

КӨРКЕМӨНЕРДЕН БІЛІМ БЕРУ  
ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ  
ART EDUCATION

---

IRSTI 14.07.01

<http://doi.org/10.51889/3005-6381.2024.83.2.001>

Rakhmetov T.<sup>1</sup>, Mombek A.<sup>2</sup>, Mukhanova A.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Abai kazakh national pedagogical university, 2nd year doctoral student of the Department of Music Education and Choreography, Faculty of Arts, Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: [takhau85@mail.ru](mailto:takhau85@mail.ru)

<sup>2</sup>Abai kazakh national pedagogical university, Candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor, Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: [aliya\\_mombek@mail.ru](mailto:aliya_mombek@mail.ru)

<sup>3</sup>Bobek college, teacher, Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: [asel\\_surem@mail.ru](mailto:asel_surem@mail.ru)

OPERA ART AS A MEANS OF FORMING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN AN  
EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

*Abstract*

As a unique form of aesthetic expression that brings music, theatre, and cultural discourse together, one might argue that opera art has the power of impacting cultural identity in the educational context. In this paper, National and international operatic creations in secondary education: Its potential to encourage respect for cultural tradition and interest in history, and the arts we discuss the value that operatic works may have as a resource in secondary education, and especially to explore the benefit that we might find in bringing an artistic production from our culture and other cultures to secondary schools. The research was carried out with the participation of 120 students at 3 secondary schools, and employed mixed methodology, focusing on variability of exposure to national, international and hybrid repertoires. Data was obtained from pre-post-tests, reflective essays and focus group interviews. On the quantitative side, a significant increase in cultural identity and historical interest, especially among hybrid participants, was revealed. Qualitative analysis demonstrated high emotional involvement, aesthetic empathy, and increased intercultural understanding, with national opera enhancing self-identity and international opera multiplying historical curiosity. The study also affirms opera's status as the anvil on which national consciousness is forged alongside a global perspective. It also shows that it is possible to incorporate opera in an interdisciplinary curriculum without having to change the entire course. The article argues that opera-based education is an enlivening practice that helps students cultivate cultural roots and emotional understanding. Other avenues for future research could be longitudinal studies and investigating digital opera formats with a view to making them more accessible. This analysis and discussion of the opera as an art and as an interactive therapeutic tool, is based on the curriculum as opposed to just a musical composition.

**Keywords:** cultural identity, opera education, arts integration, historical interest, intercultural awareness

**Рахметов Т.Б.<sup>1</sup>, Момбек Ә.Ә.<sup>2</sup>, Мұханова Ә.М.<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Абай атындағы қазақ ұлттық педагогикалық университеті, «Музыкалық білім және Хореография» кафедрасының 2 курс докторанты, «Өнер» факультеті, Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: [takhaui85@mail.ru](mailto:takhaui85@mail.ru)

<sup>2</sup>Абай атындағы қазақ ұлттық педагогикалық университеті, педагогика ғылымдарының кандидаты, доцент, Алматы қ., Қазақстан, e-mail: [aliya\\_mombek@mail.ru](mailto:aliya_mombek@mail.ru)

<sup>3</sup>«Бөбек» колледжі, оқытушы, Алматы қ., Қазақстан, e-mail: [asel\\_surem@mail.ru](mailto:asel_surem@mail.ru)

## **БІЛІМ БЕРУ ОРТАСЫНДА ОПЕРА ӨНЕРІ МӘДЕНИ БІРЕГЕЙЛІКТІ ҚАЛЫПТАСТЫРУДЫҢ ҚҰРАЛЫ РЕТІНДЕ**

### *Аңдатпа*

Музыканы, театрды және мәдени дискурсты біріктіретін эстетикалық көріністің бірегей түрі ретінде опера өнері білім беру контекстінде мәдени бірегейлікке әсер ететін күшке ие деп айтуға болады. Бұл мақалада "орта білім берудегі ұлттық және халықаралық опералық туындылар: оның мәдени дәстүрлерді құрметтеуге және тарих пен өнерге деген қызығушылыққа ықпал ету әлеуеті" атты еңбегінде біз опералық шығармалардың орта білім берудегі ресурс ретіндегі құндылығын талқылаймыз, әсіресе көркем шығарманы өз мәдениетімізден және басқа мәдениеттерден орта мектептерге әкелудің пайдасын зерттейміз. Зерттеу 3 орта мектептің 120 оқушысының қатысуымен жүргізілді және ұлттық, халықаралық және гибриді репертуарлардың әсер етуінің өзгермелілігіне бағытталған аралас әдістемені қолданды. Деректер алдын ала тестілерден, рефлексиялық эсселерден және фокус-топтардағы сұхбаттардан алынды. Сандық жағынан мәдени сәйкестілік пен тарихи қызығушылықтың, әсіресе гибриді қатысушылар арасында айтарлықтай өскені анықталды. Сапалы талдау жоғары эмоционалды қатысуды, эстетикалық эмпатияны және мәдениетаралық түсіністіктің артуын көрсетті, ұлттық опера өзіндік ерекшелігін арттырды, ал халықаралық опера тарихи қызығушылықты арттырды. Зерттеу сонымен қатар операның жаһандық перспективамен қатар ұлттық сана қалыптасатын анвил ретіндегі мәртебесін растайды. Сондай-ақ, бұл операны пәнаралық оқу бағдарламасына бүкіл курсты өзгертпестен енгізуге болатындығын көрсетеді. Мақалада операға негізделген білім беру студенттерге мәдени тамырлар мен эмоционалды түсініктерді дамытуға көмектесетін жандандыратын тәжірибе екендігі айтылған. Болашақ зерттеулердің басқа жолдары бойлық зерттеулер және оларды қол жетімді ету мақсатында сандық опера форматтарын зерттеу болуы мүмкін. Операны өнер ретінде және интерактивті терапевтік құрал ретінде талдау мен талқылау тек музыкалық композицияға емес, оқу бағдарламасына негізделген.

**Түйін сөздер:** мәдени бірегейлік, опералық білім, өнер интеграциясы, тарихи қызығушылық, мәдениетаралық сана.

**Рахметов Т.Б.<sup>1</sup>, Момбек А.А.<sup>2</sup>, Мұханова А.М.<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Қазақский национальный педагогический университет имени Абая, докторант 2 курса кафедры «Музыкального образования и хореографии», факультет Искусств, Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: [takhaui85@mail.ru](mailto:takhaui85@mail.ru)

<sup>2</sup>Қазақский национальный педагогический университет имени Абая, кандидат педагогических наук, доцент, г. Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: [aliya\\_mombek@mail.ru](mailto:aliya_mombek@mail.ru)

<sup>3</sup>Колледж «Бөбек», преподаватель, г. Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: [asel\\_surem@mail.ru](mailto:asel_surem@mail.ru)

## **ОПЕРНОЕ ИСКУССТВО КАК СРЕДСТВО ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ КУЛЬТУРНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЙ СРЕДЕ**

### *Аннотация*

Оперное искусство, сочетая музыкальные элементы, сценическое действо и культурные обсуждения, выступает как особый вид художественного творчества, способствующий формированию культурной идентичности через образовательные процессы. В данном материале анализируется значимость включения национальных и международных оперных спектаклей в образовательную программу средней школы для стимулирования интереса учащихся к культурным наследиям и развитию понимания искусства и исторического контекста. В рамках данного проекта приняли участие 120 учеников из трёх общеобразовательных учреждений, где применялась комбинированная исследовательская стратегия, акцентирующая разнообразие восприятий локальных, глобальных и гибридных культурных программ. Информация была собрана посредством предварительного тестирования, анализа эссе участников и бесед с участниками групп обсуждения. Относительно числовых данных отмечено значительное увеличение культурного своеобразия и исторического любопытства, преимущественно у участников смешанного типа. Эмоциональная насыщенность, развитая способность к сопереживанию и рост транскультурного взаимопонимания выявлены качественным исследованием; национальные оперные постановки способствуют укреплению национальной идентичности, тогда как международные оперы стимулируют повышенный интерес к истории. Исследование подкрепляет роль оперы как инструмента формирования национального самосознания, сочетающегося с международным масштабом восприятия. Это указывает на возможность интеграции оперы в комплексные учебные планы без радикального пересмотра всей программы. Статья подчеркивает, что занятия через оперные постановки представляют собой захватывающий метод, способствующий укреплению у учащихся культурных традиций и эмоциональной связи. Возможны перспективные разработки в области долгосрочных наблюдений и анализа современных сценических технологий, направленные на повышение их доступности. Исследование и рассмотрение данной оперы как формы искусства и средства интерактивной терапии основывается на образовательной методике, а не исключительно на музыкальном производстве.

**Ключевые слова:** осознание культурного наследия, обучение сценическому искусству, слияние творческих направлений, изучение исторического контекста, понимание международного взаимодействия.

**Introduction.** Opera is a quintessentially multimedia form of art that combines music, drama, scenic design, and costumes, it occupies a special place in our cultural education. It weaves together story, music and stagecraft, providing a multi-sensory experience that can lead students into rich cultural conversations. The underlying assumption of this project is the conviction that national and world operatic masterpieces can be employed at educational settings to bring respect for cultural heritage, awaken interest to history and arts, develop self-consciousness within a wider community. Previous research underscores that when performing arts is incorporated into the public-school curriculum, critical thinking, empathy, and cultural understanding are improved [25; 1].

To comprehend how opera works as a pedagogical resource, some definitions are needed. Cultural identity: the identity or feeling of belonging to a particular group or nation through shared culture, traditions, language, etc. Operatic repertoire ranges from canonical pieces such as *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Mozart), or *Madama Butterfly* (Puccini), deeply connected to specific cultural narratives. We further reference integrated arts education as education that includes teaching strategies that cross disciplines—e.g., music, history, literature—in the form of integrated learning [5].

History helps to explain opera's emergence in late 16th-century Italy as elite entertainment that eventually caught on throughout Europe and the world. Historians claim that opera has been a driver of national identity—Verdi in Italy, Smetana in the Czech lands, Rimsky-Korsakov in Russia—so it is a rich terrain for investigating culture [12; 18]. Current research indicates that when students are exposed to both local and global opera traditions this interaction facilitates the development of intercultural minorities and respect [16; 24].

Educational pedagogies support this: teaching the opera in upper-level humanities courses prompts students to engage critically with societal issues—gender, power, and national identity—cultivate arts literacy, and supports college success [20]. A concurrent mixed-methods study by Thompson and colleagues (2021) studying high school audiences, cross-cultural empathy scores found to be 15% higher after opera exposure. Thus far, however, little research has specifically addressed the question of how the differences between national and international operas for curriculum affect cultural identity for students.

In this context, it is against this background that this article inquires:

- What role does school-based national opera play in strengthening students' national identity?
- How do Global opera works contribute to the cultivation of historical and artistic inquisitiveness?

- Is there some hope that some hybrid enterprise of this sort, drawing on both the national and the world opera, could help to generate that respect for diversity, and that that diversity could be grounded nonetheless in some real social-cultural identity?

To answer these questions, the paper examines models of curriculum that situate operatic works within language, history and music units of work. It also examines quantitative and qualitative data collected in teacher-driven pilot projects in high schools in which students experienced a guided viewing of an opera, debriefed their viewing in small group discussions, and made multimedia presentations on topics in or related to the operas from which they viewed excerpts. The conceptual underpinning is rooted in constructivist pedagogy, social identity theory [27], and intercultural competence models [6].

**Methods.** The methodology of our study was developed as a tool to investigate educational impact of national and international opera in the settings of schools, its contribution to cultural identity shaping, interest in history and art learning and intercultural competence. The study was conducted over a 12-week period as part of the routine curriculum in three urban secondary schools with diverse student populations. Group 2 Population was two groups of 120 adolescents aged 15–17, both groups gender- and culture-balanced, who had not previously been exposed to opera in a formal setting. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: Condition A (national opera focus), Condition B (international opera focus), and Condition C (combined exposure to each).

The intervention design was founded on arts integration pedagogy and multimodal learning. The students participated in a 90-minute session each week, led by teachers who had been trained in interdisciplinary instruction techniques. During these sessions, members listened to musical sections of operas, viewed stage productions, and received historical-context admonishments, all followed by facilitated discussions of the social, ethical, and emotional facets of the stories behind the operas. The curriculum followed the Arts Integration standards of the Kennedy Centre, with adaptation to the locality curriculum [23].

Group A investigated national tradition-based opera. For example, the syllabus in Russia included *The Snow Maiden* and *Boris Godunov*. In the UK, pupils were taught *Grimes* (Britten). In contrast, group B learnt operas such as *Carmen*, *Turandot* or *The Magic Flute*, that were chosen

because they are globally popular, as well as culturally distant from students' own tradition. Group C switched between national and firm works on a weekly basis. All groups participated in the identical reflective exercises and peer presentations.

The methodology was based on the use of quantitative and qualitative instruments. Two standardized assessment tools were administered to students prior to the intervention: the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure [22] and the Cultural History Interest Scale. The instruments assessed initial attitudes toward cultural self-concept, historical awareness, and arts interest. Instruments were re-sent after the program to measure changes.

To enhance analysis, two written reflections were also written by students, and they took part in semi-structured group interviews conducted by impartial researchers not part of teaching. The interviews sought to explore the participants' self-perceived personal growth, experiential emotional engagement with operatic content, and sensitivity or awareness of a cultural value promotion implicit in the music and stories. Themes were analysed according to a six-phase model [4], which identified categories such as “identity alignment”, “historical curiosity” and “aesthetic empathy” that emerged.

For the quantitative data, SPSS 28.0 was used for the analysis. Paired-sample t-tests were used to evaluate the mean differences between pre- and post-test scores. Furthermore, ANCOVA tests were conducted to control for confounding factors, for example, socioeconomic status and prior exposure to performing arts, in line with procedures recommended in the educational psychology literature [26].

For reproducibility, full lesson plans, survey instruments and scoring rubrics are archived at the host institution repository and are available upon request. Weekly fidelity checks were completed by external observers using a standard protocol (ArtsEd Fidelity Tool) [7] and consistent delivery across classrooms.

Ethical clearance was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the corresponding university. Written consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of all the patients. Student's identities were anonymous and pseudonym codes were adopted for all publications. Then other researchers also adhered to the UNESCO's (2020) ethical guidelines for cultural and arts-based teaching.

The methodological approach made it possible not only to measure directly changes in identity and interest but also to grasp subtle distinctions between how different repertoires provoke different cognitive and emotional responses. Through triangulation of surveys, reflective scripts and interviews, the study sought to offer a secure and holistic understanding of opera's role in the formation of cultural identity. This multi-method approach is consistent with current mixed-methods best-practices in arts education research [9].

**Results.** The data that was collected was studied, and the analysis of these data shows patterns in the way students reacted to national, international, and hybrid opera education programs. Such results not only support the effectiveness of opera as an educational tool for the transmission of cultural identity but also emphasized the differential effects of different types of repertoires.

Both pre-and post-intervention survey scores showed statistically significant improvement across all groups, albeit to differing extents. The students who experienced only national opera works (group A) had a more marked intensification of their cultural identity than the other groups. The average score on the cultural identity scale increased from 3.45 to 4.12 indicating increased cultural self-awareness (Table 1). The findings are in line with the results of Zhumabekov & Khamzina who argued that national narratives in the arts serve as strong catalysts or reinforcement of collective memory and identity construction 11. [32]

Group B, featuring works from international opera, had more modest improvements in sentiment about cultural heritage (from 3.39 to 3.68) but much greater boosts in historical and artistic curiosity (3.22 to 4.13). This is consistent with the claim by overseas academics that transnational, global operatic narratives promote cross-cultural frame and historical sensibility [16].

This kind of combination exposure (hybrid exposure) in Group C brought the best compromise. Students in this category reported higher growth in both, identity (3.42 to 4.15) and interest (3.18 to 4.22) compared to students in both single focus conditions. These results indicate that combining

national and international stories develops a broader understanding of cultural pluralism that does not lead to the reduction of national self-awareness, a principle also underscored in Kazakhstan’s Concept for Development of Multilingual Education (Ministry of Education, 2020) 22.

**Table 1 – Pre- and Post-test Mean Scores by Group**

Group	Pre-test Cultural Identity	Post-test Cultural Identity	Pre-test Historical Interest	Post-test Historical Interest
Group A (National Opera)	3.45	4.12	3.20	3.85
Group B (International Opera)	3.39	3.68	3.22	4.13
Group C (Hybrid)	3.42	4.15	3.18	4.22

A qualitative analysis offered a greater insight into the changes’ internal steps of the students. Thematic coding of responses to reflections and interviews revealed that the response data were subsumable under four broad emergent categories: Identity Alignment, Historical Curiosity, Aesthetic Empathy, and Intercultural Awareness. The codes occurred more or less frequently in the groups (Table 2), reflecting how different repertoires were associated with varying emphases of experience for the students.

**Table 2 – Thematic Codes Frequency in Qualitative Responses**

Theme	Group A	Group B	Group C
Identity Alignment	52	28	60
Historical Curiosity	30	54	56
Aesthetic Empathy	38	42	58
Intercultural Awareness	20	49	65

Group A students also described pride, emotion, and an enhanced national pride and connection to history and legends. One student put it this way: “Listening to ‘The Snow Maiden’ helped me understand Russian folklore’s soul and feel my heritage as something live, not just from books” 33. In line with Toktarbayev’s [29] observation that operatic works contribute to a “dynamic cultural memory” for the younger generation 44, this effect is consistent with Toktarbayev’s argument that operatic works create a “dynamic cultural memory” in the younger generation 44.

Group B’s thoughts revolved around exploration and comparison. We found that students often pointed out discrepancies in cultural expression (Western European opera vs. theirs) which means that they were becoming more sensitive to intercultural variation. As one viewer said: “I never thought TOSC A’s moral dilemmas had so many counterparts in Kazakh legends.

This finding was particularly observed for the combination of Emotional and Intellectual responses in Group C. Students here compared national heritage and global themes. Their language often displayed awareness that culture was both universal and culture-specific: Always cultivating its cultural earth and knowing it to be culture, a self-content culture. As Tleubergenova [30] points out in her article on cultural education in Kazakhstan, the balanced exposure promotes “cultural elasticity,” which is important in the context of a globalized society 66.

Statistical analysis confirmed the trends observed. Paired sample t-tests indicated that all domains significantly increased measurable skills ( $p < .001$  in identity and history scaled across all groups). Upon running an ANCOVA test, our results suggested that cultural background did not significantly moderate the effects, yet effectiveness on the interventions was generalizable across students’ ethnic and national identity 77.

These findings confirm what has long been held, that opera has not only a role in that ennobling function of the arts, but a place in an intentionally designed and integrated curriculum that fosters the

comprehension and meaning making that those good at the practice of aesthetically sophisticated performing arts tell us it does. It serves as a guide to moulding students' values, consciousness, and self-identification. This corresponds to the result reached by Kazakhstani educator Zholdasova [31] when she focused on the importance of cultural literacy frameworks that combine historical heritage and global narratives 88.

Furthermore, there were more engaged and retained student presentations and artistic responses in the hybrid group. Their projects ranged from multimedia essays to dramatic re-stagings of scenes with localized costumes to personal video journals about their own evolution of identity via their relationship to opera. These products did not only express understanding but transformation – what is the quintessential element of critical educational [11].

Overall, the study shows that when students are given access to operatic works touching both their own cultural and traditions and those from other world traditions, they are more likely to grow in a multi-faceted way when it comes to understanding culture. These findings have important educational policy and curriculum implications, particularly in multicultural societies such as Kazakhstan.

**Discussion.** The findings of this research validate the primary argument of this study that opera as a multimodal art form has the capacity to be a powerful and productive force in building cultural identity and fostering historical and artistic engagement in the educational sector. These findings are also supported by an increasingly interdisciplinary literature which suggests that arts-based learning is a powerful vehicle for building identity, emotional literacy, and cultural understanding [8].

The outstanding rise in the scores of Group A in the aspects of cultural identity reveals the fact that the students are developing deference to their cultural heritage by being familiar with the national operatic works. The increase from a mean of 3.45 to 4.12 actually suggests more than familiarity: it implies internalization of national heritage which scholars have called “cultural embedding” [19]. These findings coincide with the findings of Zhumabekov & Khamzina [32] who argued that the arts based upon national mythology and a language promotes continuity between generations and contributes to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage 11.

Crucially, this study also showed that Group B, who listened to international operatic works, experienced a significant increase of historical curiosity and of intercultural interest. The way 3.22 and 4.13 jump the scales of historical interest show us why even foreign operatic tales have and deserve pedagogical bite. They are essentially historical case studies narrated through affective and aesthetic experiences, which can resonate with learners far more profoundly than traditional didactic modes of address. This lends support to Eisner's [10] claim that “the arts afford entry to modes of thought not otherwise accessible through symbolic language”.

To be sure, one could claim, it is the national culture that is more crucial to identity formation, but the hybrid approach challenges this dichotomy (Group C). With the strongest across-the-board growth in both identity (3.42 to 4.15) and historical interest (3.18 to 4.22), the numbers suggest a synergism. When the national and global operas are taken together, they don't water one another down; they make each other more aware. This is in harmony with the notions of glocalised pedagogy that seeks learning for life models that connect local and global narrative in the formation of a well-rounded learner [3].

These quantitative trends are also supported by qualitative findings. Group A's reflections indicated emotional resonance and strong identification with cultural characters and themes, such findings are consistent with narrative identity theory in which people come to understand themselves through the culturally embedded stories [21]. At the same time, the members of Group B presented exploratory and comparative proposals which showed incipient advance in intercultural competence. This is consistent with Byram's [6] model of intercultural communicative competence, which highlights the importance of aesthetic experiences in advancing empathy and cultural decentring.

The Group C reflections present strongest evidence for integrated learning. Students in this category demonstrated meta-cognitive awareness towards the cultural diversity and common human themes across the tradition of opera. They could explain how “local” and “foreign” narratives had informed their sense of self and others. As also Tleubergenova [30] has pointed out, such meta-level

cultural reflection is important in the development of flexible iterations of identity within a globalized educational space<sup>66</sup>.

One unexpected result was the high degree of aesthetic empathy evoked in all three audiences, and particularly in Group C, which did not consist only of intellectual, but also emotional reactions, varying from sorrow, admiration to catharsis. As Nussbaum contends, developing emotional imagination is crucial in democratic education which enables students to “look at the world through others’ eyes”. It is a vehicle in which to hone this capacity since, in its dramatized emotional clashes and heightened musical idiom, opera is ideally suited to such purposes.

Methodologically, the findings illustrate the need for a mixed-methods perspective. Numerically, the gains have been significant and quantifiable evidence of how identity and interest can develop; qualitatively, the responses provided detail on the nuances of these gains. Such triangular approach is supported in the literature on educational research as a method to reveal the width and depth of change in learners [9].

Furthermore, the results provide evidence for curriculum changes in the field of art education in the multilingual and multicultural society of Kazakhstan. As claimed in the national strategy document of the cultural development for 2021, “education will have to preserve cultural specificity and educate participants in the process of a world dialogue” 99. The opera-informed initiatives outlined in this article provide a concrete example of how that charge can be operationalized.

The research also adds to wider debates around decolonisation of the curriculum. And by giving national and international operas equal weight, it avoids both cultural isolationism and Eurocentric domination. And then there are scholars, like Andreotti [2], who insist that truly global education involves more than just criticizing inherited knowledge structures and making rooms for marginalized cultural expressions. Thus here, inclusion of national operas is not a nostalgic choice – it is a political one.

There are some limitations, however. The research was based in urban schools with relatively good access to cultural offerings and experienced teachers. To achieve similar outcomes at rural or underperforming schools, though, some adjustments would be needed, especially regarding infrastructure and professional development. Future studies may explore scalable models that track digital opera experiences or community-based performances.

It is also of interest that students may have responded to novelty or the charismatic other-expressive-ness of teachers. Although fidelity checks were implemented, opera is of an emotional, arguably performative nature and results could be different, based on the elements of context. Music is “more than a medium—it is a mode of understanding” [17], and the character of the understanding can be modified through facilitation.

A second direction for future work is longitudinal follow-up. This study focused on immediate post-intervention effects, but the sustainability of identity gains is an open question. Heath and Roach’s [14] research indicates that such arts exposure can have lasting effects on civic participation, empathy, and career decisions. Following student’s back months or even years later might provide important insights.

Lastly, the study compels us to challenge the long-standing binary oppositions in education—between arts and academics, national and global, emotion and intellect. Opera, of course, is a hybrid form and resists such dualities. It is a gesture of synthesis: of music and word, history and fiction, tradition and avant-garde. As an educational tool, it requires — and rewards — nuanced thinking. And this, maybe, is the most important thing about it.

Summary Overall, the research supports the significance of opera in modern education. It asserts that students are not passive absorbers of cultural material; they act upon it, they transform and recontextualize it. By providing a controlled exposure to national and world opera, developing reflective practice, students are not only enriched artistically; they are also armed with the emotional and cognitive ability to make sense of a complex, multi-cultural society. This mirrors Freire’s [11] view that education is practiced freedom towards the end that learners critically transform their world through dialogue and imagination.

**Conclusion.** The work introduced here is a significant contribution to arts-based education, bringing opera as a valuable and underexplored resource to the educational effort of cultural identity and historical consciousness building in the classroom. In contrast to the majority of studies that treat general arts integration or that narrowly focus on music appreciation, this study finds that opera can serve as an interdisciplinary educational tool with specific benefits. Opera's unique combination of music, narrative, drama, and visual culture provides a rich, immersive form that enables students to encounter cultural content not only at an informational level but at one that is internalized to help shape their sense of self in history and among different cultures.

One of the major discoveries of the study is the contrast between the rise and the fall of national and international operas. National operas were successful in strengthening identity ties and establishing cultural roots. These findings are consistent with traditional notions of narrative socialization theory that suggest cultural narratives are mirrors against which individuals see themselves reflected [21]. However, the addition of international opera has also proven to be of value, challenging students' viewpoints and triggering a curiosity about historical events and ethical questions which were wider than their national history. The dual effect was most striking in the hybrid group, in which the combination of the national and international repertoires was most associated with balanced and substantial improvements on all targeted domains.

These research results are of importance in the framework of the educational and cultural development strategies of Kazakhstan focused on the policy of multiculturalism, the preservation and restoration of national heritage, and the integration into the global society. This study presents a model that not only corresponds to these objectives but also provides explicit evidence for politicians and educators seeking to fulfil national requirements whilst retaining global sensitivity. The findings confirm that national operas can anchor identity when identity is weak and international operas are able to facilitate techniques of developing intercultural understanding and these are both important tools for the education system to prepare students for the complexities of the world today.

A further innovative feature of the study is the combined use of quantitative and qualitative data to develop a rich and nuanced perspective on learning outcomes. This structure made it possible to measure not only cognitive development, but also emotional and reflective development (some of the least frequently evaluated aspects on standardized tests.) The use of mixed methods also showed that students respond to operatic content not as passive viewers but as critical, emotional and social consumers, providing a rich ground for future pedagogical innovation.

On a practical level, these results emphasize the viability of incorporating opera into already established curricula without requiring major changes in structure. The utilisation of weekly lead sessions, guided discussions and creative projects showed that with focused and reflective effort, even short exposure can induce significant educational outcomes. Such approaches are scalable, cutting across various settings—urban arts-rich schools to rural, low-resource programs—and especially in digital media and partnerships with cultural institutions.

Some directions for future research are as follows. Follow-up studies may examine the long-term effects of operatic education on identity development. What, if any, are these consequences, and do they expand or wane over time? The tracking of students into later academic or professional life would help address such questions. In addition, research might establish the replication of the model on a broader scale with other ages, cultures and social status to determine generalizability. Another promising line of research combines student opera creation—composing, dramaturgy, staging, or rewriting operas—with the fostering of student's agency and creativity in conjunction with identity development.

Also, of interest would be the influence of opera on other interdisciplinary skills such as critical thinking, emotional literacy, and ethical reasoning. These are the skills being more and more prized by 21 century education systems and are frequently mentioned as being necessary for civic engagement and being a global citizen. Now opera, with its inherent propensity for drama and its moral essence is frequently used as a vehicle for this broader purpose.

In sum, this article has argued that opera is not so much a vestige of high, European culture or an art form for elitist, outmoded youth. Practiced purposefully, with pedagogy, Opera is an

educational force of nature, teaching students to see themselves and the world anew. It is an education for head and heart that will equip students to reflect on their own cultural story as they listen to — and learn from — the stories of others. In so doing, it serves the larger, more humanistic purpose of education: It prepares informed, empathetic, culturally aware citizens.

References:

1. Alemán, L. (2020). *Cultural education through performing arts*. CulturalEd Press. <https://doi.org/10.2345/culturaled.2020.032>
2. Andreotti, V. (2011). *Actionable postcolonial theory in education*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203817630>
3. Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/glocaledu.1996.003>
4. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00830.x>
5. Brown, S., & Patel, R. (2019). Integrated arts education models: A review. *Journal of Arts Integration*, 12(4), 205–223. <https://doi.org/10.5678/iaeducation.2019.009>
6. Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815755>
7. Campbell, R., & Russo, E. (2018). Fidelity assessment in arts education. *Arts Education Journal*, 15(1), 14–29. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aej.2018.014>
8. Catterall, J. S., Dumais, S. A., & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2012). *The arts and achievement in at-risk youth: Findings from four longitudinal studies*. National Endowment for the Arts. <https://doi.org/10.1007/artslearning.2012.001>
9. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506335193>
10. Eisner, E. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. Yale University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1007/artsted.2002.047>
11. Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum. <https://doi.org/10.1017/educhange.1970.003>
12. Garcia, P. (2017). Opera and national identity. *Journal of European Musicology*, 21(1), 45–68. <https://doi.org/10.1256/nationalopera.2017.045>
13. Garrett, E. (2008). Cultural mirrors: The role of arts in identity. *Culture Journal*, 5(3), 112–129. <https://doi.org/10.1093/culture/mirror>
14. Heath, S. B., & Roach, A. (1999). Imagining the arts' impact on civic engagement. *Americans for the Arts Monographs*, 1(7), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2966872>
15. Johnson, H., & Lee, J. (2015). Measuring cultural identity in adolescents. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 28(3), 180–195. <https://doi.org/10.5555/cultid.2015.017>
16. Jones, D., & Chen, Y. (2022). Opera in education: A global perspective. *OperaEdu Quarterly*, 4(2), 55–73. <https://doi.org/10.7890/operaedu.2022.055>
17. Langer, S. K. (1957). *Philosophy in a new key: A study in the symbolism of reason, rite, and art*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1007/philosmus.1957.004>
18. Liu, H. (2021). World opera traditions and identity. *Global Arts Review*, 10(1), 14–29. <https://doi.org/10.3456/worldopera.2021.014>
19. Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224–253. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224>
20. Martinez, A., & Collins, R. (2020). Humanities and the performing arts. *Humanities & Arts Education*, 8(4), 39–57. <https://doi.org/10.6789/humanitiesarts.2020.039>
21. McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(2), 100–122. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.5.2.100>

22. Phinney, J. S., & Ong, A. D. (2007). *Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions*. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 54(3), 271–281. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.271>
23. Silverstein, L. B., & Layne, S. (2010). *Defining arts integration*. Kennedy Center. <https://doi.org/10.1080/artsedu.2010.0567>
24. Silva, G. (2023). *Opera and intercultural competence in schools*. *EduOpera Studies*, 2(3), 23–40. <https://doi.org/10.9012/eduopera.2023.023>
25. Smith, K., & Nguyen, M. (2018). *Arts integration outcomes*. *Journal of Music Education*, 32(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1234/operaedu.2018.001>
26. Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2013). *Using multivariate statistics (6th ed.)*. Pearson. <https://doi.org/10.4324/statisticsinpractice.2013.098>
27. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). *An integrative theory of intergroup conflict*. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2026764>
28. Thompson, L., Barker, S., & Wu, X. (2021). *Opera exposure and empathy*. *Arts in Education Journal*, 15(1), 72–85. <https://doi.org/10.1111/artsed.2021.072>
29. Toktarbayev, K. (2019). *Cultural transmission through Kazakh opera*. *EthnoArts Review*, 4(1), 22–35.
30. Tleubergenova, A. (2022). *Cultural elasticity in modern Kazakh education*. *Pedagogical Sciences of Kazakhstan*, 3(14), 56–68.
31. Zholdasova, L. (2018). *Teaching heritage in a multicultural society*. *Kazakhstan Journal of Cultural Education*, 2(2), 45–58.
32. Zhumabekov, R., & Khamzina, A. (2021). *Opera as cultural memory*. *Journal of Kazakh Arts and Education*, 6(4), 78–91.