

## 'Polifonia' WG4

**Site visit Popakademie Baden-Württemberg (University of Popular Music and Music Business)**

Mannheim, Germany

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- *Participants* : Helena Maffli, Mark Lambrecht
- *Persons interviewed* :
- Prof. Udo Dahmen, director, Dr. Heiko Wandler, Studiengangsmanager (course manager)
- Jonas Mengler, Angie Taylor and Johannes Butzer, master students
- Florian Sitzmann, producer, and Frank Itt, bassist, both teachers

***The Story***

The Pop Academy was founded in 2003 on the initiative of the federal state of Baden-Wuerttemberg to create the first institution in Germany to offer academic studies in the field of popular music and music business. Mannheim won the competition launched by the politics to host the new academy, as this city offers an ideal environment with a long tradition of active promotion of pop music, a lively cultural scene and strong public support for education and start-ups for music and creative industries.<sup>1</sup> Under the dynamic direction of Udo Dahmen, percussionist and groundbreaking German pioneer in the field of popular music, the new institution grew and developed rapidly to become one

<sup>1</sup> « Mannheimer-Musik-Modell » is a combination of training institution and business start-up centre in music industry, located close to the inner harbour. Initiated by local and European means, its aim is to unite artistic work with a broad field of creative industry. After the most recent expansion, more than 200 persons work in the « Music Park » 1 and 2, in 60 enterprises at the moment. The estimated total annual turnover of all companies involved in the Mannheim Music Model is 20 to 25 million €. [www.musikpark-mannheim.de](http://www.musikpark-mannheim.de)

of the most renowned names in German music and media landscape. In 2010, the Pop Academy received the accreditation of its degree programs.

### ***Vision and Values***

The Pop Academy Baden-Wuerttemberg is not only a higher education institution but also a competence centre for all aspects of the music industry, underpinning this with numerous projects in the areas of European cooperation, regional and business development. Its leading principles are :

- The interlinking of the two courses of study, music and business, to open up new horizons and make all students aware of the various perspectives of both the artistic and business sides
- The practical focus of the teaching, which is ensured by the numerous lecturers who are active in the industry and by work on business or band projects
- The individual support for every single student, which is made possible by the small size of the courses as well as the open communication with the directors and staff
- The formation of an active network between the Pop Academy, business, higher education institutes, international institutions and students

From the start, the strategy of the Pop Academy has been to offer an added value to the educational landscape and not to double up other institutions.

The Academy defines *popular music* through youth culture over the last 60 to 70 years. The definition is constantly evolving and includes styles such as pop, rock, country, soul, funk, hardcore, punk, metal, industrial, ambient, reggae, techno, drum'n bass and hip-hop. In order to guarantee high quality, the enrollment policy is restrictive and the number of students is kept deliberately low. The outcome and the benchmark of success set by the Academy is that every student will be able to live on his/her music after the studies. Permanent monitoring by the Academy reveals that this is indeed the case for 90% of the graduates. The enrollment is highly selective : out of ca. 800 candidates, ca. 50 are admitted each year, and the total number of students is ca. 280. The studies are very demanding, but students are counselled and supported individually to an exceptionally high degree. The buildings and studios with all their facilities are open for students and teachers 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Two facility managers, who are actually high-level sound engineers, maintain and control the 21st century infrastructure and equipment, buildings and logistics.

The Pop Academy entertains numerous national and international partnerships and exchanges, extending the network beyond Europe (China, USA). International *band and business camps and songwriter weeks* are organized twice a year. Once a year, the *Future Music Camp* becomes a centre for Germany's digital entertainment business scene where young entrepreneurs, academics, journalists and students in the field of digital/social music and entertainment meet for exchange, showcases and workshops. All year round, the SMIX.LAB, a social music innovation and experience laboratory, carries out R & D projects in the digital area.

The Pop Academy offers *continuing education* : seminars, workshops and open house events where public figures and celebrities from the worlds of culture, academia and business discuss and present creative ideas and current innovations for music business.

A very important part of the Academy's activities are educational projects, some of which have received national awards for their innovative teaching concepts. Students are actively involved in all projects as coaches and instructors, under the supervision of teachers and specialists.

*Bandpool* offers coaching and support in all important areas during 18 months to five young bands taking their first steps towards a serious professional career. Since 2008, *School of Rock* is a yearly project supported by the Goethe Institute and a large-scale public performance with school kids who have never sung or played an instrument before. The project *InPop* works with Mannheim children and teenagers with a migrant background. The goal is to support integration by encouraging and improving linguistic competence through music in workshops extending over a period of three years. The project *RegionNet* aims at working together on site with selected communities and initiatives to directly implement the Pop Academy's ideas of providing consistent support to pop culture, music and the scene throughout Baden-Wuerttemberg.

### **Evolution**

*Using all the opportunities available to bring students into the market and to find a job* : this main focus has not changed since the founding of the Academy. Today, this goal is a moving target because the digital shift is changing the market. The curriculum of the Academy is constantly updated and adapted to the changing requirements of the music business. All teachers are experts within the music and media sectors with large personal networks who are currently active in their fields, allowing them to integrate the latest developments into their teaching. There is a particular need to focus more broadly on electronic music and bring in new teachers. Since 2 years, new courses are given in composing for games, with three instructors and producers from this field. Alongside Macromedia-Munich, this is the only course available in Germany in this field.

### **The Business Model**

The Pop Academy is submitted to the German law for universities, but at the same time it is a company with limited liability, GmbH in German.<sup>2</sup> The four shareholders of the GmbH, representing politics, media and economy, are the federal state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, the city of Mannheim, SWR<sup>3</sup> and LFK<sup>4</sup>. Two thirds of the Academy's budget are public funding by the city and the federal state, the remaining third being provided by partners and sponsors such as EMI, BASF, Deutsche Post, etc. All instruments and material, studio equipment and technology are continuously provided and renewed by *endorsement partners* such as Yamaha, Kawai, Roland, Fender etc.

In the federal state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, there are no student fees in higher education, which means that studies at the Pop Academy are completely free of tuition for the students.

The directorial team of 6 persons<sup>5</sup> and the administration staff of 30 persons<sup>6</sup> are permanently employed, whereas all teachers work as free-lancers. The Academy has a pool of 120-150 teachers

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<sup>2</sup> GmbH : Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung, a legal entity very common in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

<sup>3</sup> SWR : Süd-West Rundfunk, the regional public broadcasting company and the second largest broadcasting organization in Germany.

<sup>4</sup> LFK : Landesanstalt für Kommunikation, the media authority of B-W, responsible for the licensing and supervision of private radio stations and TV channels.

<sup>5</sup> Directorial team : two directors, Udo Dahmen (music) and Hubert Wandjo (business), and four course managers, graduated scientists or PhD's in the field of popular music. Teachers at the Academy (max.6 hours), the course managers are responsible for the design and organization of the study programs.

<sup>6</sup> All staff members possess at least a Bachelor's degree. There are specific departments for PR, press, projects and sponsoring.

and instructors, half of them from other fields than music. Experts are provided for any given subject. Conforming with German standards, the teachers are correctly remunerated according to day and exam rates, and their travel costs, meals and hotels are covered. The student cost at the Pop Academy, ca. 15'000€, is cheaper than in other universities.

### ***Skills and Training for Entrepreneurship***

The overall principle is to make the study time resemble to real working life.

The Pop Academy offers two interlinked degree programs in which music-making and business go hand in hand throughout the study time. A large number of master students have also accomplished their bachelor studies at the Pop Academy.

#### *Bachelor's Degree*

Degree programs : Music Business and Pop Music Design

Duration : 6 semesters

Two compulsory internships (2 x 12 weeks) in 3rd and 5th semester

The two first semesters contain practice-oriented basic courses which are compulsory for both degree programs : marketing and sales management, business management, legal and financial skills. During the entire study time of 6 semesters, business and music students work together in the so-called « project factory », carrying out real and imaginary projects. The students are responsible for finding their internship jobs, but placements are also transmitted by the teachers and the institution. The Academy supervises the internships.

#### *Master's Degree (since 2011)*

Degree programs :

Popular Music (PM) and Music and Creative Industries (MCI), both 120 ECTS

Duration : 4 semesters

One internship of 12 weeks, compulsory for MCI

The program PM offers three orientations :

1. performing artist, 2. producing/composing artist and 3. educating artist.

The orientation 2 is the most popular one at the Academy and unique in Europe.

It teaches composition and production of songs, soundtracks for films, multimedia tasks, music for computer games, radio jingles, mobile phones and advertising. All forms of electronic media are considered and media culture theory is applied to the musical context. Business, management, financial, legal and communication skills are the components of the study program.

The program MCI

As the cultural sector changes, knowledge of music business is becoming increasingly important in areas such as advertising, design, software, games, books, publishing, film, arts and the press. These new facets are addressed in the MCI program. Besides courses in analysis and research methodology, the learning modules include business, administration and communication skills, content development and marketing as well as financial and legal subjects. National and international business contacts enable the course contents to be permanently updated and the newest trends integrated into the program.

*Agency for music services – Klinkt*  
www.klinkt.de

The Pop Academy runs its own agency for music services as well as a record label called *KLINKT*. Contracts are made with students and graduates, but *KLINKT* also cooperates with the Musikpark Mannheim, offering services associated with the artistic content such as technology, promotion, merchandising, graphics and photo/film. The agency has already gained a reputation for its high quality and works for clients such as Mercedes-Benz, Greenpeace, Coca-Cola etc. The services range from composition jobs and performances/events to audio branding, handling licenses and rights, as well as promotion and marketing services.

### **The interviews**

- a. Prof. Udo Dahmen, director
- b. Dr. Heiko Wandler, course manager

The content of these interviews is integrated in the previous parts of the report.

- c. Jonas Mengler, 2<sup>nd</sup> year master student

Jonas' parents are both classical musicians: the father is a cello teacher and member of the Aachen Symphony Orchestra and the mother a piano teacher. Jonas' father is very active in ESTA Germany! He also is an entrepreneur working out technical supporting devices for musicians and selling them. Jonas went to a music gymnasium (secondary school), where he mainly got a classical music education. This was a good preparation for the Pop Academy, mainly on the theoretical level, and Jonas passed his BA and MA entrance examinations with success.

His instruments are piano and drums, but since 10-12 years he has collected pop-practice and producing skills as an autodidactic and now mainly works on the computer.

Through networking Jonas has already received some orders, and since people were pleased with his work he got new ones. On the other hand, he also finds out new projects. In order to ensure their chances to succeed, he always investigates the market beforehand.

The Pop Academy takes good care of the development of hard and soft skills. As Jonas chose the master orientation "producing/composing artist", his study program consists of 60 % music and 40 % business lessons. This combination of courses, the renowned teachers and the students selected by heavy entrance examinations guarantee the quality of the interesting mixture of musicians, producers and business people who work together at the Pop Academy ("We are one family!"). However, Jonas thinks it's a pity not to have more individual drum lessons than once every 2 weeks. Obviously there is no more time for it due to the well-filled schedule.

As a producer you also have to compose, and Jonas likes all kinds of orders: film music, recording of bands, writing orchestral scores, etc. He is very versatile and flexible. He already invested in technical equipment and possesses a nice studio at home to work in.

When asked where he would like to be in five years, Jonas answered with conviction:

"I want to be a name in the production business".

- c. Angie Taylor, master student

Angie accomplished technical studies before entering the Pop Academy where she finished her bachelor's degree some years ago. Then she started to perform as a bass guitarist and to teach the piano and the bass guitar. She had a lot of "gigs", but there was no more time left for her own

project. For this reason, she decided to integrate her personal project in a master's program and go on studying at the Pop Academy to gain a master's degree and achieve a higher level as a musician. Angie is 33 years old, she is a real entrepreneur and very ambitious. At the end of the interview, she gave us a CD with merchandising products and had a picture taken of herself with the visitors – for the Facebook, we suppose. Angie's show can be performed with a minimum of 5 persons, but it can be extended until 20 musicians. She integrates voodoo elements and visual effects into the show and wants to create strong emotions and combine different art forms. At the same time, she understands the realities: sometimes you have to say "no" to smaller jobs, in order to work on the larger project! Angie has her own label as well as a personal manager who takes care of the finances and the booking. She is very satisfied with her studies at the Pop Academy: although she has learned a lot in her life "by doing", the hard skills instructed at the Academy have been very useful to her. Angie also praises the open atmosphere of the Academy, the tailor-made curriculum as well as the great availability of the teachers and the directors for the students. The only things she is missing are weekly individual instrumental lessons (instead of every 2 weeks) and the possibility to study a second instrument.

d. Florian Sitzmann, producer / teacher

Florian is a patchwork career musician. Trained in classical music education, he is a producer and a songwriter and plays the keyboard. Udo Dahmen spoke to him about the Pop Academy, and he got very enthusiastic about the idea and joined the team from the start. Now Florian is teaching mainly producing at the Academy, but the economic situation has become more difficult in the last years. This makes it necessary to combine different activities, and it is a daily challenge to keep every activity in balance in the patchwork. Florian considers that he could not be a good teacher in producing if he did not actively play music himself. The producing business is changing, and today the producer gets more and more tasks: he is the artistic director who controls the musical quality, decides about the choice of the studio, coordinates all aspects at every working step and is also involved in the business side of the project. Sometimes the producer can even be the artist. The information about the music & business development has to be up-to-date! Students are helpful here as they are close to the most recent evolution. According to Florian, the success of the Academy is largely due to the highly specialized teachers. Real workers in their fields, they have the possibility to promote the students through their own networks. This support from the teachers enables the students to make a choice out of the multitude of possibilities.

e. Frank Itt, Bass teacher

Frank talked passionately about his career and the technical possibilities of his instrument. He plays some 50 to 100 gigs a year with big German names, mainly on the bass guitar. Frank has been teaching bass and band coaching at the Pop Academy from the beginning. He often takes 2 or 3 students at the same time and also teaches them room physics/acoustics, because the bassists depend on the resonance of the room and must learn to adapt. They also have to work a lot with the computer. Frank's philosophy about entrepreneurship: "how to get and keep the job" is the n°1 thing for session musicians. Therefore, Frank also teaches and promotes the right professional attitude: bassists are serving and supporting in bands, not leading.

f. Johannes Butzer, master student

Johannes started learning the guitar at the age of 18 years and went to a private school in Switzerland to learn music after high school. He wanted to become a professional pop musician,

applied to the Pop Academy but didn't get in. Then he decided to study math, music and sports to become a teacher in secondary school. Johannes chose to study in Heidelberg, because he knew a lot of good musicians there. He applied to the Pop Academy again, but still was not accepted. Then he started to work with bands, applied for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time after his state examination in Heidelberg and finally entered the Academy as a guitar player (Pop Music design). Johannes was quite a bit older than the other students, but he had the advantage of experience. The first year was difficult, especially the business courses, but Johannes acknowledges the importance of the study concept and the high quality of the specialized teachers. However, he finds some classes in the master program too theoretical and it is hard for him to see their benefit for the profession just now.

Johannes had the chance to spend one year in Chicago for an exchange. His motivation for the master's degree: "I am not a virtuoso guitar player, but I want to produce and need the title for my future life." His project is to compose, play the guitar and produce.

A DJ and free-lance teacher of the Pop Academy asked Johannes to join the group 'Die fantastischen Vier' for several productions: a fine example of networking.!

Link to the institution website: [www.popakademie.de](http://www.popakademie.de)