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“Stile Concertante”

Developing a Flexible Model for the (Co-)Operation of Europe’s Music Education Networks

Introduction

Why does the current landscape of European music education networks look the way it does? There are many factors that contribute to the answer to this question; some seek to offer solid structural or functional justifications for the *status quo*, but others reflect the simple fact that this is the way the various networks have come into being, each meeting the needs of a particular constituency at a particular stage in the development of music education systems within and across Europe. As a consequence, all networks have their distinctive characteristics, structures, and traditions.

But is the current pattern of networks therefore the best for the sustainability and further growth of European music education? Again, some of the possible answers to this question show convincingly how the interdependence that has grown up between each network and its special constituency has led to a patchwork of strong and loyal groupings that, separately and collectively, cope well with the diversity of situations found across European countries. Nevertheless, it cannot be convincingly argued that the overall picture owes anything to coordinated *a priori* planning as to how many networks there should be or how their roles and spheres of interest should inter-relate to face the challenges of today and tomorrow.

So, given the state of affairs as it exists in this second decade of the 21st century, how can the separate and collective endeavours of the existing networks be optimised in such a way that the distinctive character of each network, and its relationship with its membership, can be preserved but music education as a whole can speak, when necessary, with a united and powerful voice across the European space? This article describes the moves undertaken by three leading European music education networks to achieve just such an optimum outcome.

The organisations in question are the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), the European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) and the European Music School Union (EMU). The cooperation model they have devised, and are continuing to develop, is one that might be characterised using the musical metaphor of the 'stile concertante'. According to this analogy, each organisation continues to function in a separate and 'solo' manner within its day-to-day operations but it does so increasingly within a texture of 'concertino' dialogue with the other two that, over appropriate issues, can be amplified into a resounding 'ripieno', articulated with emphatic and carefully-coordinated unisons and doublings. The significant message of this metaphor is that not only can the different modes of interaction all exist within one unified 'composition' but they can become a structuring principle in their own right, informing and enlivening the overall entity of which they are a part. With this in mind, the 'stile concertante' metaphor will be returned to at key points during this article. But first, some background will be provided to the musical environment within which this intensified cooperation has arisen.

The changing landscape of music education as a major challenge

Music education takes place at all levels and in varied ways, and the pattern of music education in Europe is currently undergoing major changes. For example school-related music education is not taking place solely *in* schools. In many instances children and young people are exposed to music education in other settings than the classroom. Children and adolescents are involved in musical activities organised for them by concert halls, musical services and other cultural organisations, and they learn music not only through activities in school provided by their music teachers but also through encounters with musicians and other professionals who 'teach' them by involving them in musical practice. All these activities in and around primary and secondary schools are provided as a result of collaborations of music teachers, musicians and cultural organisations. For music schools it has become clear that they do not only provide traditional one-to-one instrumental tuition on a weekly basis; they also offer other kinds of musical learning activities including group lessons, ensemble and rock band playing, choir singing and performances. Nor is it only children who take music lessons at music schools; the population ranges from early childhood to elderly people. Conservatoires are still training highly qualified musicians who become performers and teachers, but they have an increasingly important role in delivering additional qualifications enabling their graduates to act within the rich and varied field of music education as described above. Furthermore, higher music education institutions can also play an active role within their own cultural environment, offering public performances, musical appreciation events, outreach activity and generally acting as catalysts for social engagement with music.

Mutual understanding and shared responsibility are important in a field where different professionals and organisations are more and more concerned with music education. Quality enhancement, competence development, evolving feasible tools for collaborations and speaking with a unified voice where necessary, are necessities in the changing cultural and educational environment.

Contemporary music education is challenged by the changing landscape and new approaches. Integrating music education and activities in and around schools, music schools and conservatoires in collaborative ways not only realizes powerful learning environments; it contributes to the development of new audiences and the cultural participation of all citizens as well. When a diversity of cultural activities is connected to music education in schools, a new generation of audience will be reached.

Demographic, sociological, cultural and economic changes in society require an overall shift in the way we think about music education. Musical learning is not limited to the school period only; nor do people learn only from music education in schools or music schools. People learn music throughout their whole lifespan and they do so by being exposed to many musical experiences. At different times and ages, and in different contexts, the ‘musical learner’ might access their musical learning through any or all of the sources mentioned in Figure 1.

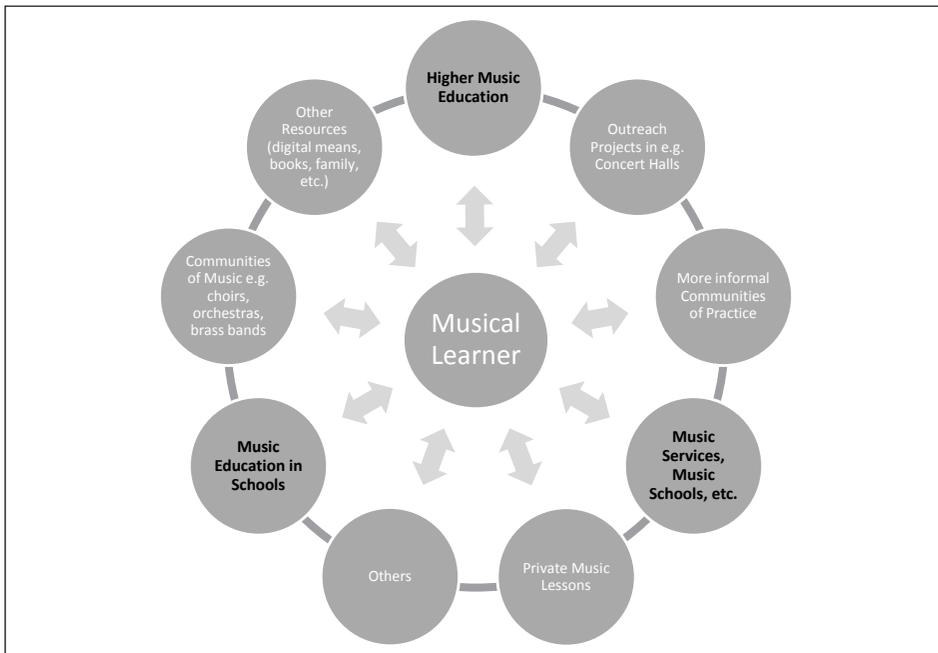


Figure 1: Diagram developed during a meeting of SCHEME based on a draft by Adri de Vugt to show sources of knowledge, influences, and dependences on and by the musical learner. “Others” is used to express the conviction of the authors that this list is not exhaustive.

Although music education in schools and related activities outside school are just two among many of the exposures to music open to the learner, they are of great importance because they reach, in principle, all young people. What are the aims that we wish to achieve with music education and activities that are offered outside school? Who do we want to reach and in what way? And what are the approaches in all these activities? Are there common aims in what we want to achieve with, for example, educational concerts, workshops or projects by musicians in the classroom? Have they been formulated, and, if so, are they comparable at a European level? And how are we evaluating musical activities in the frame of music education?

The changes in society have led to the development of all kinds of collaborations and there are still many to be established. What kinds of collaborations are there and how do these partnerships work? What do good examples of good practice in contexts show on the level of collaboration? Which criteria can be formulated for good cooperative practices?

What are the consequences of this process of change for the training of music teachers and musicians? And what can be undertaken to enhance the professional development of those who are already working in this field? What tools need to be developed to ensure that professionals in music education and related musical activities have the ability to change roles and tasks and collaborate with one another?

Now that music educators, schools, practising musicians and cultural organisations are becoming more and more involved in the field of school-related music education, there is a need for analysis of how these professionals and their organisations perceive their role changing. They are expected to do new tasks and take on new roles which they probably have not developed yet. In the process, they may discover powerful resources in themselves. They are professionals and learners at the same time. How do they experience this and what can we learn from it? To begin to answer these questions, the network organisation for music education themselves need to develop new joint competences and take on new collaborative roles, adapting and reinforcing those they have acquired separately.

Establishing a basis for closer cooperation

AEC, EAS and EMU are three network organisations with strongly complementary roles in European music education. Between them, they cover both the generalised and more specialised formal music education that, in principle, all children, many youngsters, and all who are interested in music encounter, and they embrace virtually all the different kinds of environments and institutions in which this takes place, from the earliest years through to higher education, and across lifelong learning:

- AEC is the European membership association that represents all the diverse kinds of institutions – conservatoires, music academies, Musikhochschulen, etc. – that offer specialist, professionally-oriented training in music at the higher education level (a field that it refers to as higher music education – HME).
- EAS is a music education network that brings together all those concerned with music education and provides a forum for teachers, teacher educators, students, researchers, artists and policy makers working in school-related music education across Europe.
- EMU is the European umbrella organisation of national music school associations in Europe (music schools in Europe are institutions especially devoted to musical education and chiefly geared towards the practical aspects of music-making).

The three organisations have a good history of cooperation on individual projects and events. This can be seen in a number of ways: through the Music Education and Training working group of the European Music Council (EMC); in the development of Learning Outcomes for both musical performance and music education; in work on the pre-college training received by conservatoire students (within projects of the AEC-coordinated *Polifonia*¹ ERASMUS Network for Music, between 2004 and 2014) and the EAS/EMU/EMC/ISME-coordinated *meNet*², between 2006 and 2009; in the development of key statements such as the EMC’s “Bonn Declaration on Music Education in Europe”³ (2011) and in the organisation of joint events such as the seminar “From Seoul via Bonn to Budapest”⁴, in the Hungarian capital in 2012.

In 2013, in order to embed this cooperation more firmly, and with a view to developing greater synergies and building up stronger structures in support of the kinds of development in the European music education, training and cultural sectors described above, AEC, EAS and EMU began a series of high-level joint meetings designed to deepen their mutual understanding, reinforce their knowledge management and cooperative expertise and lay the foundations for a more strategic approach to working with one another. An early outcome of this initiative was the development of an innovative cooperation strategy for their respective applications to the EU Culture Programme for the period 2014–2017 (and, potentially, to 2020). This is the ‘stile concertante’ model described in the present article.

¹ For more information visit <http://www.polifonia-tn.org/> [21.01.2016].

² For more information visit <http://menet.mdw.ac.at/menetsite/english/index.html> [21.01.2016].

³ Find the Bonn Declaration at <http://www.emc-imc.org/cultural-policy/music-education/bonn-declaration/> [21.01.2016].

⁴ For more information visit <http://www.emc-imc.org/events/budapest-seminar/> [21.01.2016].

In March 2014, each of the partner organisations submitted its own application to the Culture Programme under the line “Support for European Networks” (the ‘solo’ element of the strategy). However, the three applications were closely coordinated, with mutual sharing of drafts and provision of feedback; in addition, each application featured one specific joint project activity, led by the organisation making the application but including a request for funding support for the other two (the ‘concertino’ element). The areas of joint activity chosen for these projects were as follows: evaluation and quality enhancement (led by AEC); cooperation between music teachers and artists (led by EAS); and digital music education (led by EMU). By this strategy, the odds of at least one joint project being funded were tripled.

Besides planning these joint project activities, the partner organisations also agreed to establish a Steering/Planning Committee designed both to oversee the delivery of joint projects throughout the period 2014–17 and to explore the possibilities of preparing even more closely integrated operation in future years – not only among the three organisations but between them and the wider environment of music and music education networks across Europe (the ‘ripieno’ element). It was agreed that this Committee should consist of two representatives from each partner organisation. A first, more informal, meeting would take place in Budapest in November 2014 and, thereafter, two meetings per year were to be scheduled. In addition to the three explicitly collaborative projects, the cooperation model was intended to ensure good coordination across all the remaining, and therefore predominantly ‘solo’, activities planned in the three applications. Not only was this a safeguard against any wasteful duplication of effort but it was also seen as a mechanism for widening and strengthening the impact of each individual activity. In this way, the intention was to develop shared expertise and to build mutual trust, doing so progressively and systematically between 2014 and 2017.

AEC, EAS and EMU agreed that by moving forward in this fully committed but responsibly measured way, cooperation of high quality and true sustainability could be generated and then properly embedded at the core of their future operations. How this might be achieved has become clearer in the period between early spring 2014 and summer 2015.

From conception to realisation (2014 and 2015)

As already indicated, the decisions and agreements described above were initially taken during autumn 2013 in the run-up to the announcement of details of the funding lines under the new *Creative Europe* programme of the EU and were fine-tuned at the beginning of 2014 in the process of preparing the three organisations’ applications for this programme. The imminence of the new programme – and, correspondingly, the termination of earlier funding programmes from which two out of the three organisations had benefited – undoubtedly contributed a sense of urgency and focus to discussions across this

entire period. Nevertheless, it was a fundamental point of principle for all those involved in these discussions that, in order to be viable, closer cooperation had to be something that offered mutual advantage to all three organisations, with or without funding. For everyone involved, working towards closer cooperation in this way was enthusiastically embraced partly because there was a clear and immediate meeting of minds, and areas of potential synergy were readily apparent, but also because, putting it simply, it was self-evidently the right thing to do.

Although, once all three applications to *Creative Europe* were submitted by late March 2014, the organisations each had much to occupy them with the completion of existing projects and other challenges, an important statement of intent was issued by the fact that representatives from AEC and EMU attended the EAS conference in Nicosia in May of that year. In a joint presentation at this event, the proposed collaboration was presented to EAS members, both to raise awareness and to invite feedback. As well as welcoming the chance to learn more about the other two organisations, EAS members strongly supported the initiative. Meanwhile, the gathering provided an opportunity to discuss the next steps that would be taken once the results of the applications were known.

The announcement of results came in late August 2014. All three applications had scored strongly but only one had reached the threshold to be accepted. Amidst the disappointment about the other two outcomes, the strength of the ‘stile concertante’ strategy in terms of enabling at least one of the joint projects to proceed was clearly underlined by this result.

A matter of weeks after the results were announced, the successful project began operating on 1 September 2014. Embedded in the application, among other features, was financial support to continue the reciprocal representation at each organisation’s meetings begun with EAS in 2014. This has meant that both EAS and EMU were represented at the AEC Congress in Budapest in November 2014, AEC at the EMU General Assembly in Berlin in 2014, AEC and EMU at the EAS Conference / ISME Regional Conference in Rostock in 2015 and EAS at the EMU General Assembly and Conference in Luxembourg in 2015. Similar reciprocal attendances are being maintained throughout the academic year 2015/16 and will be continued in 2016/17.

As well as enabling the new cooperation arrangements to be presented to the membership of all three organisations, these gatherings at events during 2014 and early 2015 were important opportunities to set in motion the key actions of launching the joint project and establishing the joint steering/planning committee. The fully-joint project that was funded for the period 2014–17 is the AEC-led investigation of evaluation and quality enhancement⁵. This seeks to explore the extent to which the quality enhancement

⁵ FULL SCORE working group (WG) on Evaluation for Enhancement, for more information visit <http://www.aec-music.eu/projects/current-projects/full-score/b1-evaluation-for-enhancement-> [21.01.2016].

framework already developed for higher music education (with a focus upon the artistically-oriented programmes at this level) might be either appropriate for or adaptable to the requirements of music pedagogy and pre-college programmes. Here is a classic example of building upon the work of one organisation (the 'solo' principle) and exploring the parallels and counterpoints that might exist with the contexts addressed by the other two (the 'concertino' principle). Progress on this work as at November 2015 and the working methods that have been agreed for the remainder of the project will be described in greater detail below.

Meanwhile, the fact that only one joint project would run during the funding period reduced the urgency of establishing a joint steering/planning committee – although not its ultimate importance. After informal meetings between those involved during events in late 2014 and early 2015, the committee met formally for the first time in July 2015 and is working since then as the Steering Committee for the Harmonisation of European Music Education (SCHEME). By this time, another important issue had emerged which it seemed natural for it to address as a key focal aspect of its support for wider collaborative activity across the entire music education sector, both formal and informal (the 'ripieno' principle). This is the proposed European Agenda for Music, an initiative begun by the European Music Council (EMC) and one of the key elements in that organisation's own funded project within the "Support for European Networks" programme of *Creative Europe*. Music education is only one of eight domains proposed for this Agenda, but given the profile of organisations who are members of EMC, most of whom are active in either the formal or the informal educational sphere, it is likely to prove one of the most prominent. The young but rapidly consolidating relationship between AEC, EAS and EMU means that their taking a leading role in the development of this domain both flows naturally from what they are already doing and gives a sharper focus and additional impetus to their ambitions to take their collaboration to a deeper and broader level.

The three remaining sections of this article will address in turn the joint project on evaluation and quality enhancement, the evolving strategy of the three associations to address music education within a European Agenda for Music and, finally, the thoughts and expectations about where their collaborative strategy might take them in the years beyond 2017.

Imitative Counterpoints – quality enhancement in music as a 'concertino' dialogue amongst the European networks

In the last decades, educational institutions all over Europe have gained more autonomy. As a consequence, embedded in the concept of the New Public Management, these institutions became responsible for their own quality. Depending on the particular approach

taken by national governments, various systems of internal and external quality assurance were introduced, obliging educational institutions to respond appropriately. For many institutions, this required the development of new competences and represented an area where the sharing of good practice through subject networks could be of invaluable assistance. With this in mind, AEC has developed, very successfully over years, subject specific evaluation procedures aiming at quality enhancement in higher music education institutions. In 2014 they, co-founded, with EMU and the professional employers’ network PEARLE⁶, an independent body called MusiQuE⁷. This endeavour by AEC aims to address the obligation for quality assurance but, more importantly, to change it into a sensible and useful tool for enhancement.

A joint Working Group on the topic of quality enhancement, with participants from AEC, EAS and EMU, started to work in early 2015 and, as of late 2015, has already held three meetings. One of the aims of the joint Working Group ‘Evaluation’ is to examine the suitability of the already existing quality enhancement framework for higher music education to be applied to pre-college music training. While the final report of the *Polifonia* Pre-College working group⁸ (2007) remains a valid background for this task, it does not explore the wider European landscape of music schools where most students in HME come from. This is an area of expertise of the European Music School Union (EMU), a network of national music school associations which is described in the chapter “International and European Music and Arts Education Policies” (p. 96) of this publication. Inside EMU, a ‘music school’ is a clearly defined institution with public responsibility, quality standards, fully qualified teachers and a wide variety of teaching subjects. Entirely private and business-based schools, organisations teaching only a few disciplines and the sector of private teaching do not fulfil the membership criteria.

There is a great diversity of music school systems and pedagogical practices in Europe. Nevertheless, pre-college training, in particular that concerned with the last phase before entering HME, exists in every country. The concept ‘pre-college’ can also be conceived as comprising of the entire span of music education and training in all educational settings, from early childhood to professional studies. This larger point of view joins another objective of the WG ‘Evaluation’: to explore the needs and ongoing development of the music teaching profession as a whole.

In view of the diversity of systems, the concepts of evaluation and quality enhancement are also conceived and implemented in different ways, depending on the national or regional context. In order to understand this landscape better, it is necessary to take a closer look into the ways in which music schools in Europe are functioning.

⁶ PEARLE*-Live Performance Europe, for more information visit <http://www.pearle.ws/> [21.01.2016].

⁷ For more information visit <http://www.musique-ge.eu/> [21.01.2016].

⁸ Find the report at <http://www.aec-music.eu/media/publications/pre-college-music-education-in-europe> [21.01.2016].

According to EMU statistics from 2010⁹, over one quarter of the 26 member countries have neither a music school law nor a national curriculum. The status of music schools varies considerably: this extends from the granting of minimum funding amounts, coupled with minimum standards, to the obligation of every municipality in the country to maintain a music and art school. In other countries, music schools are an integral part of the state education system. Regarding teaching, over one in four of the countries have neither examinations nor school-leaving certificates in their music schools. The reason for this might lie in the pedagogical goals set by countries, regions and school types, and the ways these are balanced between the desire to reach as many children as possible and the decision to favour those with predisposition or talent.

In light of this information, the concept of quality enhancement becomes complex. In the absence of legislation, exams or certification, one might ask how the institutions and their services are evaluated at all. Nevertheless, evaluation of some kind does take place because, according to the EMU statistics, only six countries have no system of quality assurance. For a long time, the traditional system of exams used to be the only way to evaluate students', teachers' and schools' performance. It is only in recent decades that this system has been questioned – and, in some countries, the debate is only starting. On the other hand, there are entire countries whose deliberate pedagogical choice for many years has been to function without exams and curricula. In this context, the governance and funding of the music schools is mostly the task of regions or municipalities, either by law or on a voluntary basis, and possible modes of quality assurance are based on whichever regulations are in force. Music schools can be recommended to develop self-evaluation models, coupled with surveys among users. The study plans of pupils can be determined by explicit or implicit learning agreements and their evaluation can be carried out in informal exchange. This freedom does not exclude the existence of quality assurance systems based on voluntary use, which might explain the results of EMU statistics. In some countries, process-oriented models without links to pedagogical aspects are used to evaluate the functioning of the institutions. In others, a combination of tests and exams, self-evaluation models and sometimes state inspection are in place.

Where there is proof of comprehensive and sustainable pre-college training, a network of music schools and other educators seems to be in place which allows a broad base and a visible point to the 'learning pyramid'. In this construction, each and every actor has a measure of responsibility and a potential role in pre-college training even though the tasks will be very different when starting the education, while advancing and when approaching the entrance to HME. During this 'final furlong', structured cooperation with institutions of HME is indispensable to ensure the security of the learning path.

⁹ Link to EMU statistics: http://www.musicschoolunion.eu/fileadmin/downloads/statistics/EMU_Statistics_2010.pdf [21.01.2016].

The variety of this landscape is an exciting challenge to take into account for the joint Working Group.

We hope that the final results, a quality enhancement framework for specialist music institutions at pre-college level and for institutions and programmes focused on music teacher training, will be of use for a large number of actors in the music education sector. This hope is based on the conviction that the ‘concertino’ dialogue will combine the various strengths and expertise of the three partners, among others, about the professional situations linked to music education as well as the notion of quality at the various levels. This will not only lead to an expanded framework of quality enhancement procedures applicable for music schools in their existing diversity, but will assess how effectively all the stages and strands of music education in Europe work in a coherent way to provide future cultural and creative players. To make this happen, a shared and profound understanding of how to evaluate the development of musicians’ skills and competences at all stages has to be acquired. In addition, this understanding will inform pedagogy programmes as to how to educate teachers with an even more promising future.

A European Agenda for Music: Joining voices – articulating a ‘ripieno’ vision for music education

As already mentioned, EMC has started an initiative, with an ambitious scope, to formulate a European Agenda for Music. In eight domains EMC wants to reflect the diversity of organisations within EMC. The steering committee SCHEME agreed that the Bonn Declaration from 2011 could work very well as a base document to start reflecting on the needs of the sector in relation to the European Agenda for Music. It was agreed that the document will also be presented to the membership of the three organisations in order to collect feedback on the content of the Agenda.

AEC had already held a Reflection Day on the European Agenda for Music at its Annual Congress in November 2014 and disseminated information at other AEC meetings and via its Newsletter. In summer 2015 the short video¹⁰ on the European Agenda for Music, recorded during the AEC Congress in Budapest by AEC, was disseminated to the memberships of the three organisations together with an online questionnaire. The objective of this questionnaire was to gather feedback from the three organisations’ memberships on the priorities to be addressed in the European Agenda for Music: what should be in it and how it should be constructed and, eventually, used. By autumn 2015, a total number of 185 answers had been gathered; especially within the membership of EMU, a very high response rate was reached. In November 2015 the steering committee SCHEME analysed

¹⁰ Find this video at <http://youtu.be/eN0SdarSwLY> [21.01.2016].

the data with the aim of identifying the shared views, the concerns and the needs of the actors in the music education sector. The results of this questionnaire have been shared with EMC for the further development of the Agenda and are publicly available at the AEC Website¹¹.

During the AEC Annual Congress in Glasgow in 2015, the status of the project was presented in a session by representatives from all three organisations, and AEC members had the chance to discuss in break-out groups. The feedback collected during the group discussions will provide material for a Position Paper to be developed and disseminated in 2016. A similar exercise will be used at the EAS Conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, in March 2016 and at a meeting of EMU General Assembly and Conference in San Sebastian, Spain, in May 2016 to gather maximum input from the membership of all three organisations.

Longer-term cooperation model for European music organisations: Themes and variations – building the ‘stile concertante’ strategy

“Fully committed but responsibly measured” was considered as the best description of the approach of AEC, EAS and EMU to their cooperation. The steering committee SCHEME will, among other working fields¹², monitor the effectiveness of the cooperation during 2014–17 and will maintain an awareness of which of the upcoming challenges can be handled in this close cooperation. Originally planned to be the coordinating body for the three European funded projects, SCHEME will address its amended role of identifying possible synergies between the existing joint project and other issues, both externally and internally, in the three organisations. Whilst the initial failure of EAS’s and EMU’s EU-bids has been felt to be a significant setback for the group, a positive outcome has been that the group can now spend less time on project governance and more time advocating for change with the European Agenda for Music and other crucial issues.

Of course this collaboration should not become just an ‘exclusive club’ of three. It is our aim to develop a strategy to involve other European organisations, respecting the importance of each organisation having its own unilateral connections with others. By the end of 2016, a clear strategy of collaboration for the period up to at least 2020 will have been established.

¹¹ Find the results of the questionnaire at <http://www.aec-music.eu/projects/current-projects/full-score/a1-strengthening-and-connecting-the-music-education-sector> [21.01.2016].

¹² For the terms of reference of SCHEME visit <http://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/FULL%20SCORE/SCHEME%20-%20Membership%20&%20Terms%20of%20Reference.pdf> [21.01.2016].

Conclusion

To face the challenges of today and tomorrow for music education, from early childhood to doctoral studies, and to sustain this foundation for European musical life, cooperation between AEC, EAS and EMU is crucial. The cooperation model the three organisations have devised, and are continuing to develop, is one that might be characterised using the musical metaphor of the ‘stile concertante’, a model that offers mutual advantage to all three organisations, with or without funding.

The Steering Committee for the Harmonisation of European Music Education (SCHEME), representing the boards of the three organisations, is discussing where the different forms of ‘stile concertante’ fit best:

- The ‘solo’ manner which preserves the distinctive character of each network, and its relationship with its membership
- The ‘concertino’ dialogue that combines the various expertise of the three partners for the benefit of all three and for widening and strengthening the impact of their activities to their members and to external partners
- The ‘ripieno’ resounding that makes it possible for music education as a whole to speak within the cultural debate, when necessary, with a united and powerful voice across the European space

All various modes of interaction exist within one unified ‘composition’ of the entire collaboration, and they contribute in different ways to guaranteeing the sustainability of cooperation over the projects described.