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Convergence strategy and innovation capability of the classic art industry



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Abstract

Arts management is the field related to business operations of arts organizations, specifically production, fundraising, policy and administration, public relations, marketing, etc. The main characteristic of the field of art is that it requires talented people as the main input for value creation, and this requires effective management of resources and processes. The purpose of this study is to investigate the potential of a convergence strategy for improving the sustainability of the opera industry by focusing on operama, a new genre created through the fusion of opera and drama. Through the convergence of the two different industries, operama has been able to communicate the philosophy and artistic values of classic art to the public more effectively. This study proposes how classic art industries can be positively reinvented by adopting various convergence strategies.

Keywords: Art management, Classic art industry, Convergence strategy, Operama

Introduction

Art management is concerned with effective use of various resources for successful artistic performances [1]. While the artistic talent of the cast is the fundamental requirement for attracting an audience, there are numerous other resources and operations that are required for the production of performances such as fundraising, public relations, process management, marketing, administrative policies/procedures, security, and the like [2]. The unique characteristic of art performance is that it is a human talent-intensive production, not only the artistic talent of performers but employees and volunteers in every facet of the event operation. The value that the audience is looking for in an art performance is the fulfillment of emotional and sensory desire for the beauty of art [1]. The fundamental goal of art management is finding the most effective way to “connect people with the artwork.” This paper proposes “operama” as a new innovation to achieve this goal. Operama is a genre created through the fusion of classic opera and modern drama through modern media.

While the production of an exceptional event is the goal of every art organization, such performance requires inputs of various resources. The public demand for fine arts, which cannot be mass-produced, has somewhat drifted recently, financial sustainability has posed daunting challenges in art management [3]. Many art organizations

focus on simply surviving and staying afloat financially. The core of art management, therefore, should be the development and execution of effective strategies for improving the quality of art performance with available resources [2]. The first step for developing such strategies is to analyze the current state of the art performance.

According to the Art Management Support Center of Korea, only about 42% of audiences of performing arts events are paying customers [4]. A newspaper report even suggested that the actual fraction of paying audience may be as low as 20%, as about 50% of tickets are usually purchased by sponsoring organizations for their special customers [5]. This very low rate of paying customers has been a critical issue for the classical music industry. In the music industry, operama is a new innovation for the modern music lovers who cherish the philosophies and emotion-rousing music of classic operas and the interpretation of the themes in the modern-day environment. The enthusiasm of operama by the public has been exceptional. We believe this innovation is a new business model in the fine arts industry which can sustain the industry by providing new value to the lovers of classical music.

Every aspect of arts management is important for quality performance and audience engagement. However, art management appears to focus on just helping art organizations stay afloat financially. The most important goal of arts management should be developing and executing effective strategies for improving the quality of art performance with the available resources. The fundamental principle of arts management is to create meaningful connections between people and artworks and then determine the best action plans for the performance. In many pop cultures, the arts and the public neglect each other and as a result, they do not share the artistic value and quality. Operama is one of few channels to overcome this challenge by applying a mixture of fine arts and popular arts to complement each other to create quality art through modern media.

In this paper, we present a case study of operama development in South Korea. A number of successful operama performances have been produced with enthusiastic audiences during the past several years. Operama includes not only the Western classical tradition of the Renaissance period but also modern drama on multiple media such as television, movies, pop and jazz concerts, and the like. The result of the study is expected to contribute to the arts industry management, innovation in human-intensive industries, and value creation through convergence in arts. The paper is organized as follows: The “Review of relevant literature” section presents a review of relevant literature to support the study. In the “New genre of operama” section, we discuss the emergence of operama as a new genre of music and drama, including its development and performance on multiple media. The “Implication and conclusion” section presents implications and conclusion on the paper.

Review of relevant literature

Opera

Opera is part of the Western classical tradition that started in Italy during the sixteenth century Renaissance period [6]. Common artistic elements found in opera during this time included many genres such as literature, music, art, dance, play, and the like. There are fine arts and art fundamentals that have survived for a long period and can be defined as “classic.” In addition to usual musical elements, opera has been connected

with philosophical trends and conditions of the period [7]. During the early days, nobles invited commoners to banquets to demonstrate their power, while using opera as the medium. During this process, commoners also became interested in opera, especially with the development of the philosophy, performances that portrayed conflicts in the social hierarchy system, and plots related to revolution [6, 7]. Also, along with developing economic conditions, commercial opera theaters were being built from the seventeenth century [7].

Opera was not just for enjoyment of the nobles, but it was also a genre that provided opportunities for everyone from all social classes to be engaged. To compare, opera was on par with the status of movies or musicals of the present day. The status of opera did not suddenly change based on a single event in a particular period, rather opera has survived for a long period of time and is now defined as classic. The definition of classic has been losing its true meaning by becoming synonymous with words like old or old-fashioned [3]. Opera represents classic, fine arts, and art fundamentals, the same reasons that classics are facing difficulties in the present time.

In South Korea, an opera-loving country, ticket prices of operas performed at the Seoul Arts Center Opera Theater (the most renowned opera theaters with 2283 audience capacity) range from \$10 (Class D) to \$200 (Class R). Although most of the performances sell out, the opera theater is not profitable. The portion of the audience who pays the full price for the performance is rather small. They are either invited to the performance or purchase tickets at a substantial discount through some sponsors, or in some cases attend for free. According to the *Kyunghyang Newspaper* [8], about 40 percent of customers attending performances of national and public opera houses do not pay.

In South Korea, many popular musicals are much more profitable than operas. For most people wanting to purchase musical tickets, they wait in front of their computers for the online ticketing system to open for their preferred dates and performing casts of their choice. On the other hand, nowadays operas do not get enthusiastic support, especially from young people. This simply is not a pricing issue as the ticket prices of operas and musicals are similar and, in some cases, musical tickets are even more expensive. Opera goers and musical lovers show somewhat distinct ticket purchasing patterns. The 2013 Survey on Performing Arts by the Korea Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism indicated these differences on genres. There were 3282 musicals performed 39,955 times in 21,191 days that attracted about 9.3 million people in 2013. On the other hand, there were 248 operas performed 549 times in 415 days and attracted about 304,600 customers in 2013 [9]. These numbers clearly indicate demand for operas is not up to the level for musicals. The number of customers decreased from 2013 to 2017 for both genres, but the decrease rate of operas was 40%, much higher than 17% for musicals [10]. Table 1 summarizes the numbers.

What caused this gap between operas and musicals? There are standard answers to this question. First, popular and large scale musicals in South Korea feature star

Table 1 Audience numbers of musicals and operas over 5 years in South Korea

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Decreasing rate over 5 years
Musical	9,339,579	9,499,382	8,535,163	5,595,999	7,791,796	17%
Opera	304,595	346,674	295,586	208,207	183,885	40%

celebrity casts whereas operas often feature unknown new singers. Second, musicals are more familiar to the public than operas that are often sung in different languages and unfamiliar classical music [11]. Even though operas contain philosophical themes, such messages are lost if they are not congruous with today's trends and values [7]. The lack of adaptability to change, either by design or not, appears to be the reason why fine arts including opera continuously fall behind in Korea. The opera started as an amusement in the sixteenth century, but its perception as a fun play has faded significantly. The third reason is that operas have lacked creative publicity and promotion.

Today, all genres, including classical music performance, must compete with other entertainment activities and genres in order to attract people to music halls or theaters. Contents of the popular culture are continuously evolving and being recreated, exposing the public through more developed channels like video streaming, the Internet, and SNS. The pop music industry has been much more innovative and future-oriented than its classical music counterpart in leveraging multiple media [12].

Drama

An invention or innovation can lead to an unexpected outcome. In 1925, John Logie Baird, a Scottish engineer, created an invention which he probably never imagined expected how it would his invention could impact human life [13]. As his invention spread and became more developed, traditional media lost their positions. That invention was television.

Television has greatly impacted the art culture as well. From news reports, drama, music, and dance, TV broadcasting firms air everything that is technically feasible. In the past, to enjoy the traditional art culture, people had to visit the venue. Television, on the other hand, is a system that allows mass production, consumption, and reproduction. The primary example can be drama. There is no need to go to the theater to enjoy "Romeo and Juliet" anymore, as there are many similar dramas that can be seen on-demand with greater emotional engagement due to the combination of various scenes and background music.

Drama began in the USA in the early twentieth century and it includes contents such as movies, documentaries, soap operas, pop music, rock, jazz, and hip-hop that are distributed through digital media in the form of newspapers, magazines, broadcasting, Internet, etc. Mass production and consumption, easy access by diverse audiences, and the ability to communicate between suppliers and consumers have become major characteristics of modern drama [14]. While drama gained popularity in contrast to classics, ironically, the philosophical depth that used to be found in classics diminished slowly in most dramas.

The era of pop culture emerged with the increase in media channels. As almost every household has a television set, newly found freedom to enjoy culture became prevalent. With people's desire for culture and the availability of the means, the pop culture has quickly filled the needs. Unlike classic arts that have failed to adapt to change, pop culture gained momentum by connecting people and media. With rapid advances in digital technologies, pop culture has spread globally without time and spatial limitations [15].

Operama

Operama is a transformed modern art form of classic masterpieces and humanities. It blends different elements of classics and pop culture by reinterpreting them to reflect modern philosophy. In addition to including the fundamentals of modern culture and classic arts, by studying media outlets, operama creates a new brand by connecting with various other fields such as media art, performance, festival, management, and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferencing, and exhibition). Through art infusion, which enables developing and producing content with no boundaries, operama forms a fusion art platform. Operama is the world's first digital opera that started in Korea in 2010.

Operama is a genre created from the fusion of opera and drama. On the surface, opera and drama are names of genres, but they are symbolic words that have profound meaning. Operama represents the current state of fine arts such as classical music, dance, Korean classical music, and arts that have been passed down from the past. Essentially, it represents the positive aspects of philosophy and artistic beauty that have been solidified for a long period, and at the same time, it delves into the negative reality that is avoided in real life.

Drama includes television dramas as well as popular art genres such as blues, jazz, pop, hip-hop, rock, musical, pop art, and movies; content like original soundtracks and music videos; and media outlets such as television, radio, Internet, and SNS. Hence, drama may also include both positive and negative aspects of popular culture. To overcome these difficulties of cultural arts, operama is designed to blend the positive aspects of two genres: opera and drama. The difficulty that needs to be overcome is communicating the philosophy and artistic values of both to the public. Thus, operama strives to convey the fundamental characteristics of these two genres to meet both philosophy of classic art and popularity of modern culture but is not skewed in one direction.

Operama Arts Management Institute was established as a not-for-profit organization in 2014 and its vision is described in the website (operama.org) as below:

The operama art platform is based on a rigorous study of how the public is exposed to, consumes, and spreads the musical contents. We do the best to make people have access to and enjoy classical art through the contents of operama such as performances, education, records, and music videos. Therefore, operama helps create a balance in a cultural ecosystem by strengthening the consumer base of classical art in the long term.

Convergence strategy

Convergence has been highlighted with the continuous advances of IT. IT plays a role of glue for the fusion of different products and services, or a lubricant to make matters efficiently collaborate to provide new or additional value to the stakeholders. Convergence has been defined by Merriam-Webster as “the merging of distinct technologies, industries, or devices into a unified whole.” This paper adopted Lee and Olson’s [16] definition of convergence: “synergic combination of ideas, objects for other contexts utilized in a manner yielding better results than were possible before.”

Convergence can be classified into two major categories: application and combination [17]. Application means creating new value by applying existing ideas in different

contexts. For example, Netflix defeated Blockbuster in the video rental industry by borrowing ideas from Amazon that sold books by mail. On the other hand, combination means fusion of different entities to create a new synergy effect for creating more value. Combination convergence can be classified into six types based on objects involved: (1) component/product convergence, (2) functional convergence, (3) organizational convergence, (4) technology convergence, (5) industry convergence, and (6) bio-artificial convergence [18].

Among the above types, operama can be classified as an industry convergence that combines opera and drama. It tries to act as a bridge between the two genres to help people better understand and enjoy classical music and performance that are often considered boring and expensive by young generations [19]. Operama is a good example of converging classical culture with the various elements of pop culture. The young audience considers entertainment more of an essential element of performance than their counterparts in the 40s and 50s generations who pursued meaning over entertainment [20]. Operama performances that involve various techniques of interaction with the audience attract the attention of young people.

New genre of operama

Operama performance

The typical form of operama performance reflects the characteristics of musical drama. There is a clear distinction between opera and operama in regard to expressions. Opera may fail in connecting with the public because of its old-fashioned dialog and performance. Operama attempts to overcome this issue by incorporating the flavor of modern plays. Operama uses the language and gesture of the present day to arouse the emotion of the play to the audience. Other elements such as stage, lighting, and sound and visual effects are all modern as well.

Operama reinterprets classical music by merging it with modern music such as musicals and pop music in the performance. This modernization of classic is not superficial but rather profound. Every operama piece is developed by first analyzing a classic opera to understand its true meaning. An in-depth analysis of the experiment and spirit of the period in a synchronic and diachronic way, and ultimately extracting a plot that embodies pivotal philosophy is the next step. Discovering the connection between the plot and modern thinking would complete the piece.

The basic objective of operama is to seek the appropriate theme of the present time that best fits with the original opera of the past. For example, “Operama: Opera + Drama,” produced in 2012 and 2013, touched the topic of contradictions of male-dominant culture. The Seoul Art Center and Korea Broadcasting System (KBS) sponsored the performance. It was an omnibus style play that was a combination of arias, chorus, folk songs, and musical.

In May 2014, operama “Casanova!! My Unfaithful Boss” was performed at the Guri Arts Hall (see Fig. 1). It is a modernized piece using the plots of Mozart operas *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*. From the perspective of operama, *The Marriage of Figaro* can be interpreted as farce of sexual desire and the social hierarchy system hidden within the main cause of the conflict, *droit du seigneur*, the right of the first night. Using occupation, which can be considered as today’s status symbol, as a



Fig. 1 Operama “Casanova!! My Unfaithful Boss”

metaphor, the characters of this performance are the CEO and temporary employees of a company. Especially, Leporello, the servant from Don Giovanni, has transformed into a custodian and provides the overall commentary of the performance.

This modernization is not simply applying arias from the original opera. Arias from the original opera more boldly serves the true message. A good example is “Deh, vieni alla finestra,” a serenade in Don Giovanni which unveils the filthy desire disguised in the sweet love confession in the performance. Table 2 shows a brief history of operama performances and achievements.

Operama concert

The traditional forms of classical music performance, recitals and concerts, are facing many challenges. Music has transformed from listening to watching. Even though classical music performances may still satisfy the ears of the audience, the visual presentation has been lacking. The magnificent concert of a symphony orchestra may initially overwhelm the audience, but maintaining the attention of the audience for over 2 h may be a difficult task. As such, many concerts include various repertoires such as using instruments from a different genre or playing pop music, but these are only a temporary effort and not sustainable content. Pop music is not much better than classical music in this regard. Flashy stage, lighting, directing, and loud metal all have helped entertain the audience’s ears and eyes at the performance. Even behind the phenomenal success of K-Pop, there is the humanistic infrastructure that is being overlooked: there is more to pop music than just electronic dance music.

An operama concert presents a content to resolve this unstable nature of performance. Operamas provide visual excitement by actively incorporating rarely used

Table 2 A brief history of operama

2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Take Out, Operama" invited by Korea University, Kyunghee University, and Konyang University.
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Operama" invited by the Morning Garden TV program of KBS. • "Operama" invited by the Classical program of the Seoul Arts Center.
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trademark of "Operama" registered in the Korean Intellectual Property Office (trademark number 41-02282250000). • "Operama of Baritone Kyoung Jung" invited by the Korean Broadcasting System. • The Operama music video album, "Dancing: La Danza" released. • "Operama is a Story" at Seoul Olympus Hall. • The live album, "Operama at Seoul Olympus Hall" released • "Operama: Sogno" at Brown Gallery in Apgujeong, Seoul.
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operama "Sing for You" at Seoul Sangmyung Art Center. • VIP Operama invited by Galleria. • An Operama music video album, "Serenade by Kyoung Jung." • "Operama of Baritone Kyoung Jung" invited by IBK Industrial Bank. • "Operama" invited by KMF Olympic Hall. • "Operama of Baritone Kyoung Jung" invited by ART M. • "Operama: The Story of a Bartender" at Guri Art Hall.
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Operama: Humanitas" at JTBC Art Hall. • "Operama is a Story" invited by Culture Center of the Three States Heritage. • "Operama: Casanova," "Operama: Schubert's Tremendous Love and Serenade," "Operama: 3.87:1," "Operama: Beethoven's Destiny" hosted by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. • "Operama Arts Management Humanities Program" invited by Kookmin University, Sungshin Women's University, Yeungnam University, and Pusan National University. • Establishment of a not-for-profit organization, Operama Arts Management Institute. • OPERAMA's collaboration with Dana. • "Operama: Kopino" at JTBC Art Hall. • Published a book, "Operama Unveiled."
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Operama showcase, "Kissing Crazy Composers" at Parum Tower. • "Kissing Crazy Composers" invited by Samsung Electronics Co., All Hands Meeting, the Chanel Korea branch, Chungju City Hall, KR Consulting, Gyeonggi-do Human Resources Development Institute, Gangwon-do Institute of Human Resources Development, Gyeonggi Institute of Peace and Education, Korea Institute of Self-help Training, Design Enterprise Association, the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs' local administrative training center, and Korea Telecom. • A Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) documentary, "Operama." • A CTS talk concert, "Operama." • "Operama" invited by Seoul Women's University. • "Operama: Refugee" at JTBC Art Hall. • "Kiss the Operama" at JTBC Art Hall.
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Operama: Shadows of Don Giovanni" invited Metropolitan Opera, USA. • "2016 Korea Opera Stars Ensemble" at Seoul Arts Center Concert Hall. • An Operama column, "Art Merchants." • "Kissing Crazy Composers" invited by Samsung SDS. • A digital single album, "Pioneer." • Performed at the 11th Samsung Electronics Emotional Communication program. • "Art Merchants" invited by Hanwha L&C, National Radio Research Institute, Gachon University, Gyeonggi Human Resources Development Institute, and National Assembly Hall. • The release of an Operama album titled "Jeju Hae-nyeo: Deep Sea inside a Girl." • An Operama for e-learning, "The Opera Story of Professor Bariton Kyung Jung." • Operama concerts invited by Carnegie Hall, New York City, USA and St. Mary's University, TX, USA.
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A talk concert, "Kissing Crazy Composers" at JTN Art Hall • The release of an Operama album, "Operama Concert Preview at Carnegie Hall." • Poet Yun Dong-ju's 100th Anniversary Concert, "Singing and remembering Poet Yun Dong-ju." • An Operama concert, "Art Merchants" invited by Korea Investment & Finance Group. • An Operama concert, "Art Merchants" invited by the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission. • An Operama special lecture for VIP customers of Samsung Life Insurance, "Art Merchants."

elements in traditional classical music performances such as visual effects, lighting, sound effects, and stage settings. Concurrently, operama introduces contents that incorporate genres that are different in style such as classical music, musical, rock, jazz, Korean classical music, and dance. Storytelling based on different themes is what triggers a chemistry of new excitement, rather than just physical connections like many crossover contents. Operama analyzes the region, culture, time, season, etc. of the story

to determine the theme. The songs that can amplify the story are selected and shaped by composers and visual artists.

Operama development

By focusing on the humanities that are hidden in the classic, it presents new perspectives on the theme by using the problems that people face nowadays. The main characteristic of operama development is “co-creation approach.” It does not adhere to the standardized form like a one-way communication of knowledge, but rather developing a presentation that is flexible enough to adjust to the audience response during the program. Thus, the topic and style of the program should change with the audience. Different audience groups could have different levels of knowledge and interest about music, and thus delivering just one perspective to all audiences will lead to some failure. To resolve this issue, an operama program should create content based on the analysis of the target audience. This is why the program can embrace all types of audiences, starting with lectures for undergraduate- and graduate-level students to entrepreneurs, office workers, housewives, seniors, and the like.

Operama combines both theory of humanities involved and practice of delivery at the same time by carrying out the lecture and the performance in tandem. The language barrier of classical songs is resolved through translation of lyrics and music videos that represent the story of the song. Actual performance could be co-produced and performed on stage for extended lectures through co-creation of the content with the audience. If attending a performance is an indirect experience, planning and executing a performance can be a firsthand experience. For example, “Operama: Fusion Performing Arts,” the lecture at the Kyung Hee University Humanitas College, allowed students to be responsible for every phase of the operama performance from selecting the topic to directing, script writing, hall renting, and marketing. There is always room for conflicts when planning for a performance. During the planning phase, students experience some of the possible issues that they can face in society.

Operama on-air

Operama on-air is a new approach to more actively leverage modern media outlets. Expanding the audience beyond the ones visiting the theater but broadcasting live on channels like YouTube can target the audience of all generations. Even though an operama performance at the Seoul Arts Center Opera Theater was sold-out, each performance could only accommodate 2200 people. However, exposing a performance through live broadcasting will maximize the effects of the performance.

Performances that were broadcast live will be edited into contents such as video highlights and DVDs. Similarly, opera and musicals already have DVDs with live recordings of performances, but screening and staging have not been performed in tandem in the past, noticeably reducing the enjoyment of video images. To resolve this issue, predetermined camera angles are planned during the production process.

Operama music video

In an era where various contents overflow, connecting with other media is becoming important. The old paradigm where music used to be just a score, voice, and stage is

no longer competitive for contents. To an artist, the abovementioned elements may seem everything to music, but for the general public, these elements are only seen as necessary but not sufficient inputs of a superb music performance. Actually, instead of music, media is the starting point of operama production. The producers and artists of pop culture are clearly aware of this fact, whereas purists in fine arts are not, which caused the current disparity between the two cultures. Operama music video is an attempt to bridge the gap between these cultures. Music video is classified not only as viewable music, but also as an independent content from music that can be distributed through various media.

In today's digital age, people can enjoy various visual contents through diverse channels such as PCs, Internet, SNS, mobile devices, and even wearables. Through this digital infrastructure, operama music videos deliver quality content at negligible cost. Operama has released music videos such as "La danza" by Rossini (see Fig. 2), "Ständchen" by Schubert, "Ich liebe dich" by Beethoven, and "To my love" by Adas Aldo. Music lovers have found operama as an attractive modern genre.

Implication and conclusion

From March 2015 to January 2018, the Operama Art Management Institute had delivered 55 lectures about opera to 17,200 attendees. It also conducted 65 operama performances to 32,000 people during the same period. Operama's strategy is to offer a new genre of music through convergence. This strategy has been quite successful. For example, the percentage of paid audience for operama performances has been about 70%, which is significantly higher than the average of 25% for classic art performances. Furthermore, CGV Cinemas, a major movie distributor in South Korea, has regularly hosted Operama Talk Show at one of its flagship theaters in Seoul [5]. This indicates that operama is attractive enough to compete with even blockbuster Hollywood movies.

Operama's contribution as an innovation to reinvent classic art can be summarized as follows:

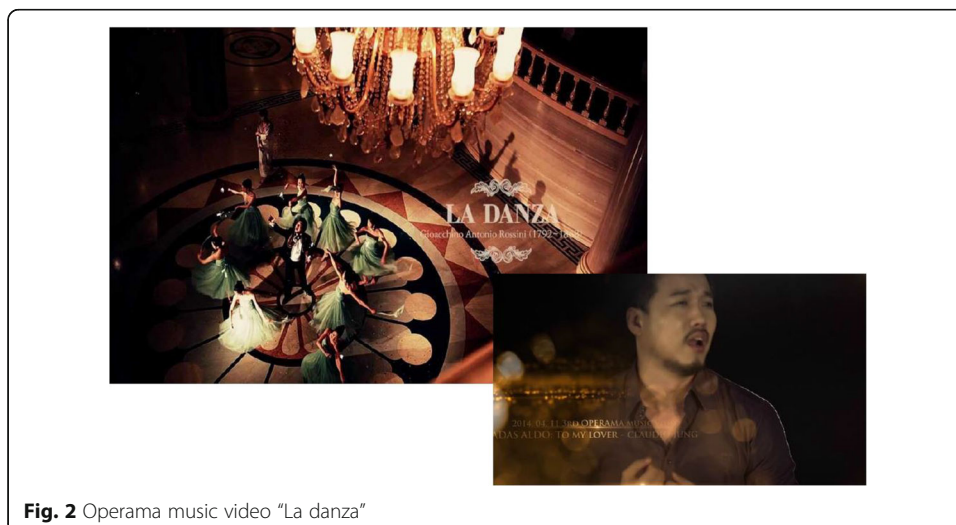


Fig. 2 Operama music video "La danza"

- Customer base innovation: Operama extended the customer base of opera from B2C market into B2B market by producing customized opera performance.
- Product innovation: Operama has created new genres such as “Classic Talk Concert” through convergence of many genres.
- Business process innovation: Increased the number of channels to deliver operama contents by adopting YouTube, lectures, education programs, and so on.
- Business model innovation: Dramatically increased the ratio of paid audience, resulting in economic sustainability

In conclusion, operama has been able to effectively communicate the philosophy and artistic values of classic art to the public through the convergence of industries, organizations, functions, and ideas. The operama case demonstrates how innovation based on the convergence strategy can reinvent the classic music industry.

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All authors contributed to the developing of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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The operama website (operama.org) offers general information about operama in Korean.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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