



Funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

# **SURVEYS**

## **ABOUT THE STUDY OF RUSSIAN and ITALIAN as FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **FOR SINGERS**

-----

- **INTRODUCTION**
- **EOALAB questionnaire about language and singing for STUDENTS**
- **EOALAB questionnaire about language and singing for TEACHERS**
- **Summary of the EOALAB questionnaires outcomes**



## INTRODUCTION

Before creating the model for an intensive one-week masterclass activity focused on the deepening of the foreign language (Italian or Russian) in singing, it was essential to question the status quo of the study of these two languages, so different from each other, in our European HEI's. Two different surveys were therefore created (one for students and one for teachers), which were then distributed to the EOA partners. The analysis of the responses received gave us a very varied picture of the situation of the actual and usual approach to Russian and Italian Languages for singers on our Institutions. But despite the many differences, some very interesting traits and needs in common emerged, which prompted us to seek an answer to the requests that emerged, with the creation of an intensive training module (a sort of "fuel moment" to enlight such an important topic for every professional singer), which is an alternative to the existing normal curricular teaching.

Here are the two surveys and a little analysis of the results

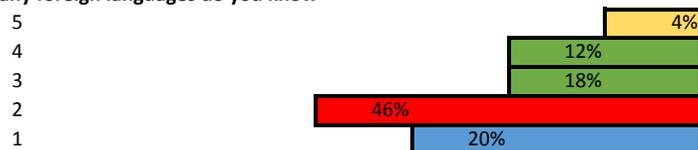
## EOALAB Questionnaire about Language and Singing - for STUDENTS

### 50 responses

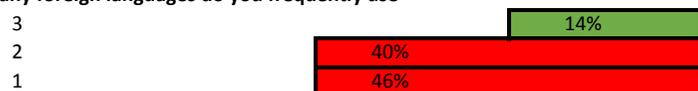
#### Native language



#### How many foreign languages do you know

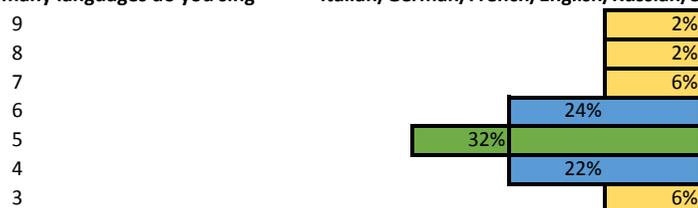


#### How many foreign languages do you frequently use



#### In how many languages do you sing

#### Italian/German/French/English/Russian/Spanish



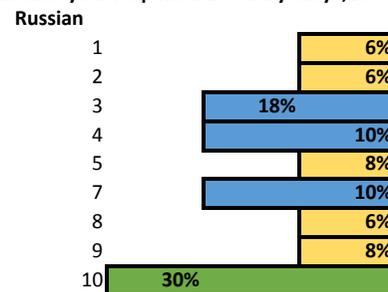
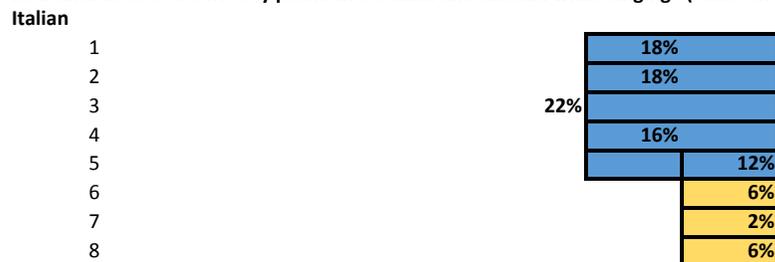
#### Which language would be most useful in your vocal career



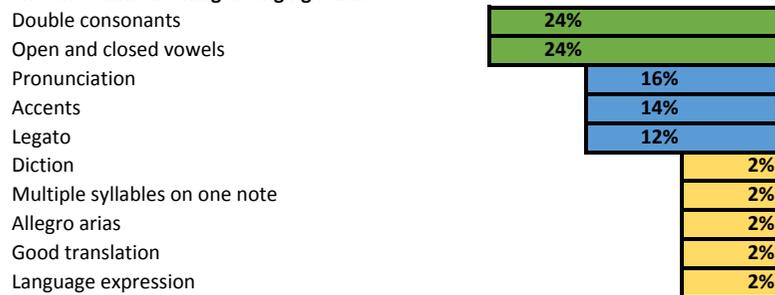
The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



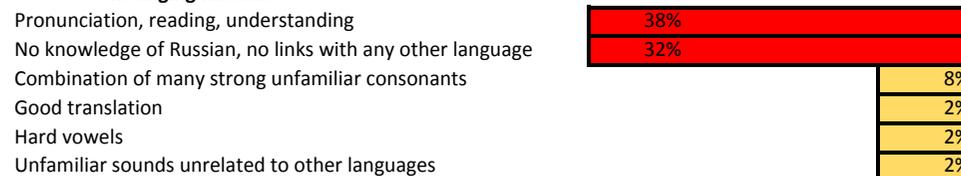
how difficult is it to correctly pronounce Italian and Russian while singing? (select the number that best matches your response: 1 = "very easy";10= "very difficult" ).



**The most difficult thing in singing Italian**



**in singing Russian**



**Do you find similarities between Italian&Russian?**



**Have you ever read some book/novel /poem written by an Italian/Russian writer/poet?**



**Have you ever seen some film/documentary about/based on Italian/Russian culture?**



**If you answered yes in above question, do you think this was helpful in some way? (culture/character comprehension)**

Culture - mentality, characters, expression, acting

Books/movies - vocabulary, grammar, habits

### How is organised the Italian learning/teaching at your institution?

<b>Antwerp</b>	Bachelor - group lessons (general rules of pronunciation) + repertoire coaching (1st year optional, 2nd -recitals)
<b>Hamburg</b>	Native Italian language teacher & Italian coach; non native phonetics teacher
<b>Oslo</b>	One year on weekly basis with native speaker
<b>Parma</b>	Grammar & diction at the University
<b>Riga</b>	Language & phonetics 2 years
<b>Vilnius</b>	Language & phonetics 2 years

### How many hours/modules/semester courses are reserved for Italian?

<b>Antwerp</b>	Group lesson 1 hr weekly + 6x20-30' individual coaching + 6x 1 hour listening to other students per year
<b>Hamburg</b>	2 years master level
<b>Oslo</b>	2 semesters, 2 hrs weekly
<b>Parma</b>	Grammar 1 semester 4 hrs weekly, diction 1,5 semester 2 hrs weekly at the University
<b>Riga</b>	4 semesters, 15 hrs p/sem.
<b>Vilnius</b>	4 semesters, 30 hrs p/sem.

### Assessment at the end of the course Italian

<b>Antwerp</b>	Examination: singing and reading text of prepared song/aria + evaluation for participation and performance during the whole course
<b>Hamburg</b>	Examination: singing recitativi
<b>Oslo</b>	Examination: written & oral
<b>Parma</b>	Examination: written & oral
<b>Riga</b>	Examination: written & oral (reading & translating, singing, monologue)
<b>Vilnius</b>	Examination : writing, reading, listening

### If you attended them, was it helpful? Italian

Practically 100%: Next to normally speaking the language, more specifically for singing in Italian I've got a lot of tips concerning music practice, f.e.: where to make appoggiatura's in secco recits, what is meant with the rhythms and rests in Mozart recits, where to connect the words/consonants of different words when singing an Italian aria... and also some insight in understanding the language itself

**YES**

16% wish more lessons

### How effectively do they improve your performance/ interpretation?

The more you know about the language, the better is your performance and interpretation.  
 Language and correct pronunciation helps to express the message.  
 Language helps interpretation.  
 Being confident in pronunciation helps interpretation.  
 Easier to sing, learn and understand music when you know the language.  
 More easy singing and more clear interpretation.

### What would you add/ change to make these existing courses/modules more effective?

More lessons, more hours	40%
Add speaking and understanding	20%
Add also German and French	2%
No native speakers as language teachers!	2%

### How is organised the Russian learning/teaching at your institution?

<b>None</b>	76%
<b>Teacher/piano coach</b>	14%
<b>Phonetics</b>	6%
<b>Optional</b>	2%

### RUSSIAN

<b>None</b>	76%
<b>Vilnius</b>	1 year 1 lesson p/week (90')
<b>Riga</b>	Optional

### RUSSIAN

<b>Vilnius</b>	Written and oral examination
<b>Riga</b>	Written and oral examination

### RUSSIAN

<b>Vilnius</b>	Understanding difference between hard and soft consonants; Systematic learning Easier to sing
----------------	---

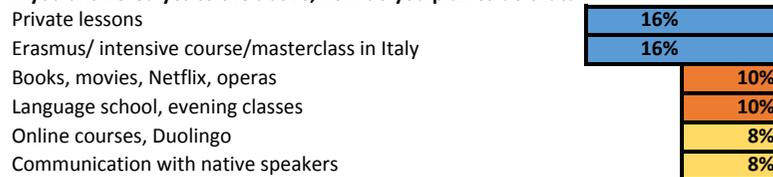
### RUSSIAN

Russian course necessary	20%
<b>Vilnius</b>	More hours. A course with emphasis on singing

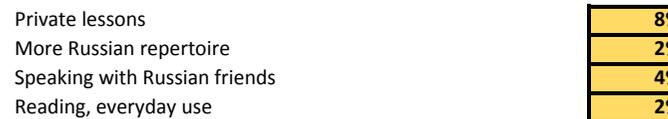
**Are you going to continue studying this language deeper?**



**If you answered yes to the above, how do you plan to do that?**



**Did you ever avoid to choose some Italian arias/songs because of the language obstacles ?**



**Did you ever avoid to choose some Russian repertoire because of the language obstacles ?**



# EOALAB Questionnaire about Language and Singing - for teachers (Singers and Language Teachers)

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use

## Course type Italian language



## Course type Russian language



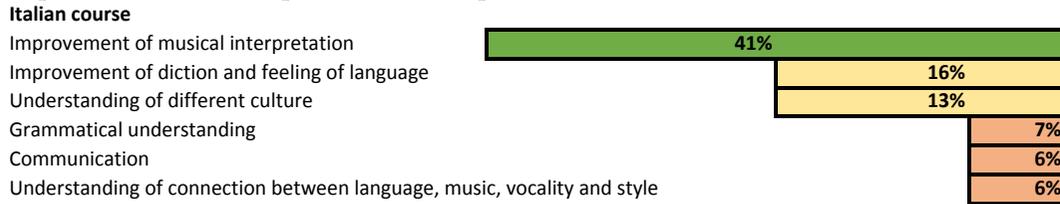
## Assessment at the end of the Italian course



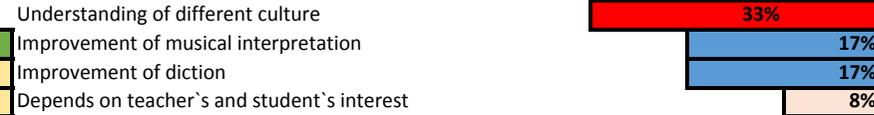
## Assessment at the end of the Russian course



## Improvement of student's performance/ interpretation



## Russian course



## Students actively involved Italian



## Russian



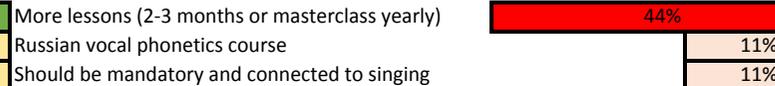
## Students motivated and interested Italian



## Russian



## Anything you would add/ change to make these existing courses/modules more effective



## FOR SINGERS ONLY) Did you ever avoid to give your students pieces/songs in this language because of the language obstacles?





## Summary of the EOALAB questionnaires outcomes

Both EOALAB questionnaires – teachers` and students` – reflect huge contrast in the practical realization of the language tuition for singers between “traditional” Italian language and “difficult” Russian language.

Operas of such Russian composers as Glinka, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich are standard repertoire in most of the opera theatres. The heritage of 20th and 21st century Russian composers in the opera genre is practically unknown, but that includes such outstanding composers as Mieczysław Weinberg, Edison Denisov, Sergey Slonimsky, Rodion Shchedrin, Alfred Schnittke, Nikolai Korndorf. The reason for this anonymity and oblivion first of all is the language – strange alphabet and difficult pronunciation. The absence of native vocal coaches in the opera theatres often is the main obstacle for performance of the Russian operas, especially contemporary, although music itself is extremely interesting and attractive.

Conclusions: the only solution to this situation is the change in the attitude to the Russian language in the education of young singers in the HEI`s. HEI`s should provide at least basic training programmes in Russian language and phonetics – in various forms: regular course, optional course, short intensive courses – at least one per year, regular workshops provided by guest-teachers.

### TEACHERS:

If 42% mentioned Italian as a regular mandatory course (others with different variations), then **53% respondents acknowledged they don`t have any Russian course.**

41% respondents confirmed that the Italian language course helped to improve students` performance/interpretation, only 17% admitted the same in the case of the Russian language course, but 33% mentioned that Russian language course improved the understanding of different cultures.



88% students are actively involved in the Italian language studies, **67% students are NOT INVOLVED in the Russian language learning.**

94% students are motivated and interested in mastering the Italian, **58% students are motivated and interested in learning Russian language!** This demand proves the necessity to include this language in study programmes for singers.

Almost the same number of respondents indicated the necessity to add more lessons/hours to the Italian and Russian language courses – 46% /Italian/ and 44% /Russian/.

Interesting and important response to the question “Did you ever avoid giving students some repertoire because of the language obstacles?” – 91% NO regarding the Italian repertoire, **56% YES regarding the Russian repertoire.**

## STUDENTS

**Information for reflection:** 20% of the surveyed students admitted they know only one foreign language, 46% know two languages. But good singers should be multilingual..

According to students, the most useful languages in their professional career would be Italian (38%), German (30%), French (20%), English (8%), Russian (6%).

Responses to the question about **main difficulties** in both languages:

**Italian:** double consonants (24%), open and closed vowels (24%), pronunciation (16%), accents (14%), legato (12%)

**Russian:** pronunciation, reading, understanding (38%), no links with other languages (32%), combination of many strong unfamiliar consonants (8%)

20% admitted they avoid Russian repertoire due to the language obstacles.



If the Italian language teaching is very well organised in different forms in all respondents` institutions with compulsory examinations at the end of the course, 76% acknowledged there is no option to learn Russian language – 14% responses mentioned advice from the teacher or piano coach.

Responses to the question “How effectively does a language course improve your performance/interpretation?” reflect students` understanding:

- The more you know about the language, the better is your performance
- Understanding language and correct pronunciation help to express the message
- Easier to sing, learn and understand music when you know the language

40% of respondents wish more Italian lessons, besides 20% would like to add also speaking and understanding. Some students pointed out the necessity to include in the study offer also German and French lessons. 20% acknowledged that a regular Russian course would be necessary.

Information for reflection – no native speakers as language teachers! They don't fully understand difficulties and are not able to explain them.

84% of the respondents are going to study Italian deeper (privately, Erasmus studies, masterclasses in Italy, books, movies, duolingo).

26% expressed a wish to learn Russian deeper.