



23 rue Léopold, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium
Tel /Fax : +32 2 217 6705

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Opera Europa, the professional association representing 120 theatres throughout Europe, is greatly concerned by the developments which endanger the continuing existence of the Deutsche Oper am Rhein Düsseldorf Duisburg.

Our first and immediate concern is for the cultural life of the inhabitants of the city of Duisburg and the surrounding region served by the Deutsche Oper am Rhein since 1956. While we understand the need for economies in the current financial climate, we question whether they will be achieved by dismantling a model which has proved so successful in maximising resources. The potential impact on jobs and on public service could be devastating.

Our second and wider concern is for the example which would be set to the rest of Europe. Germany is acknowledged to be the leader of Europe in cultural provision, underpinned both by the relative strength of its economy and by its commitment to civilised values. Its leading theatre institutions, of which Deutsche Oper am Rhein is recognised as belonging to the top ten, set the standard of productivity which others strive to emulate. This exemplary status may be a burden but it is also a responsibility which deserves to be cherished.

Deutsche Opera am Rhein is more than a member of the leading group of theatres within the power house of European Opera. The alliance of Düsseldorf and Duisburg in sustaining a company of nearly 600 members providing around 300 performances every year is a strong and distinctive example of cooperation, which is increasingly relevant during difficult financial times. Our belief is that this kind of collaboration represents the future rather than the past.

On behalf of my members, I therefore urge the administrative board and city council of Duisburg to weigh carefully the consequences of its decisions. We at Opera Europa are engaged with the firm of Deloitte on a study of the economic impact and return on investment of a selected number of operatic institutions across Europe. If it would be helpful, we would welcome the involvement of Deutsche Oper am Rhein in this study.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicholas Payne".

Nicholas Payne
Director of Opera Europa