

and performance did not align, resulting in many of the negative reviews of the production. As Kung says, it was not a masterpiece, nor was it intended to be. It was intended to be a presentation of a very fundamental process of research and experimentation together. Such processes produce an enormous surplus of valuable insights and learning, but, like basic research, do not produce themselves much useable end products (as opposed to applied research in the traditional research and development model). It is not that a level of grandeur would have been impossible, but rather that this was not the intention of the artists involved. Producing a work with that level of polish would have required either a working method that was more fixed, meaning that the format would have to be less experimental, or a huge amount more time and resources would have had to be invested, which was not feasible.

The performance of *Bubble <3* is then best understood as a small bundling of the results of the workshop, a work in progress, not as a magnum opus of epic proportions—its development structure itself was not set up for this. It is in this moment that the biennale's production methodology and the expectations of the festival public diverge: While the methodology insists on an experimentation with format and with conceptual ideas around the issue of music theatre in the process of production, leading to productions that are the presentation of preliminary experimentation, the public still seems to expect the level of finish that comes with a fixed working method and a traditionally-musical approach to virtuosity (what has been referred to as lay virtuosity).

This insight once again returns to the question of how such approaches can be better mediated to their audiences. It also more generally addresses a larger aspect of the biennale, namely that the curatorial focus of DOMTS as directors of the biennale has been on the mediation of productions themselves, which seemingly comes along with a difficulty in mediating these processes of creation to festival audiences.

4.8 The Munich Biennale in Numbers

This section will examine the biennale from a quantitative perspective, considering data from the first 16 editions of the festival, spanning between 1988–2018. Based on data collected from the biennale and processed by the author, this section presents a series of charts and analyses that allow for some central claims of the biennale to be tested, and some unexpected trends to be detected. Furthermore, it allows for certain differences in the management style of DOMTS to be contrasted with those styles of their predecessors.

4.8.1 Age of Commissioned Composers at the Biennale

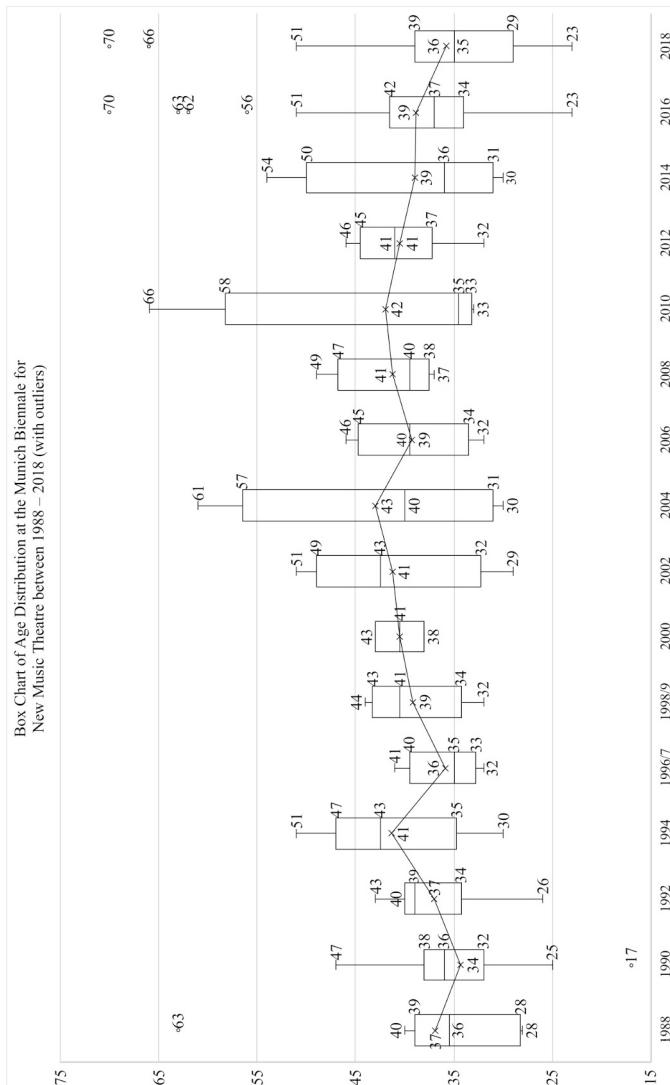
Hans Werner Henze's original ambition was to create a biennial festival where younger composers could receive their first music theatre commissions. The biennale's goal can be seen to change and move away from its original ambition: rather than be a festival that supported the first music theatre compositions by young composers, it increasingly became a platform for more established composers to receive commissions in the genre of music theatre. DOMTS' ambition has been to reverse this trend, and bring the festival back to its roots of being a festival to support the next generation of music theatre composers, claiming that in general that artists for the biennale should not be much older than 35 (Münchener Biennale and Kulturreferat der Landeshauptstadt München 2018, 31). Statistical analysis of biennale productions can help evaluate these narratives.

In order to do this, Figure 3 uses a box chart to plot how the age of biennale composers has shifted over the thirty years of the Munich Biennale for New Music Theater. Important to consider is that between and including the years 1988–2014, the average was calculated by tallying up the ages of composers of all the works commissioned for the biennale, including puppet theatre works, and smaller music theatre works. For the 2016 and 2018 editions of the biennale, DOMTS shifted to their platform system of developing productions, and to a system of giving commissions mainly to groups rather than to discrete individuals. Therefore, *the ages of all commissioned group members were taken into account here*. This includes not just composers, but also directors, scenographers, and other members of the commissioned groups. Composers and commissioned individuals whose birth years were not available were excluded from the results (n = 13).

Looking at Figure 3 supports the interpretation that Henze's biennales started out as targeted at a younger group of composers. The first three years would also see a number of composers under 30, which would only happen again once in 2002, and again in the DOMTS era biennales. While the "transition festivals" in 1996/7 and 1998/9 would largely stay within the trend set by Henze, over the course of Ruzicka's tenure, the mean age of commissioned composers and the age range of the festival both increased drastically. Most festivals during these years seem to have a mean age of around 40, as well as a high range for the third quartile, further suggesting that these years were dominated by older composers, in general.

While the diverging methodology for measuring the mean age of the two DOMTS-era biennales has been addressed already, it is nevertheless interesting to see how it fits in with the other historical data. The first insight that can be drawn from this data is that the two most recent biennales surveyed do seem to be once again lowering the average age, which corresponds with their stated claims to this effect. Furthermore, the youngest commissioned individuals, 23 years old in both cases, as well as a median age of only 35, once again return the biennale

Figure 3: Average Age per biennale edition year 1988 to 2018



to a similar territory as those biennales of Henze. The 2018 biennale for instance has a box that is almost identical to that of the first biennale exactly thirty years prior. Notable as well in these two editions is that because of the low mean and median ages and larger data set, the older generation of composers programmed

at the festival have less effect on the dataset, and are identified as outliers to the core group. Their statistical “outlier” status fits well with DOMTS intention of programming this older generation in order to maintain a relationship to older music theatre practices.³⁶

In order to attempt to produce a more approachable overview of changes in mean age across the three directorships, the per director mean can be calculated, which produces a bird’s eye view of the situation:

Table 1: Average Age of Commissioned Artists (in Years) per Period of Artistic Directorship at the Munich Biennale for New Music Theater

| Director Name (Years as Artistic Director) | Average Age of Commissioned Artists (in Years) |
|--|--|
| Hans Werner Henze (1988–1994) | 36.97 |
| Peter Ruzicka (1996–2014) | 40.00 |
| Daniel Ott/Manos Tsangaris (2016–) | 37.41 |

Here once again the same general narrative seems to be confirmed, namely that composers during Ruzicka festivals were in general older than their predecessors during Henze’s tenure. Significant as well is DOMTS direct return to an average age very close to that achieved by Henze, in accordance also with their stated goals.

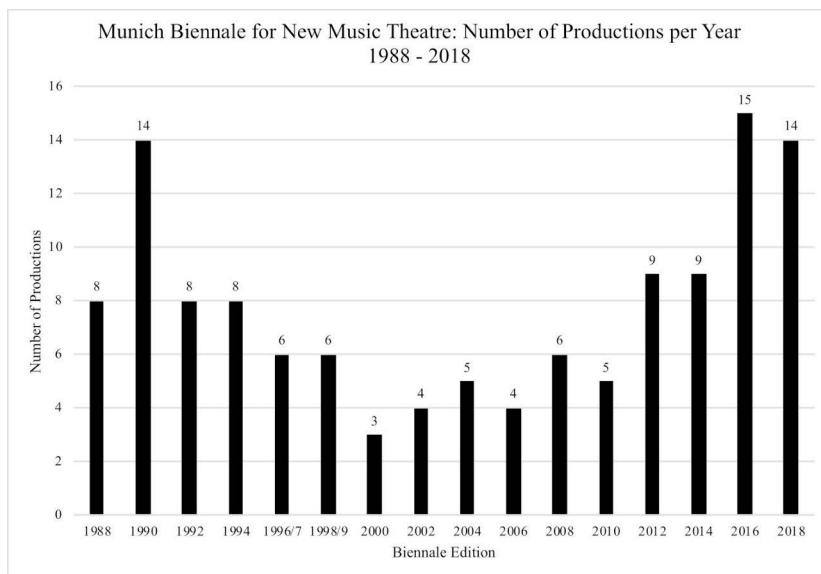
4.8.2 Number of Productions at the Biennale

Another important statistic to look at are the number of productions put on by the biennale per year. The number of productions can be understood as an expression of the size and scope of the biennale. Figure 4 plots the number of productions per year over the course of the biennale, from 1988–2018. Productions are considered to be all those discrete projects listed as commissioned by the biennale for a given year, including also puppet theatre works in the earlier years, and various other experimental formats and smaller projects over the years. This does not then consider the number of performances per production. These would have been lower in the stagione years of the biennale (1996/7 and 1998/9), where productions were only performed around three times each, and higher e.g. in the 2018 edition of the biennale, which adopted a model of higher number of performances for less audience per performance (*Bubble <3* in 2018 was for instance performed a total of 10 times for small audiences of around 20 people each).

Plotting the number of productions per year in Figure 4, a U-shaped curve is formed, created by a high number of productions in earlier festivals, a trough

³⁶ Daniel Ott, interview by the author, Berlin, 28 October, 2017.

Figure 4: Munich Biennale for New Music Theater: Number of Productions per Year 1988–2018



around the turn of the millennium and the leadership of Peter Ruzicka, followed by a return to a high number of productions.

Another consideration in studying this chart is the difficulty in counting what precisely should be considered a biennale production over time, particularly in historical biennales before 2016. The decision was made during the evaluation of the data to count all productions equally, despite some of them being very small. Two enormous music theatre works vs. 10 mini works would look the same here. A comparison would have been possible, e.g. by comparing the inflation-adjusted budgets of each production, along with perhaps the total audience capacity offered, however accessing this data would have gone beyond the scope of this particular study. This was decided in order to not have to make subjective decisions regarding how to differentiate between large and small productions in the many edge cases. For instance, for the 2016 biennale, the very small production of *Sez Ner*, which was a book reading double-billed with *Pub-Reklamen* was counted, despite its small scale.

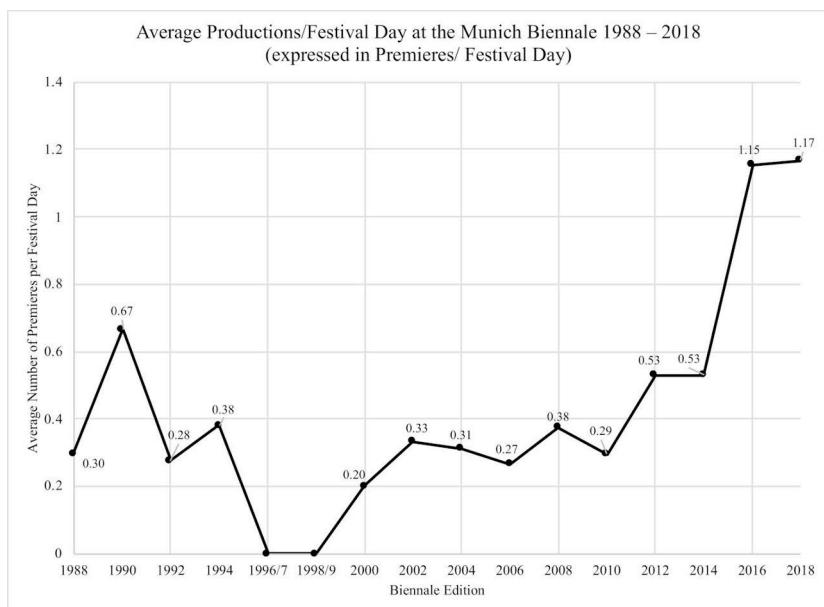
Examining the graph, another similarity between Henze's earlier biennales and those of DOMTS becomes visible. Earlier biennales had a large number of productions, with the second edition in 1990 having a total of 14. This would mark a peak that would only descend in the years afterwards, to a low of just 2 productions

in 2000. After the transition to DOMTS' leadership of the festival, the number of productions shot up again sharply, and in the biennale's 15th edition in 2016, managed to just top its previous record by organizing a total of 15 productions. This was followed up by 14 productions in 2018—the same as its previous all-time high.

4.8.3 Concentration of Productions at the Biennale

The data in Figure 4 can be combined with the duration of each festival in order to calculate their respective densities. This is interesting for understanding the extent to which each festival offered a spatio-temporal concentration of music theatre works. Comparing the number of days between the first and last performances of the festival (its effective length) to the number of productions commissioned per year allows for a rough way of comparing the relative densities (premieres/day) of the festivals. This comparison can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Average Productions/Festival Day at the Munich Biennale 1988–2018



Note that in Figure 5, the 1996/7 and 1998/9 festivals were set to a duration of 0 because of their stagione system, wherein they had three and two periods of performances respectively over the course of the two years' time, which cannot be considered a festival in the same sense. Note as well that this does not consider the number of performances/day, which once again would certainly be substantially

higher during DOMTS' tenure, particularly in the 2018 edition, when they decided in favour of a large number of performances for very small audiences, due to the biennale's theme ("private matters"). The difficulty in assessing size of performances vs. number of productions is why this metric of productions/festival duration has been chosen here instead.

What Figure 5 shows is that the festival density has never been higher than in the past two festival editions. This has principally been achieved by reducing the duration of the biennale under DOMTS' leadership. The past two editions have lasted 13 and 12 days respectively, making them the shortest so far. Daniel Ott has said in interview that one of the goals of DOMTS has been to attempt to return the biennale to the festival character of earlier Henze biennales. While he mentions the "legendary" parties of the Henze era, he also mentioned returning to a concentration of the festival to a narrower period of time.³⁷ Looking at the graph above, this goal has clearly been reached, even going far beyond the density of the Henze-era biennales. The 2018 edition has a production/day density of 1.17, which comes close to doubling that of Henze's most dense biennale in 1990, with a value of 0.67. Notably, any density by this metric that is ≥ 1 means that there is at least one premiere happening on each day of the festival.

One way that DOMTS have achieved this density is through avoiding the reuse of performance venues. The two most-used theatres during the previous two directors were the Carl-Orff-Saal and the Muffathalle in that order, and were used for multiple productions per edition. In the 2016 edition, these two locations were used for only two productions each, reducing the amount of dark days that were needed in the festival programming. This in part is what allowed the directors to pack their 15 productions into just 13 festival days. The strategy in the 2018 edition was more drastic; the directors did not reuse any venues, which allowed them to present 14 productions in just 12 days.

4.8.4 Gender of Commissioned Individuals at the Biennale

Examining biennale productions since 1988 in their entirety allows for an analysis also of gender equality at the biennale to be examined. The following charts compare the proportions of commissions given by the biennale as divided by gender (separated into male, female, and non-binary). Note that demographic categorizations have been made based only on the limited publicly available information available at the time of compilation of the data, and as such raise the risk of misgendering participants. Effort has been made to avoid this, and the author welcomes all corrections. Between 1988–2014, the charts reflect the demographics of commissioned composers of biennale works. As of 2016, as in the analysis of age

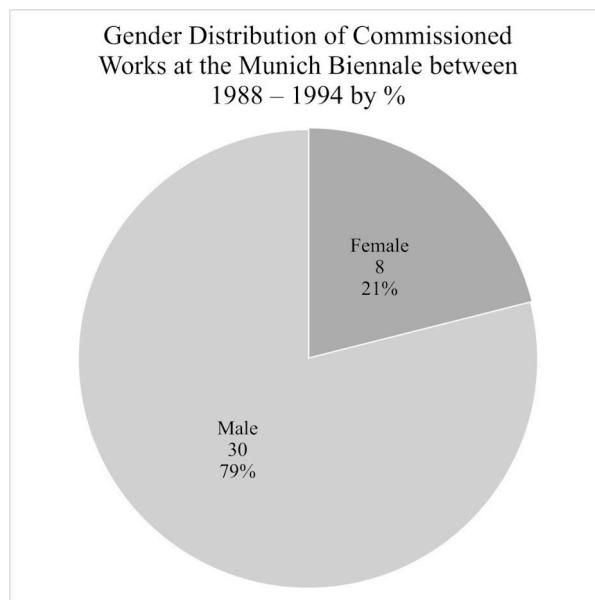
³⁷ Daniel Ott in conversation with the author, 28 October, 2017.

(section 4.8.1), all commissioned group members have been counted towards the statistics.

What these charts show is more than just a distribution of gender statistics. Rather, it can be understood as a proxy for the extent to which this biennale is addressing issues of structural exclusion of minority groups. It is unfortunately the case that CCM has a longstanding and deeply-entrenched problem with being a largely male-dominated field, particularly when it comes to composers or other author figures. The prototypical “male genius” unfortunately still carries too much currency in the field, and is an issue that only recently has slowly begun to be addressed and called into question (by groups such as Gender Relations in New Music).

Under Henze’s leadership, the biennale’s commissions were largely male-dominated, with only 8 commissions going to women over the period between 1988–1994, as can be seen in Figure 6.

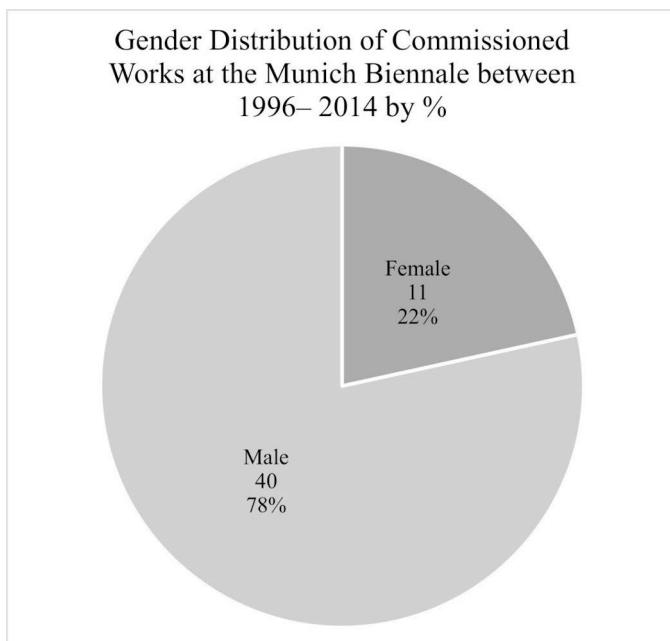
Figure 6: Gender Distribution of Commissioned Works at the Munich Biennale between 1988–1999 by %



With the transition to Ruzicka’s leadership of the biennale, between 1996–2014, Figure 7 shows that only 11 women received commissions, representing a slightly higher proportion of commissions, though still vastly outnumbered by their male colleagues. Notable about these two graphs is that they both reflect the roughly

80/20 gender split as calculated by Gender Relations in New Music across several other festivals, for instance Maerzmusik (between 2002–2017, 77.42% male, as of 2018, 47.63%), or the Donaueschinger Musiktage (between 1981–2017, 86.73% male) (Gender Relations in New Music n.d.-b).

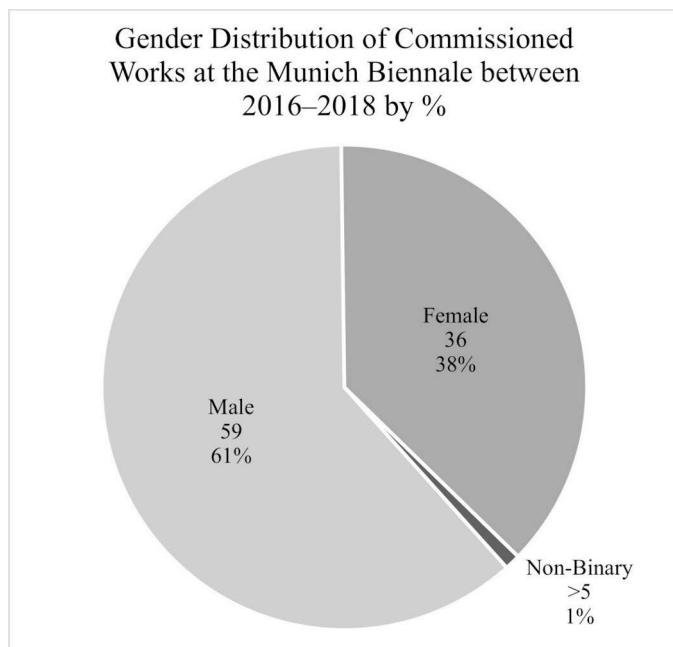
Figure 7: Gender Distribution of Commissioned Works at the Munich Biennale between 1996–2014 by %



With the DOMTS biennale, the number of non-male identifying people commissioned almost doubles, while nevertheless leaving much room for improvement (Figure 8). One hypothesis for this sudden change is that the festival's change towards commissioning multi-person teams to create productions meant that all members of the commissioned teams were counted towards the total, including perhaps people who have not historically been counted as musical authors. DOMTS also placed emphasis on making interdisciplinary teams with practitioners from a variety of backgrounds. It could be argued that issues of gender discrimination are to an extent less prevalent in other fields (or even reverse discriminatory) and therefore raise the percentage of women and non-binary people.

While this change in the commissioning and therefore counting system means that a direct statistical comparison is not possible, it could be argued that from

Figure 8: Gender Distribution of Commissioned Works at the Munich Biennale between 2016–2018 by %



a functional diversity standpoint, because DOMTS' demographical statistics skew closer to equality, their platform system is successfully producing more outcomes that are assigning authorship to women and gender non-binary people, despite no explicit goal to do so being set by the organizers themselves.

4.8.5 Number of Co-Producers of Biennale Productions

The biennale has always taken the form of a festival of premieres, presenting with very few exceptions only new works. This comes out of its stated goal of supporting the development of music theatre repertoire over the years—this can only be done effectively however if the works are also presented somewhere else. Furthermore, as new commissions are investments, co-productions are also strategic in regards to cost-sharing. Apart from this first goal of offering a laboratory for young composers, Henze saw the festival also as a place for the promotion of the genre of music theatre in the German operagoing public. According Peter Ruzicka, fewer than 3% of new operas are performed again after their first production, in what

Tsangaris has called a problematic *Uraufführungsgesellschaft* (premiere-based culture) (Ruzicka 2014, 9; Brotbeck 2016, 17).³⁸ This low amount of new productions of new operas makes their entry into the repertoire much more difficult, which proponents such as Ruzicka argue over time creates a vicious circle wherein less exposure to the genre leads to audiences to appreciate it less, making opera houses program less new operas, leading to less exposure.

If a second goal of the biennale has been increased public exposure (and thus hopefully acceptance) of contemporary opera, then not just supporting new works, but also taking responsibility for their life after the premiere is essential. This problem has been addressed through a strategy of co-financing of productions together with other opera houses. This allows not only for the festival to share and therefore reduce its own costs, but also means that its productions would have at least one more opportunity to be performed on another stage somewhere else after their premiere.

This helped the works reach a larger audience, and increased the chances that they would be picked up for further performances or stagings. The result of this was that roughly fifty percent of works during Ruzicka's tenure were staged at least one more time after their premieres, and several pieces would receive subsequent productions, and prove to be influential in the development of the genre and composers' careers (Ruzicka 2014, 9). This can be seen for instance in the effect that both productions in the 2000 edition of the festival, *Angelus Novus* by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, and *Pnima.... Ins Innere* by Chaya Czernowin, had on their composers and their careers.

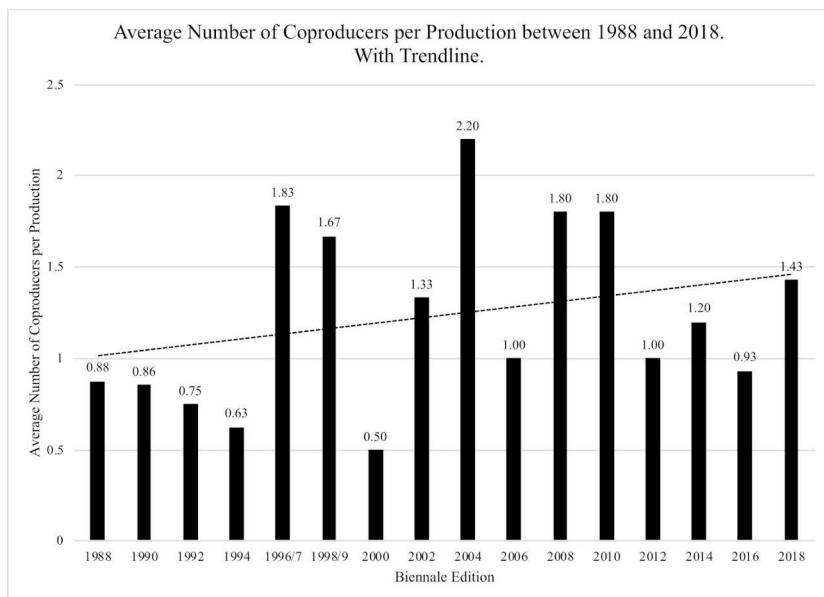
An emphasis on the importance of co-productions is continued under the directorship of DOMTS. In an interview before the duo's first edition in 2016, Daniel Ott writes that they have continued the emphasis the importance of co-productions for the festival, attempting to perform all works at least four times in Munich, and four times on another stage somewhere else (Brotbeck 2016, 17). Now having access to the data for two of their festivals, this emphasis on co-productions can be put to the test.

In order to compare the number of co-producers across the three directorship periods, what has been counted are the average number of co-producers per production per year of the festival. This metric was chosen because it allows for comparison independent of the number of productions per year. Plotting this looks as follows:

Ruzicka took over the administration of the biennale as of the 1996/7 festival. In this year there is also a spike in the number of co-producers per production, increasing just shy of threefold to 1.83 from 0.63 the year before. Notably, Ruzicka's

³⁸ NB Ruzicka himself does not provide a source for this statistic.

Figure 9: Average Number of Co-Producers per Production between 1988 and 2018



2004 edition would prove to have the largest number of co-producers so far, averaging at 2.2 per production. These high numbers show that Ruzicka put an emphasis on finding co-producers.

Comparing this to co-productions under DOMTS, their first two editions have roughly the same number of co-producers as the two last years of Ruzicka's tenure, though they have an upwards trajectory: by their second edition, they managed to bring in approximately 1.43 co-producers per production.

What is not shown here are *who* are working as co-producers to the biennale's productions. In interview with Manos Tsangaris, he mentions that in a conversation he had with Daniel Ott and Peter Ruzicka in 2013 during the festival transition, that the latter had mentioned that if he were to do something different, he would work less with opera house, which often predetermine very strongly the format that productions can take.³⁹ This is seen in the list of co-producers of Ruzicka's productions (omitted here, but visible in the appendix), which includes many state theatres and opera houses (for instance the Staatstheater Stuttgart, the Alte Oper Frankfurt, or the Bayerische Staatsoper). Looking at the co-producers of DOMTS'

39 Manos Tsangaris, interview by the author, Berlin, 03 May, 2017.

productions, while there are still opera houses (like the Deutsche Oper, or the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, however both via their “experimental” spaces, the Tischlerei and the Neue Werkstatt), there are also an increased number of co-productions with independent arts project spaces (Lothringer13 in Munich, Gare du Nord in Basel, Villa Waldbertha near Munich) and art institutions (Kolumba in Cologne, Onassis Cultural Center in Athens). This can be interpreted as evidence of a shift away from the stringent form needed for opera productions and towards the more experimental music theatre approach taken by DOMTS with their productions.

As mentioned earlier, the diagnosed premiere-based culture, where there is a large emphasis placed on the presentation of new works, presents a difficulty for new operas to make it into the opera repertoire, which in turn reinforces the well-ensconced repertoire even more. However, while there are some works that would benefit from being restaged on opera stages (inasmuch as this is at all possible), for the most part the productions under DOMTS fit more into an independent music theatre genre, or a performative approach to music theatre (see Rebstock 2017).

What this means is that the success metrics for the biennale must be re-examined, as the work-concept itself has shifted. For many of the performances commissioned by the current biennale, the highest level of success is not the successful integration of the work into the operatic canon. This is because works are often much more site-specific and process-oriented, and thus cannot be well-transported to other venues without the work itself fundamentally changing.

Nevertheless, it seems that the concept of “success” in terms of a biennale production’s afterlife (what used to be canonization in the repertoire), as well as the sensitization of the German theatregoing public towards music theatre are both categories that would need to be re-examined. In light of the changing nature of biennale productions, the co-production metric shifts from being an indicator of the likelihood that a performance will be made a part of the repertoire into a possibility that the commissioned artists will be invited to make subsequent commissions within the specific frameworks of projects connected to those other institutions, such as the restaging of *regno della musica* at ECLAT in Stuttgart where it presented the culmination of its open rehearsal process in Munich. This shift can be attributed to the increasing importance of site-specificity to these artistic works, which limits their dissemination across so many identical theatres, and disrupts the concept of the theatre “work” which is tailored to fit into it.