

Migration brokers and opera singers before and after Covid-19

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Abstract

Scholars of Arts note that the key role in securing artistic employment is played by music brokers, who dispatch the talent to theatres and artistic patrons (Petersen 2017; Walter 2016). Within this context, the high-flying career of an artist who becomes a migrant is shaped by brokers and cultural producers whose influence extends to the transnational level of networking. Ambitious migrant-artists thus join the well-networked global cultural industry, the navigation through which is a challenging process (Lee 2021). The complexity is added by the pandemic crisis, which has particularly affected the sector of opera: opera-houses were the first to close in 2020, while their post-2021 reopening has created stressful job search conditions for singers (Isaakyan 2020, 2021).

Based on interpretive biographic with opera singers from the former Soviet bloc who now live in Italy, this paper explores how these migrant-artists perceive their brokers and the dynamics of their network communication. Findings show that the pandemic crisis has severely affected the newcomer-artists, whose search for brokers started after 2020, and the impossibility of engaging with a broker in the (post) pandemic milieu. While the positive network dynamics of more established singers has remained robust.

Biography

Irina Isaakyan is Senior Research Associate at the Toronto Metropolitan University. Holding a PhD from the University of Edinburgh, she has conducted research on: diaspora nationalism, elite migrations, migration and gender and post-communist space. Prior to joining the Toronto Metropolitan University, she worked in the European University Institute in Florence on various projects related to the integration of migrants. She has recently conducted a longitudinal biographic study of migrant-artists who have moved from the former Soviet bloc to Europe. At the moment, she is working on a new project related to athletic migrants in North America. Irina Isaakyan is also the Managing Editor of IMISCOE Books and the Associate Editor of the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*.