work happens



Sustainable progress depends on institutional change



Human dignity and equality are fundamental to co-creation



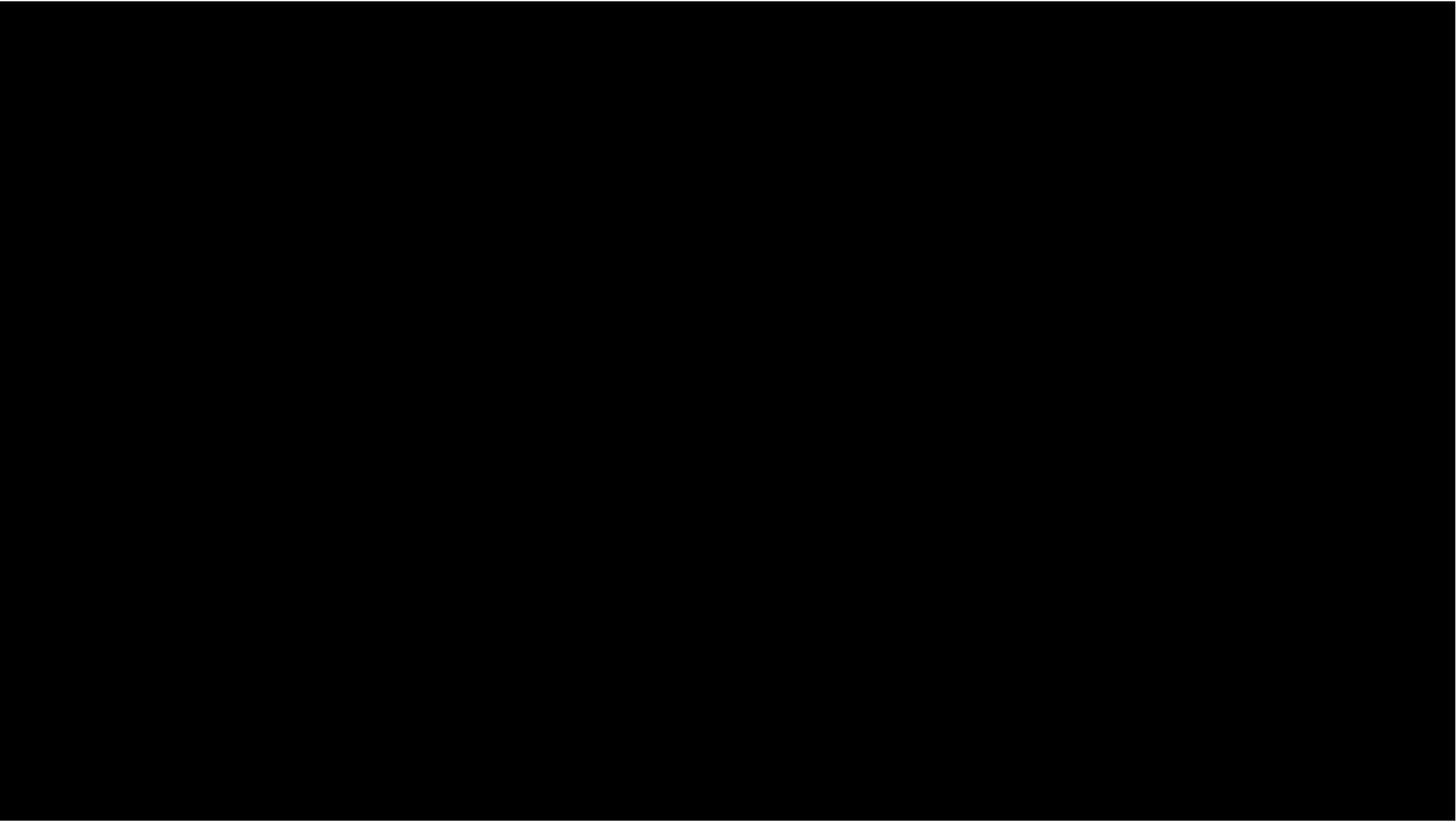
A photograph of a group of people, primarily Black, wearing white t-shirts. They are gathered together in a group hug, illuminated by a strong blue light. The scene conveys a sense of unity and emotional connection.

We still need opera

Its very exclusiveness makes it a powerful territory for inclusion
...if that's really what we want

Grazie!







Social impact is not the purpose of art



Distinguishing between rights and benefits

Rights are fundamental to human dignity

Benefits of participation art are vital – but incidental

Art and human rights



Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 27

‘Everyone has the right **freely to participate in the cultural life of the community**, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Opera, inclusion and human capabilities

[Capabilities] are the answers to the question, "What is this person able to do and to be?" They are not just abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment.

Martha C. Nussbaum. *Creating Capabilities*, 2011