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Pantouvaki, Sofia

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Published in:
Performance Costume : New Perspectives and Methods

Published: 14/01/2021

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

Please cite the original version:
Pantouvaki, S. (2021). Exploring Rossini's Berta: Young Audiences and the Agency of Opera Costume. In S. Pantouvaki, & P. McNeil (Eds.), *Performance Costume : New Perspectives and Methods* BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC.

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Exploring Rossini's Berta: Young Audiences and the Agency of Opera Costume

Sofia Pantouvaki

Performance is a form of art that children can fully grasp. Through the synthesis of artistic forms, narrative and expressive style, performance excites children's imagination, incites their thinking and activates their emotional world. Children tend to be motivated to actively participate in live performance through theatrical action, which stimulates their spirit and mind, their sensations and judgement by reflecting models and ideals, and gives examples of wider educational affection on their characters. Performance takes on a special role for young audiences,¹ becoming 'an index of ideology' (Grammatas 1999: 160),² suggesting rules of life and models of ethical behaviour and discussing, directly or indirectly, issues related to human personality. Frequently, the emphasis is put on the positive aspects of life in ways that tend to become didactic at times, whereas elsewhere performance may have clear pedagogical aims in terms of help-seeking and empathy. According to Theodore Grammatas, theatre can become 'a weapon for the emancipation and education of young audiences - with all the positive or negative meanings these notions may convey' (1999: 108). Shifra Schonmann notes that the theatre 'offers a language of universal symbols that should be understood by the young viewers. This then is a pedagogical criterion' (Schonmann 2006: 137).

Of special importance within the context of theatre for young audiences is its social and cultural function. Helen Nicholson remarks that theatre is a cultural institution which helps 'to shape forms of participation' in which theatre-makers continue 'to encourage children and young people both as artists and as citizens' (Nicholson 2011: 85). Therefore, theatre is not only an intellectual, educational and emotional experience, but also a socially engaging event and a

cultural experience that entails artistic and aesthetic elements; the 'aesthetic experience is fundamental in [a child's] development', as Schonmann observes (2006: 44). These complimentary perspectives of theatre for young audiences form the core of the project analysed here.

This chapter focuses on a costume-based activity within the opera project 'Interactive Opera at Primary Schools' led and coordinated by the Greek National Opera (2012-2015). The project used a new professional staging of Gioachino Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* as a stimulus for schoolchildren aged nine to twelve to interact creatively with an opera performance. Enthused by the narrative, the music and the characters of the *Barber of Seville* and Rossini's life, the children were involved in the design and making of a costume element, which complemented the costume of one of the characters on the stage, Berta. Here I discuss the children's creative and collaborative process, providing an analysis of the costume items produced, including the visual and material means employed and the themes which emerged. I use the concept of 'creative interaction' to explore the multi-layered agency of opera costume and especially its function as a form of expression, a social agent and a pedagogical tool. My research showed that by introducing a 'costume thinking' process that involved analysis, interpretation, design and implementation, the children were invited to actively participate in the creation of an operatic character, which boosted their artistic expression, activated cultural exchange and enhanced their social integration.

'Interactive Opera at Primary Schools': An Artistic and Educational Project

In 2011, Greek National Opera (GNO) undertook a research project co-funded by the European Union with a joint artistic and educational scope, entitled 'Interactive Opera at Primary

Schools.’³ The project was conceived as a fully professional version of Gioachino Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, staged as an incentive for schoolchildren to ‘interact with’, i.e. to participate actively in and contribute to an opera performance that took place at their school. The children of the participating primary schools prepared before the arrival of the GNO team during their school art classes and joined in the final preparation and presentation of the performance during the opera team’s two-day visit to their school. The project became part of the integrated curriculum in Greek primary schools⁴ in the frame of three art-related subjects taught at the primary level under the umbrella of ‘Aesthetics Education’: music education, drama education and visual arts education.

For the needs of the project, the GNO employed professional artists and educators and commissioned a creative team to create a new, abridged adaptation of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* for young people. The team comprised a stage director,⁵ two scenographers (one of whom was myself, also costume designer for the project), a lighting designer and a choreographer.⁶ The artistic team also included three music conductors, a small-scale orchestra ensemble (the GNO Educational Programmes Orchestra), six dancers and a multiple cast of opera singers for eight main roles.⁷ Five expert educators⁸ worked with the schoolchildren in workshops relating to specific areas of the project: music and voice, rhythm and movement, drama, visual arts, lighting and scenography. The educators’ role was essential not only from a pedagogical viewpoint, but also for the evaluation of the project, as they collected systematic feedback in situ. The production team included set constructors, painters, prop makers, costume makers, wig makers and a technical team that ran the performances while on tour, consisting of stage technicians, a lighting crew, dressers, hair/wig and makeup artists, a stage manager and a tour manager. A unique and important aspect of this project was that every

team member, including the opera singers, the musicians in the orchestra and the technicians, were involved in the educational activities of and with the children, led by the GNO educators.

‘Interactive Opera at Primary Schools’ toured 150 public schools over five school years, from May 2012 until October 2015. It had a broad impact and benefited over 44,000 pupils and 735 primary school teachers.⁹ The project had multiple aims, summarized by the GNO coordinator of educational programmes, Dr. Nikos Xanthoulis (2012), as:

- to introduce children throughout Greece to the art form of opera, an art that comprises many arts; to engage the aesthetic criteria of young audiences through a new professional production of high artistic merit
- to familiarize youth with the making of a musical production by actively engaging them in it; to introduce the various professions related to opera (both on stage and backstage)
- to offer a production especially made with the contribution of the schoolchildren, for the children of their home town, in their own school environment, addressing their fellow pupils as opera spectators
- to provide, through concrete activities, schools all over the country with a guide to drama and music education that can also be developed in the future, beyond the specific project.

According to the external evaluation report results collected after the first phase of the project, the children continued to talk about this experience both at school and at home for a long time after the opera had visited their school (TEC S.A. 2013: 64).¹⁰ The teachers commented that the project provided them with a tool for an ‘open school’ and ‘surpassed their expectations’ (TEC S.A. 2013: 64). They praised the ‘impressive’ collaboration of professionals

from diverse fields, including the technicians, who are usually invisible, with the children (TEC S.A. 2013: 64) and applauded the experience as an orchestration of all the arts (TEC S.A. 2013: 62) and the entire spectrum of colours and sounds, which 'was fascinating' (TEC S.A. 2013: 64). Overall, the feedback collected emphasises the value of the interaction between the pupils and opera professionals, as well as the significance of the scenographic and costume objects that the pupils constructed and the fact that these were used in the performance (TEC S.A. 2013: 91).

Children and Performance Design in the Context of *The Barber of Seville*

The collaborative features of performance-making, aesthetic and sensorial engagement, as well as the collective experience of attending performances are perspectives taken into consideration in planning the activities of the 'Interactive Opera at Primary Schools' project as a whole. The importance of the visual and spatial aspects of performance and the vital role of human representation, evident through acting/singing and costume, put an emphasis on the role of design-related activities in this project, which required the participation of the schoolchildren through team work and the production of collective artworks.

Visual language is of huge importance in performance for children. Images create visual relationships to the world of fantasy and connect imagination to reality. Grammatas remarks that 'child spectators are capable of simultaneously partaking of imagination and reality,' creating a visual world 'according to their needs' (1992: 47). As Schonmann notes:

in the process of watching a play, the child is not creating an imaginary world that takes the place of the real world, but is witnessing a reality that is created in front

of his eyes, in the here and now on the stage. The child as a spectator needs to be mature enough to understand the *as if* situation as a part of the theatrical language. (Schonmann 2006: 40)

Therefore, with the contribution of design elements, the young audience participates in the action, engages in dialogue with the performance and experiences a sense of life created on the stage (Pantouvaki 2008). Maureen Cox, author of *The Pictorial World of the Child*, argues that children brought up within a social setting 'cannot help but be influenced by the culture that envelops them, and this includes the visual images they see' (Cox 2005: 2). The communication of ideas by means of design and music is often achieved without the requirement of a particular cultural background. A stage image acquires a self-reliance that becomes the language of the messages contained in a performance (Grammatas 1999) and ideas are then communicated through scenographic and embodied metaphors (Pantouvaki 2008; and 2018), as well as viscerally (Barbieri 2017).

The visual world for this staging of *The Barber of Seville* was based on the *commedia dell'arte* tradition, which was used as a motive and expressive code. The scenographic concept provided an easily transferable wooden stage which offered a physical space for the performances,¹¹ as well as a dramatic space for the action. Although not based on *commedia dell'arte* stock character elements, the costume design was inspired by *commedia* touring troupes, that traditionally used old and recycled garments. The costumes were artistically elaborated (dyed and aged) to look used and the design included some colourful visual elements and deliberate modernizations, such as the use of contemporary striped socks, an element that added a feeling of playfulness to the design.¹²

The cut and forms of the costumes were drawn from a broad range of centuries, starting from the late Renaissance, or sixteenth century, with elements identified in the costume of Dr. Bartolo signifying the 'old spirit', and mixed with costumes based on fashions from later centuries, such as the Baroque period of the seventeenth century, in the decadent elegance of Don Basilio, the music teacher's costume; also, to the Rococo style of the eighteenth century in the disguise of Count Almaviva as a singing tutor. Figaro's (the Barber's) costume was based on male dress from the early nineteenth century (the post-French Revolution period), identifying - in comparison to the other male characters - the spirit of a new age.

Figure 6.1.1: Costume drawing for the character of 'Berta' for the opera *The Barber of Seville*, Greek National Opera (2012). Costume designer: Sofia Pantouvaki. Courtesy of the author.

The costume of Berta, a servant to Dr. Bartolo, was inspired by a simplified version of a Renaissance dress, thus relating to the spirit of Dr. Bartolo's home. The dress had detachable sleeves attached to the bodice by laces, two skirts and an underskirt (Figure 6.1.1). Its colour palette was monochromatic, in dark green, functioning as a background colour. This costume included an apron, which indicated Berta's status as a house worker and which was offered to the children as an unfinished costume element for them to design. Costume takes on vital importance here for the children's engagement with the performer (in this case, the singer) during live performance. It becomes an active mediator by creating connections between the narrative and performing body through design, interpersonal understanding and human representation.

Costume as a Participatory and Pedagogical Tool

By combining professional performance and education, the 'Interactive Opera at Primary Schools' project offered the professional performance designers a challenging enriched and expanded role. This extended beyond designing a new production as a collaborating artist and member of the creative team, addressing an educational aspect for which the designer becomes a contributing researcher and educator. My background experience in designing performances for children combined with my research in theatre and education specifically on the impact of scenography upon young audiences (Pantouvaki 2008) was crucial in responding to this new, integrated role, which required proposing and planning not only the sets and costumes, but also the educational activities relating to the performance's design.

Nicholson (2011: 87) remarks that 'the experience of seeing the work of professional theatre-makers contributes to [the children's] artistic development'. Children are typically involved in performance as active performers (acting, reading verse, singing, etc.) and this immersion in the theatrical event is usually their first insight into the making of live performance.¹³ The project analysed here enabled the children to participate in the meaning-making process of performance, not only by developing creative activities, but mainly by integrating the children's design input into the opera performance. This resulted in an opera designed *for* and *with* the children concentrating on 'its own artistic form and its aesthetic merits' (Schonmann 2006: 10).

From the multiple perspectives of the designer, researcher and educator, we addressed the following questions: How could the children participate in and actually contribute to the design of the opera? Could the children create and even construct part of the scenographic elements? Could the children experience the creation of an opera performance, instead of only watching the final outcome?

This process resulted in the creation of three specific actions which became a new tool for creatively engaging school children (Pantouvaki 2012b) and integrating the principles of design for performance into education for young people.¹⁴ These participatory actions addressed the main areas of design for performance – the sets, the props, the lighting and the costumes – as a framework for teamwork, social interaction and learning. Through these, the schoolchildren interacted with the performance by becoming *co-creators*, specifically *co-designers* of the final outcome that was presented on stage.¹⁵ The pupils' contribution affected and shaped the visual aspects of the opera performance and especially the representation of one of its characters, Berta. This made each individual show and each representation of Berta, different from the next.

Active participation and creative engagement was therefore, the proposed form of interaction. The costume-based activity was generated through collaborative work encouraging the children to collaborate with their classmates. When the opera team arrived at their school, the creators of the apron would present it to the opera educators and to the opera singer performing the role, explaining their approach to the character of Berta. On the following day, the singer wore the apron on stage, together with the rest of her costume. It is important to note that this activity brought the children into direct collaboration with the technicians (Figure 6.1.2), as well as with the professional opera singers.¹⁶ The children's involvement in the role of co-designer was intended to value both the work on stage, as well as the work backstage. The teachers commented that the pupils' eagerness to fulfil this task shows that alternative role models can be developed for the children's future (TEC S.A. 2013: 64).

Figure 6.1.2: The children present and deliver their apron to the dressers of the Greek National Opera. First Primary School of Itea, 14-15 November, 2012. Photographer: Aris Kamarotos. Courtesy of the photographer.

Finally, through the realization and completion of the specific objects, the aprons that they designed and made, the schoolchildren achieved a tangible material outcome. This means that their creative contribution was appreciated and became part of the performance in a concrete way. The teachers observed that the children were enthusiastic about the fact that their own creations were directly integrated into the performance that was performed the next day as a part of it (TEC S.A. 2013: 63). This shows the significance of offering the children creative responsibility as active agents and the possibility of undertaking a task that they would take full control of.

Designing an Operatic Character from the Children's Creative Perspective

Berta is Dr. Bartolo's housekeeper, a soprano role in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. She is a small ('secondary') character in the opera, singing only in five scenes; to engage the children in the design of such a character was a deliberate choice, aiming to show that not only the main characters are important in a story. Berta's words, according to the libretto, centre on commenting on the various events in the house, with a focus on Dr. Bartolo's actions (aria: 'What a suspicious old man!') and her main aria ('The old man seeks a wife') comically criticizes 'love, which makes everyone go mad' (Sterbini [1816] 2019). However, the teachers¹⁷ mainly worked with the children on analysing the character through the music and plot as a whole, taking into consideration Berta's professional identity and her role in the story as a housekeeper. The costume element they worked with, an apron, supported this direction.

This interaction through costume engaged the children in the design and making of Berta's apron which complemented her costume on stage. The apron was prepared as a 'blank' canvas for expression, offered to the children by the costume designer as a concrete material

object that they could (co-)design, becoming co-creators of the character. The choice of the apron as the element for this costume-based creative interaction was a successful one, given that all the participating children - from all the geographic areas of Greece that the project had visited, with children from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds - were familiar with this type of garment. The apron is a readily-recognized garment to children from a wide variety of places and from everyday situations, which range from the intimate environment of their homes (their family members wearing aprons to cook), to images of popular culture (e.g. television celebrity chefs) and events from their local cultural environment (particularly those involving local folk dresses, which include an apron in most regions of Greece). According to the teachers, the apron was one of the means that 'deconstructed the myth that opera is an unfamiliar type of performance for children' and showed that, instead, an operatic character can be 'really familiar' (TEC S.A. 2013: 65).

Inspired by the narrative of the opera and the music, the children analysed Berta by trying to visualize her and suggesting what she might look like, what she would enjoy and what kind of a costume she might wear. They had no visual references for the costume design, except Figaro's image, which became the project's logo and was printed on the materials that they received in advance. The guidelines sent to the teachers suggested allowing the children freedom, but included a tip: that 'Berta might like stripes', although 'this is not compulsory if the children pick a different approach' (Pantouvaki 2012a: 44); this suggestion was taken into consideration by some of the teachers when discussing the project with their pupils. As Schonmann (2006: 67) notes, 'the child's awareness that the play is a fiction must be ensured. The aesthetic response rests on the imaginative involvement of the child'. Our approach intended to leave the children's imagination as free as possible.

Costuming transforms the imagined character of the story into an embodiment on stage with a concrete physical appearance. The schoolchildren were introduced into a costume thinking process, i.e. a process of thinking about the representation of human character through costume, via the following stages: presentation (of the character); reaction; discussion (exchange of ideas); interpretation (possible pathways for the design); participation (active engagement); communication (expression of meanings) and reception. This led to the shaping of a design for the costume. The process of creation is, in general, 'an existential experience that enables openness and growth, only if it is not intentionally designed to contain learning aims,' notes Schonmann (2006: 42). Here, the children worked freely at the boundaries between fantasy and reality, applying meanings and ideas from real life and real people to the character of Berta: for them, she is a believable character. To be able to conceive the act of interpretation and, subsequently, the act of design, the children had to unpack the concept of 'aesthetic distance' (Schonmann 2006) and explore how it is constructed through design. Decoding the conventions of the stage and proposing ways for human representation – on a small scale, through this one costume element – for a professional singer was an advanced creative process for the young participants aged nine to twelve.¹⁸ Through playing and experimentation with materials and compositional elements from the visual arts, they were able 'to make distinctions between the real and the imaginary world' and be involved in 'high-level thinking operations' (Schonmann 2006: 107) developed through their exploration of costume. The diverse stage representations of Berta stemmed from the children's 'own ways of seeing and knowing the world' (Schonmann 2006: 20) and afforded them one layer of mediation, through their role of co-designer, in the creation of an operatic character, which influenced the presentation of the performance.

Through the process of interpreting Berta's character, the children were offered a chance to discuss all the characters in the opera. The on-going dialogue between the children and the character continued to develop until the children met the singer who would perform, i.e. make the character come alive on stage. The encounter between the young designers and the opera signers impersonating Berta was significant as a stage of communication. One of the elements the children were impressed by was 'how a regular person becomes/is transformed into an artist' (TEC S.A. 2013: 61). Through their active involvement in the process of costume designing, the children also learned to distinguish the role from the real performer.

Costume as Expression and Communication: Results of the Children's Design Process

Helen Nicholson claims that 'all imaginative and challenging theatre extends children's cultural education' (2011: 87). Analysing Berta as a fictional human character provided the children with an opportunity to discuss human habits, tastes, wishes, behaviours and relationships. In the theatre for young people we should not 'destroy the depth of the ideas that emerge,' remarks Schonmann (2006: 100).¹⁹ One of the strong aspects of this project was that it embraced a diversity of ideas that emerged directly from the participating children. The success of this project lies, therefore, in the fact that the children's ideas were allowed space for expression and remained untouched and raw and were integrated as such. Teachers reported that this activity offered their pupils a sense of self-confidence, including those who were not particularly confident in their studies.²⁰ The key to comprehending the difference of this children-influenced process, as opposed to an adult-led interpretation process, is in understanding that 'children interpret the world differently from adults because they see it on their own terms' (Waksler 1986 quoted in Schonmann 2006: 43); this interpretation is based on their own concerns and uses means that are familiar to them.

The children worked with materials and techniques that were already known to them, such as painting and handicrafts. The apron was sent to the schools in advance, already cut and sewn in the required dimensions and the schoolchildren were invited to paint and decorate it freely, using colours or mixed media, or any other technique and materials of their choice.²¹

How were the children inspired to design Berta's apron? The analysis of the produced costume items reveals a diversity of themes that range from visual and decorative patterns that the children applied to Berta's 'sartorial style', to themes that they associated with her personality, such as her love for music, her passion for cooking, and her sensibility toward environmental matters. In several cases, the elements that were integrated into the apron were based on the children's interpretation of the story of the opera more broadly; such ideas connected Berta to the other characters of the opera (especially Dr. Bartolo, Rosina and Figaro) and generated parallel, complementary narratives, born from the children's interpretation of the plot and developing beyond it. Here, I analyse these themes and approaches.

Figure 6.1.3: Berta (Anna Alexopoulou) with a striped apron. Second Primary School of Karpenissi, 12-13 November, 2012. Photographer: Aris Kamarotos. Courtesy of the photographer.

Although only briefly introduced to the teachers, the idea that 'Berta might like stripes' (Pantouvaki 2012a: 44) was embraced by a large number of children as relevant to her 'cheerful character'. Berta was seen by many of the children's groups as a joyful, open-hearted and optimistic person and her affection for stripes – a kinetic, vivid pattern – seemed like a natural 'choice' (Figure 6.1.3). Stripes have been analysed as a ubiquitous pattern, historically associated with people who 'disturb the established order' (such as heretics, prostitutes, madmen, convicts, court jesters and servants, and later, clowns) but over the centuries, especially after the French Revolution, they eventually became a symbol of freedom and free

spirit (Pastoureau [1991] 2001: 2). The children were certainly not aware of this analysis of the pattern, but its symbolism, particularly in indicating boldness and playfulness, was evident in the documentation of their interpretation processes. Numerous aprons were designed in striped patterns in horizontal, vertical or diagonal arrangements, with narrow or wider stripes, usually in bright colours because this is 'what Berta likes'²². In many cases, the stripes were put together with other elements, such as flowers, because 'Berta likes stripes but also flowers'²³ which 'make her apron look pretty'²⁴ (see also [Figure 6.1.9](#)). Stripes were also frequently combined with other geometrical patterns such as triangles and circles,²⁵ parallel curves or dots,²⁶ as well as rhombuses,²⁷ a pattern that was familiar to the children from representations of Harlequin, the stock character of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, dressed in stylized patches, presented to them by their teachers.

Figure 6.1.4: Berta (Anna Alexopoulou) wearing an apron with stripes, flowers and hearts. Third Primary School of Komotini, 28-29 January, 2013. Photographer: Aris Kamarotos. Courtesy of the photographer.

Another strong element in the proposed representations of Berta was colour. The use of bold colours was interpreted as an additional choice of the character ('Berta likes strong colours',²⁸ see also [Figure 6.1.4](#)) as well as a symbol of her personality: the apron is 'cheerful like Berta herself'²⁹ and 'colourful like the character of Berta'.³⁰ The children's interpretation of colour relates to liveliness, optimism and a positive temperament. This is also evident in the rare cases where colour was used to 'cheer her up, as in the specific scene she seems sad'.³¹ Colour was integrated with an imaginative array of techniques and materials besides painting, i.e. fabrics, ribbons, laces, embroidery and small-scale objects applied onto the surface of the aprons. In several cases, as will be shown later, the apron became a symbol of the character's occupation and her social status. For example, the apron was sometimes embroidered,³² or

covered with pieces of velvet and decorated with bows, because ‘she lives and works in a noble house’, while also holding a kitchen towel (an addition proposed by the children) aged with ‘stains’, as this was ‘where Berta cleans her hands while cooking’.³³ Such realistic elements were also present elsewhere, e.g. when the apron ‘should also look old’, therefore bearing pieces of fabric looking like patches³⁴ or, in a few exceptional cases, painted in dark colours, because ‘in that time period there were no bold colours’,³⁵ an interpretation rooted in the viewing of eighteenth and nineteenth century paintings that the visual arts teacher had shown to the pupils.

Figure 6.1.5: (a) The children presenting their work on the first day of the GNO visit, an apron full of flowers in bright colours; (b) Berta (Alexandra Mattheoudaki) wearing the apron on stage the day of the performance. Third Primary School of Voula, Attica, 22-23 October, 2012. Photographer: Aris Kamarotos. Courtesy of the photographer.

Flowers were also attributed to Berta’s character, as ‘she is cheerful and positive, a happy person who likes flowers’;³⁶ ‘Berta likes colours and flowers!’ and ‘for sure there are many flowers in Dr. Bartolo’s house and Berta loves taking care of them’³⁷ (Figure 6.1.5) so, ‘we wanted to create a “cheery”, flowery apron’.³⁸ The flowers indicate that the apron she wears is ‘joyful like Berta’, because ‘Berta may have a heavy workload and many tasks and responsibilities at Dr. Bartolo’s house, but inside her she is optimistic and romantic’³⁹ (Figure 6.1.6). Romanticism was also the personality trait identified in Berta when roses were used.⁴⁰ These brief narratives, collected during the presentation of the aprons by the various children groups, explain the children’s understanding of the floral elements as a symbol of positive spirit, optimism, romanticism and cheerfulness. The implementation of the ideas in some cases were very refined and demonstrated a high level of skill.⁴¹

Figure 6.1.6: Berta (Eleni Davou) is interpreted here as ‘optimistic and romantic’ and her apron is designed with a pattern of small flowers. Twenty-second Primary School of Peristeri, Athens, 16-17 October, 2012. Photographer: Aris Kamarotos. Courtesy of the photographer.

In many cases, Berta’s apron was directly related to her profession as housekeeper and cook at Dr. Bartolo’s house. This was indicated by kitchen utensils painted on or attached to the aprons in three-dimensional forms reproducing the objects. These included paper spoons, forks and ladles with which ‘she can cook’, cut out and glued, or sewn on the apron⁴² and cutlery,⁴³ drawn with chalk,⁴⁴ or painted on the apron in a linear, stripe-like composition indicating that ‘Berta likes to cook’.⁴⁵ Berta’s connection to the kitchen is also evident in the numerous representations of food depicted on the apron, including fruit,⁴⁶ vegetables (e.g. an aubergine and a tomato!⁴⁷; as well as real vegetables placed in a pocket added to the apron⁴⁸), cakes⁴⁹ and other sweets (desserts) and ice cream,⁵⁰ as well as real beans, lentils and rice glued onto it.⁵¹ These elements were inspired not only by the character of Berta, but also the composer Gioachino Rossini himself, who was a ‘virtuoso’ in gastronomy (Braus 2006). ‘It is possible that Rossini loved to eat more than he loved to compose and there are humorous stories about his adventures with food,’ notes Sweatman (2009: 11), who calls him ‘Rossini, the Foodie’ (2009: 17). Rossini’s culinary talent was made known to the children through a story that the stage director of this project wrote as a part of his director’s note. This inspired adding to Berta’s apron ‘Rossini’s recipes’; in a particular case, the teacher searched for recipes of Italian food – including those by Rossini – on the internet, together with the pupils as part of their preparation⁵² (Figure 6.1.7). Thus the global revival of food culture as popular televisual entertainment and social activity was successfully amalgamated with the opera script and ethos, through design.

Figure 6.1.7: a) Recipes of Italian food are embedded in this apron, photographed backstage and showing a polyphony of ideas; (b) Berta (Vassiliki Katsoupaki) wearing the apron on stage the day of the performance. Third Primary School of Keratsini, 17-18 May, 2012. Photographers: (a) Christina Avgeridi, (b) Andreas Simopoulos. Courtesy of Sofia Pantouvaki (a) and of Greek National Opera (b).

This interesting combination of food and music was another theme in the design of Berta's apron by the children. The aprons often combine colourful drawings of musical instruments and notes⁵³ or a large cooking pot wherefrom musical notes and a stave steam out, because 'Berta likes to sing while cooking'.⁵⁴ Designs of curly staves with musical notes function as an indication that she likes music,⁵⁵ while, in another case, there is a big G-clef because 'Berta likes to sing or listen to music while cooking' and 'of course, we are also in an opera performance'.⁵⁶

It is also interesting to observe elements of realism that the schoolchildren applied to their designs for Berta's apron. The most significant of these relate to her work at Dr. Bartolo's house, especially her role and actions in the kitchen. The type of activities she might be doing are taken into consideration in the following examples: The apron has fingerprints and stains from working in the kitchen⁵⁷ and bears traces of dirt because 'Berta cleans her hands with the apron while cooking'.⁵⁸ There are also stains because she 'uses olive oil in her cooking'⁵⁹ and because 'Berta cooks fried potatoes and gets dirty from the frying oil'.⁶⁰ Another apron bears signs of her hands covered with flour, since 'Berta has been making bread'.⁶¹ In one case, the apron's stripes are not clearly visible because 'the apron is very dirty from use in Berta's tasks'.⁶² These lively descriptions of the concept behind the design proposals come straight from the children's everyday reality and their observation of the life around them, at home and beyond.

Other elements of realism relate to the addition of patches which indicate the apron's wear following extensive use⁶³ and are sometimes reminiscent of Harlequin's patches,⁶⁴ as well as patches that Berta herself has added to the apron 'because Dr. Bartolo does not give money to Berta to buy a new one'.⁶⁵ Frequently, a pocket was added to the apron.⁶⁶ This element has been a simple, yet surprisingly inventive addition by the children that was not part of the original costume design. Here, the children's imagination developed many more imaginative ideas: 'the pocket is for Berta to keep the recipes that Rossini gives her, which he writes on sheet music';⁶⁷ 'she needs a huge pocket so she can place her kitchen utensils and anything else she needs';⁶⁸ the big pocket 'serves to Berta to place her ladle while cooking'.⁶⁹ These pockets have diverse shapes; they are rectangular, semi-circular, but also triangular⁷⁰ and even in the shape of an apple.⁷¹ They are made of different fabrics, as well as of pieces of plastic bags because Berta 'likes to recycle'.⁷² Several children's groups identified in Berta's character an environmental sensibility and therefore, a love for recycling, including with materials from her kitchen, as in the case of flowers made of plastic bottles and caps decorating her apron (Figure 6.1.8).⁷³ Moreover, the apron serves to carry measuring tapes, needles and threads because, 'if Berta does every helping task at home, she must also be fond of sewing'⁷⁴ (here it is interesting to note that sewing is not considered a 'servant's task' by the children, but rather, a personal hobby).

Figure 6.1.8: Berta's apron is decorated here with flowers made of recycled plastic bottles and caps. (a) The children explain their concept to the GNO educator (Venetia Nasi); (b) Berta (Anna Alexopoulou) wearing the apron on stage the day of the performance. First Primary School of Andravida, 19-20 December, 2012. Photographer: Aris Kamarotos. Courtesy of the photographer.

Of special interest are ideas stimulated by artistic elements that were introduced to the children by their visual arts teachers, such as intensified shapes and patterns from the visual world of *commedia dell'arte*,⁷⁵ bold colours citing twentieth-century art movements such as Fauvism (see also [Figure 6.1.2](#)),⁷⁶ or the technique of graffiti.⁷⁷ In a few cases, the aprons were based on the form and patterns of the aprons of local traditional dress from the region or town.⁷⁸ Also, a few groups integrated drawings with local references, including depictions of architectural sites emblematic of their hometown as a connection between their life and the world of the opera.⁷⁹

Other significant ideas are those that expand beyond visual representation and reality and touch the sphere of metaphorical interpretation and symbolism. For example, one children's group narrates: 'on the top part of the apron we included a few small clouds [collage] that show Berta's thoughts for all the tasks she has to undertake'.⁸⁰ Another apron is drawn in a way that indicates 'two layers of fabric', of which the 'top layer' has an austere pattern in black and white and gives the illusion that it is torn and enables the viewer to see the 'background layer', which is in strong colours and indicates Berta's cheerful self, thus functioning as a window into her personality.⁸¹ Another interesting apron is a metaphorical representation of the fight between good and evil, signified by the use of black and white.⁸² Finally, an allegorical design depicts a pocket added to the apron, opening to 'a meadow where from a bee starts its travel to freedom'.⁸³

Dialogue, questioning and interpretation offered the children a possibility to 'react to' and 'interact with' an operatic character through imagination and critical thinking and express their thoughts and ideas. This process, in the vast majority of cases, was experienced with enjoyment, 'a long disregarded concept in education' (Schonmann 2006: 176) that enables learning through experience and emotions. The character of Berta inspired diverse options for

human representation through the use of colour, the consideration of composition and form, the selection of materials and the integration of ideas and meanings into a physically-produced object, offering the children a possibility to think *through* costume. Moreover, the interrelation of narrative, music, food and visual arts enabled the experience of costume as a synaesthetic entity. That is, the children were able to experience one sense modality by stimulating another (Braus 2006), such as ‘hearing’ colours, ‘tasting’ sounds and ‘touching’ feelings. This empowered them to an advanced level of creative expression, activated by the process of designing costume.

Opera Costume as a Social Agent

Helen Nicholson remarks that ‘performance provides children with an aesthetic space that is socially liberating’ (2011: 81). One of the values of the children’s costume-based creative interaction with Berta’s costume was its frame and proposed work method, which involved the pupils in teamwork. This was developed further by the teachers, who engaged the children in discussions through critical reflection and in evaluating different proposed ideas with a freedom to decide. The teachers emphasized generating multiple draft proposals and prioritized the pupils’ own wishes and critical evaluation, directing them towards making the final choice by themselves, thus giving them responsibility for the final outcome. The apron was eventually the result of either a selection process through which one main idea was implemented, or, in several cases, a synthesis of many ideas into one final object. This is clearer if we observe some of the work methods used.

In most schools, the teachers asked the children to first work individually, expressing their personal ideas and then gathered the pupils in a group to discuss the different ideas and to

make a joint, collective decision towards the final idea that would be realized. For example, in one school, each child drew their own idea on paper for the apron in small scale and after a collective discussion, they chose one idea to apply to full-scale; they then transferred the design to the 1:1 scale using a grid and finally, painted it with acrylic paint.⁸⁴ However, the children frequently enhanced plurality and polyphony by choosing to include more than one idea in a single apron (see also [Figure 6.1.7](#)); in these cases Berta's apron was a collage of ideas resulting from individual drawings by various children.⁸⁵ Such an apron was divided into two parts: half of it is colourful with flowers (top part), while the other half is black and white (lower part), because it was a combination of two different ideas offered by the group of children.⁸⁶ Two other aprons included a collection of themes inspired by the opera's story (food, musical notes, etc.), made by various children in small-scale drawings on individual pieces of fabric that were then sewn together onto the surface of the apron;⁸⁷ similar combinations of ideas originally drawn in small-scale and later synthesized into full scale were applied elsewhere.⁸⁸ In another case, the teacher gave a task to the entire class to design an apron; then, a small group of female pupils evaluated which elements to use in the final design: they decided to select the 'most interesting elements from each proposal', so they picked the colour from one, the stripes from another, the flower and the lace from the other drafts.⁸⁹ At this school, the children were so enthusiastic about the result, that when the day arrived for them to present and deliver the apron to the opera team, they all stood up together to show that the work was collective and that they couldn't distinguish among themselves any individual creator of the apron.

Such collaborative work was also a part of other methods used, including real-time co-design of the apron. There, the children worked spontaneously and contemporaneously, i.e. painting the outline of the apron concurrently, while seated around it in a circle, or drawing on the apron in turns by rotating it. This method was particularly important when used in schools

with multi-ethnic pupils with varied cultural backgrounds.⁹⁰ In collaborating with others through discussions on human nature (habits, wishes, preferences, behaviours and relationships), the children begin to understand the wishes of others and develop skills in respecting and accepting other persons' views (Figure 6.1.9). Therefore, the 'creative interaction' with Berta's costume enriched and encouraged their sense of social empathy.

Figure 6.1.9: The design of Berta's apron as a result of collaboration, discussion and collective decision-making. Third Primary School of Lavrio, 31 October-1 November, 2012. Photographer: Aris Kamarotos. Courtesy of the photographer.

The open nature of these activities invited all the children to take part, allowing them 'a chance to publicly identify with the school events and by so doing receive necessary and fitting recognition from other pupils and teachers' (Schonmann 2006: 180). The costume-based activity with Berta's apron was embraced by pupils of all genders and the results represented the interpretation of the character by both girls and boys, who usually worked together in mixed teams. In a few cases, female pupils would take responsibility for designing the apron, applying patterns onto it, or colours or decorative elements (e.g. flowers) that are stereotypically related to romantic female characters,⁹¹ or based on research in art and dress history.⁹² Collaborative work also includes the blending of ideas, e.g. in the creation of an apron with colourful stripes painted by the male pupils of the classroom, combined with three-dimensional paper butterflies and flowers created by their female schoolmates and placed on the stripes to 'add an additional layer of joy'.⁹³ Berta's occupation as a cook, as well as the reference to Rossini's close connection to gastronomy were key in engaging all genders in the analysis of the character (Figure 6.1.10). The years during which this project was implemented in the schools followed the rise of male celebrity chefs in Greece, especially after the fame of the male winner of the first season of MasterChef Greece, who became widely popular through the medium of

television all around the country. Hence, men as chefs became widely recognized and this led the young boys to find their own role in the work with the apron. The pupils' view, however, recorded in the questionnaires for the purposes of the external evaluation of the project, is that 'boys and girls participated to the same extent' in this activity (TEC S.A. 2013: 30).

Figure 6.1.10: This costume-based activity was embraced by pupils of all genders. (a) A young male pupil as a 'chef'; (b) Berta (Alexandra Mattheoudaki) wearing the apron on stage the day of the performance. Twenty-second Primary School of Piraeus, 7-8 June, 2012. Photographer: Andreas Simopoulos. Courtesy of Greek National Opera.

Nicholson (2011: 84) claims that theatre education maintains 'its traditional commitment to providing learning experiences that are artistically challenging, socially engaged and egalitarian'. Thinking through costume about the representation of human character in this activity involved the children in dramaturgical interpretation, visual representation and material practice (Essin 2012) through an active, co-authorial role by engaging their imagination, intellectual skills, experiences and emotions. In the theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner ([1983] 2011) claims that interpersonal intelligence (the communication and understanding of other people's emotions) and intrapersonal intelligence (the internal skills, emotions and the understanding of the self) are cultivated through the development of experiential learning activities. This happened here, through working with a group of peers with costume as a tool for active participation, interpersonal understanding, expression and learning. Here, the act of participation was a celebratory act, important on both a personal as well as social level.

Conclusion

The evaluation report compiled a few months after the implementation of the project's first phase indicates that the teachers emphasized that the project's strongest aspect was its interactive character and especially the opportunity offered to the pupils to create the sets and costumes of the performance (TEC S.A. 2013: 35). The teachers remarked that, through their active participation and embodied experience, pupils were able to recognize the importance of team spirit, collectiveness and professionalism (TEC S.A. 2013: 40).

The children's creative work in co-designing Berta's apron shows a breadth in the understanding of human personalities and a wide range of imagination and interpretation. By considering performance as 'not only a synthesis of the arts, but also the art of synthesis' (Papandreou 1989: 42), the schoolchildren were introduced to collaborative work, to thinking through design and to the synthetic character of making a musical performance. By means of analysis, interpretation, design and implementation, the children developed their own process of 'costume thinking' on an operative character. This creative process boosted their artistic expression, provoked dialogue, cultural and intellectual exchange and resulted in teamwork beyond divisions of gender towards a common human and artistic goal, achieved through critical perception, problem-solving and decision-making. By engaging the children in an activity that they could fully take control of, they were able to complete the task that they had begun. In this way, they truly contributed to the making of the performance, becoming co-designers of the performance and co-creators of the character. This gave them the feeling of responsibility, satisfaction, pride and a sense of accomplishment, all of which are highly important components of a childhood experience.

This example of the 'Interactive Opera in Primary Schools' project proves that when children are given an opportunity to be engaged in the process of staging an opera, they are not only taught about the visual and performing arts, thus acquiring artistic and cultural education

(here, specific to the field of costume design), but also undergo a developmental and emancipatory process. Maxine Greene (2001: 7) sees aesthetic education 'as integral to the development of persons - to their cognitive, perceptual, emotional, and imaginative development. We see it as part of the human effort (so often forgotten today) to seek a greater coherence in the world'. Hence, the 'creative interaction' with the operatic character in this project generated an aesthetic experience for the child participants and produced a new unique art form based on costume: a co-designed costume that is beyond the reach of the original lead designer. This is shaped within a conceptual framework and becomes a pedagogical tool in a natural, unforced way, offering an opportunity for 'non-educational education' (Schonmann 2006). As the teachers and headmasters commented in their interviews during the project evaluation, 'the students learned so many [new things] without realising that they were taught' (TEC S.A. 2013: 65); in their assessment, they referred to the programme as a 'remarkable pedagogical tool' (TEC S.A. 2013: 35). The costume-based activity reached its general goals.

The imaginative artworks produced by the schoolchildren carry their intellectual ideas in concrete visual and material representations that are embedded in the aprons. These costume elements were embraced and taken forward by the opera singers who performed the role of Berta on stage. The singers were inspired to develop new reactions and gestures in response to the children's ideas, providing a next level of 'interaction': that which happens on stage during the live action of the opera.

As this project shows, by creating a platform for co-creation, children were offered a chance to understand human characters and propose ideas for human representation, thus becoming co-authors of new ideas. This took place through an understanding of the agency of costume within the context of opera. On a pedagogical level, the process enhanced a critical pedagogy approach for the development of creative expression through experiential learning.

From a sociological perspective, children's creative engagement in performance through costume design has the capacity to re-inforce the bonds among a group of children and contributes to the development of substantial life characteristics within a social frame, such as the acceptance of others' personalities, development of trust, training in active listening, dialogue and active participation, practicing empathy and observation and improving interpersonal and intercultural communication. Such a project offered a chance to develop both education for and about opera (the theatrical medium as a music-based stage art form), as well as education through opera, in which the operatic character becomes a means to reach artistic, pedagogical and social objectives. It is hoped that this paradigm will be adopted and developed further in other contexts, settings and ways as a vehicle to engage, enlighten and educate children through costume all over the world.

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¹ The rich and varied terminology used by theatre researchers (Kalogeropoulou & Kangelari 1995; Grammatas 1998; Grammatas 1999; Schonmann 2006; Nicholson 2011), refers to 'children's theatre', 'theatre for children and youth', 'theatre for young audiences' or 'theatre for young people' (Schonmann 2006) involving performances prepared by adult professional or amateur actors and addressed to children (and adult accompanying persons), performances played by children addressed to youngsters and family audiences, dramatized games performed by children and addressed to children, as well as other forms of performance (puppet theatre, shadow theatre, etc.) addressed to them.

² All translations of non-English references in this text are by the author, unless stated differently.

³ The project was conducted within the framework of the Greek Ministry of Culture's 'Education and Lifelong Learning' scheme and was co-funded by the European Union (European Social Fund) and the Greek state (National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-13).

⁴ The project 'Interactive Opera at Primary Schools' was implemented in collaboration with schools that operated between 2010-15 as all-day primary schools with a 'single reformed curriculum' (in Greek: 'Eniaio anamorfomeno ekpaideutiko programma'). This curriculum was based on actions supporting

lifelong learning; it promoted social integration and active participation and aimed at the development of innovation, creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit. This reformed curriculum enriched theatre education, music, visual arts, information technology, English language and physical education and included experiential actions in thematic areas such as sustainability and recycling, health education especially nutrition, consumer education, environmental education and hygiene, etc.

⁵ Kostis Papaioannou, a professional theatre and opera director whose background includes opera productions for young audiences with the participation of pupils in schools.

⁶ Set design by Sofia Pantouvaki and Giorgos Kolios, costume design by Sofia Pantouvaki, lighting design by Christina Kamma and choreography by Themistoklis Pavlis.

⁷ The opera originally included a double cast of soloists for each of the eight main roles, which eventually grew to become a sextuple-cast due to the length and complexity of the project's implementation which spanned over five artistic seasons (equally, five school years). The singers in the role of Berta were: Anna Alexopoulou, Eleni Davou, Vassiliki Katsoupaki, Alexandra Mattheoudaki and Maria Vlachopoulou.

⁸ The GNO educators were (in alphabetical order) Christina Avgeridi, Zoe Lymperopoulou, Venetia Nasi, Konstantina Strani and Tatiana Theologou. Their expertise focuses on theatre, music and education, as well as scenography and education (V. Nasi), the latter of which was crucial for the analytical discussions with the children who worked on the costume-based assignment.

⁹ 'Interactive Opera at Primary Schools' was implemented in three phases: phase one at seventy schools (school years: 2011-12 and 2012-13), phase two at fifty-two primary schools (school year: 2013-14) and phase three at twenty-five primary schools (school year: 2014-15). In some exceptional cases, more than one school from the same town participated, resulting in a total of over 150 participating schools. For an overview of the project, see the video by the GNO Education section (2014).

¹⁰ The project's success is evident from the participants' responses (pupils, teachers, headmasters, parents, as well as the artistic and technical staff of the opera) to the questionnaires collected for the external evaluation of the project. One of the musicians said, 'the performance was a magical experience for both the children and ourselves; we performed in front of 700 children and there was not a whisper' (TEC S.A. 2013b: 60). The headmaster of one school reported that, for about a month after their participation in the project, they would play opera through the loudspeakers of the school during the breaks (TEC S.A. 2013: 65).

¹¹ This was invaluable, especially at the schools that did not have a school theatre; then, performances took place at the schools' sports gym or outdoors and the scenography itself became the stage.

¹² According to statements made by their parents, the mixed period costumes impressed the pupils and were part of their discussions at home (TEC S.A. 2013: 46).

¹³ The majority of literature and research on the topic of children's theatre or theatre for children/youth or young audiences also focuses on how children experience performance as performers or spectators, not as performance makers or designers.

¹⁴ For a more detailed presentation of the project as a whole and the three design-related actions, please see Pantouvaki (2012b; and 2014). The focus of this chapter is on the action relating to costume.

¹⁵ Here, the term 'interactive' does not refer to any technological means, but to the children's active involvement (interaction).

¹⁶ The enthusiasm expressed by the pupils when they met the opera signers made the singers feel like 'celebrity film actors' according to their statements (TEC S.A. 2013: 58), as the children wanted to talk to them and get their autographs, etc.

¹⁷ In most cases, the children worked on Berta's costume with the visual arts teacher, although in some cases they analysed the character of Berta together with the drama teacher and in a few fortunate cases with both of those teachers together (this is not generally possible for practical reasons related to the teachers' overlapping teaching schedules).

¹⁸ The children who participated in the specific activity, the design and making of the apron, were from the last two grades of primary school – the fifth and sixth grade – which corresponds to the ages of eleven to twelve. In a few cases, children from the fourth grade (ten-year olds) also joined.

¹⁹ Schonmann is concerned by the ‘complicated situation in which the world of the young will always be constructed through the eyes of adults and their perceptions’ (2006: 20), because, as she notes, ‘children’s fiction is not an issue of what the *child wants*, but of what the *adult desires*’ (Schonmann 2006: 20).

²⁰ Remark by one of the teachers from the First Primary School of Michaniona, 15 February, 2013, from the feedback collected in situ by the GNO educations for the purposes of this study.

²¹ Materials include water soluble paints, ribbons, pieces of fabric, lace, paper, chalk (painting with chalk), three-dimensional materials (usually recycled plastic objects), thread, safety pins and small fake flowers.

²² Tenth Primary School of Chania, 1-2 April, 2013.

²³ Second Primary School of Aegaleo, 5-6 June, 2012; 9th Primary School of Ilion, 2-3 October, 2012; First Primary School of Glyka Nera, 18-19 November, 2012; Second Primary School of Patras, 13-14 December, 2012; 3rd Primary School of Peraia, 10-11 January, 2013.

²⁴ Third Primary School of Lavrio, 31 October-1 November, 2012.

²⁵ See e.g. the Fifth Primary School of Karditsa, 5-6 November, 2012.

²⁶ See e.g. the Fifteenth Primary School of Piraeus, 24-25 May, 2012.

²⁷ First Primary School of Zacharo, 17-18 December, 2012.

²⁸ Eleventh Primary School of Piraeus, 1 June, 2012; Thirteenth Primary School of Serres, 4-5 February, 2013.

²⁹ First Primary School of Itea, 14-15 November, 2012; Eleventh Primary School of Kalamata, 29-30 April, 2015.

³⁰ Third Primary School of Vrilissia, 30 May, 2012; First Primary School of Alimos, 27-28 February, 2014.

³¹ Sixth Primary School of Evosmos, Thessaloniki, 6-7 March, 2014.

³² See e.g. the 2nd Primary School of Orestiada, 24-25 January, 2013.

³³ First Primary School of Raidestos, 8-9 January, 2013.

³⁴ Third Primary School of Mytilene, 27-28 May, 2013.

³⁵ Fourth Primary School of Tyrnavos, 13-14 March, 2014.

³⁶ Second Primary School of Voutes, Herakleion, 11-12 April, 2013.

³⁷ Third Primary School of Voula, Attica, 22-23 October, 2012.

³⁸ Second Primary School of Messini, 26-27 November, 2012.

³⁹ Twenty-second Primary School of Peristeri, Athens, 16-17 October, 2012.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Primary School of Kato Kastritsi, 19-20 November, 2012.

⁴¹ For example, the fifth grade 11-year old female pupils of the Fourth Primary School of Ierapetra in Crete (8-9 April, 2013) drew the pattern of a flower and used it as a basis to cut out flowers from fabric scraps found at their homes, then placed the three-dimensional flowers on the apron and embroidered their stems. At the 13th Primary School of Larissa (4-5 March, 2013) another group of female pupils created felt flowers that were sewn onto the apron.

⁴² Fiftieth Primary School of Athens, 22-23 May, 2012.

⁴³ Second Primary school of Ilioupoli, 9-10 October, 2012.

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- ⁴⁴ Third Primary School of Vrilissia, 29-30 May, 2012.
- ⁴⁵ Collaborative participation of two schools: Primary School of Kerameia and First Primary School of Lixouri, Cephalonia, 10-11 December, 2012 (the apron specifically made by the pupils of the latter school).
- ⁴⁶ Fourth and Twelfth Primary School of Xanthi, 31 January-1 February, 2013 (joint participation of two schools); Tenth Primary School of Neapoli, Thessaloniki, 4-5 March, 2014.
- ⁴⁷ Fourth Primary School of Nafplion, 6-7 December, 2012.
- ⁴⁸ Seventh Primary School of Arta, 31 March-1 April, 2014.
- ⁴⁹ At the Third Primary School of Elefsina (26 March, 2013), female pupils embroidered a cake in the centre, surrounded by 'delicious desserts'; they also drew fruit and sweets on small pieces of fabric and sewed them with embroidery stitches at home; there is also 'a blue strawberry because there was no red thread at home!'.
- ⁵⁰ Primary School of Lakki, Leros island, 3-4 June, 2013; Ninety-ninth Primary School of Athens, 17-18 March, 2014.
- ⁵¹ Sixth Primary School of Preveza, 25-26 April, 2013.
- ⁵² Third Primary School of Keratsini, 17-18 May, 2012.
- ⁵³ See for example, the Second Primary School of Nea Smyrni, Athens, 15-16 May, 2012.
- ⁵⁴ First Primary School of Veroia, 18-19 February, 2013.
- ⁵⁵ First Primary School of Igoumenitsa, 15-16 April, 2013.
- ⁵⁶ First Primary School of Ptolemaida, 20-21 May, 2013.
- ⁵⁷ Fourth and Twelfth Primary School of Xanthi, 31 January-1 February, 2013 (joint participation of two schools); Sixth Primary School of Corfu, 18-19 April, 2013; Thirteenth Primary School of Xanthi, 16-17 March, 2015.
- ⁵⁸ Fourth Primary School of Tyrnavos, 13-14 March, 2014.
- ⁵⁹ Primary School of Rodolivos, 7-8 February, 2013.
- ⁶⁰ First Primary School of Kalamata, 10-11 February, 2014.
- ⁶¹ Twenty-second Primary School of Larissa, 11-12 March, 2013.
- ⁶² Second Primary School of Trikala, 8-9 November, 2012.
- ⁶³ First Primary School of Igoumenitsa, 15-16 April, 2013.
- ⁶⁴ Twenty-sixth Primary School of Larissa, 2-3 March, 2015.
- ⁶⁵ First Primary School of Pefki, 6-7 February, 2014.
- ⁶⁶ Twenty-second Primary School of Piraeus, 7-8 June, 2012; Twelfth Primary School of Kavala, 5-6 March, 2015.
- ⁶⁷ Tenth Primary School of Kallithea, 24-25 February, 2014.
- ⁶⁸ First Primary School of Loutraki, 29-30 November, 2012.
- ⁶⁹ Second Primary School of Aegaleo, 6 June, 2012.
- ⁷⁰ Sixth Primary School of Corfu, 18-19 April, 2013.
- ⁷¹ Fifth Primary School of Kastoria, 13-14 May, 2013.
- ⁷² Seventh Primary School of Rethymon, 4-5 April, 2013.
- ⁷³ First Primary School of Andravida, 19-20 December, 2012.

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- ⁷⁴ First Primary School of Papagos, Athens, 29-30 October, 2012.
- ⁷⁵ Sixth Primary School of Pyrgos, 23-24 November, 2012.
- ⁷⁶ First Primary School of Itea, 14-15 November, 2012.
- ⁷⁷ First Primary School of Nafpaktos, 7-8 April, 2014.
- ⁷⁸ Fourth Primary School of Lefkada, 3-4 April, 2014.
- ⁷⁹ First Primary School of Grevena, 22-23 May, 2014.
- ⁸⁰ One hundred and twenty-ninth Primary School of Athens, 29-31 January, 2014.
- ⁸¹ First Primary School of Skiathos, 14-15 March, 2013.
- ⁸² Second Primary School of Giannitsa, 26-27 May, 2014.
- ⁸³ Primary School of Agios Minas, Thymiana, Chios Island, 29-30 May, 2013.
- ⁸⁴ Fourth Primary School of Nafplion, 6-7 December, 2012.
- ⁸⁵ Fifteenth Primary School of Piraeus, 25 May, 2012; Second Primary School of Ilioupoli, 9-10 October, 2012; Thirteenth Primary School of Drama, 21-22 January, 2013.
- ⁸⁶ Second Primary School of Nea Michaniona, 11-12 February, 2013.
- ⁸⁷ First Primary School of Polycastro, Kilkis, 17-18 January, 2013; 15th Primary School of Heraklion, 6-7 May, 2015.
- ⁸⁸ Fourth Primary School of Peristeri, 27-28 January, 2014; First Primary School of Alexandroupolis, 9-10 March, 2015.
- ⁸⁹ Twenty-seventh Primary School of Ioannina, 22-23 April, 2013.
- ⁹⁰ Second Primary School of Zefyri, 24-25 October, 2012.
- ⁹¹ Second Primary School of Messini, 26-27 November, 2012; Thirteenth Primary School of Larissa, 4-5 March, 2013.
- ⁹² Second Primary School of Nea Peramos, 28-29 March, 2013. The teacher at this school said that she directed the pupils towards researching art history and dress history; she asked them to study the elements they found 'about this other time' [Rossini's time], to interpret them and develop something new for the costume. Her female pupils drew the design and embroidered the apron with her help and she said to the educators' team that this activity positively inspired her to do something beyond her daily curriculum and combine crafts with design thinking.
- ⁹³ Primary School of Velvendos, Kozani, 16-17 May, 2013.