

Conservatoires as Innovators and Audience Developers



A Three-year Strategic Programme, 2015-17

**Conducted by AEC/PJP in conjunction with the Europe
Jazz Network (EJN) and International Association of
Schools of Jazz (IASJ)**

As part of AEC's FULL SCORE project, the theme of Audience Development has been adopted explicitly as one of six overall objectives of the project, and has connections with most of the other five. Audience development is a major priority of the EU 'Creative Europe' cultural programme, through which FULL SCORE is funded. The programme guidelines offer the following contextualisation of the reasons for audience development being a priority and the main issues which the EU hopes will be addressed by projects:

Audience development is an important new priority in Creative Europe which helps European artists/cultural professionals and their works reach as many people as possible across Europe and extend access to cultural works to under-represented groups. It also seeks to help cultural organisations adapt to the need to engage in new and innovative ways with audiences both to retain them, to build new audiences, diversify audiences including reaching current "non-audiences", and to improve the experience for both existing and future audiences and deepen the relationship with them.

In some cases, developing audience development skills and capacity may be one of the aims of the project itself. In other cases, for example projects involving co-creations, co-productions, performances touring seeking to help artists/cultural professionals with their careers, projects should have a clear strategy for audience development to accompany the project, so that they do not focus solely on the "supply" side and to ensure that the activities have the largest possible impact. Similarly, projects with artists in exchange programmes and residences should seek to interact with local communities and audiences, rather than confining their mobility experience to their immediate peers. The approach to audience development will play an important role in assessing the quality of the projects and their contribution to the objectives and priorities of the programme.

Conservatoires are both institutions of higher education and cultural organisations in their own right, often providing a rich programme of concert and other activity for their neighbourhoods, cities



and regions. As future cultural professionals, conservatoire students need to learn how to engage with their current and future audiences even as they work to refine and finish their skills and competences to a full professional level – indeed, learning how to engage with varied audiences is an integral component of the skill-and-competence package they should be developing.

The FULL SCORE project seeks to identify ways in which conservatoires, as cultural organisations, can *‘adapt to the need to engage in new and innovative ways with audiences both to retain them, to build new audiences, diversify audiences including reaching current “non-audiences”, and to improve the experience for both existing and future audiences and deepen the relationship with them’*. Simultaneously, it poses questions about how the curricula of conservatoires might be adapted so as to encourage students to do all these things in their subsequent professional lives.

These aims are summed up in one of the six overall objectives of the FULL SCORE project:

To share examples of innovative approaches to genre diversification, contemporary orientation and cultural stimulation that have been implemented by European conservatoires, and to encourage wider take-up of these approaches

Compressed into this objective are three phrases that require some explanation: genre diversification, contemporary orientation and cultural stimulation.

Genre Diversification:

Concepts of genre are a useful way of classifying music but they also carry dangers. A genre label can be a pigeonhole and a straightjacket. In general, musicians, although they may predominantly operate within a particular genre, do not feel any prohibition upon straying outside that genre when interesting opportunities arise; for audiences, the same is true: a person may use genre labels as a shorthand for defining their tastes but they basically follow their ears towards the sounds and musics that give them interest, enjoyment and stimulation.

It is widely acknowledged that the digital society, with its easy access to a vast array of cultural material, has blurred what might have previously seemed relatively clear boundaries between genres. This development offers real opportunities for audience development, but only if organisations and individual musicians have the awareness and the competences to take advantage of it. Already, conservatoires are recognising that they cannot train their students for one ‘steady job’, such as a lifetime’s playing in an orchestra; they must equip them to be adaptable ‘creative entrepreneurs’, comfortable in a range of situations and across a range of so-called genres.

‘Genre diversification’ therefore refers both to the blurring of boundaries that is already occurring and to the imperative that this lays down to conservatoires to respond pro-actively to such diversification. Building new audiences and diversifying audiences will be assisted by a flexible and innovative approach to diversifying the genres across which musicians perform and through which musical artists express themselves.

Contemporary Orientation:

The diversity of today’s music (or, more accurately, musics) means that about the only way to define ‘contemporary music’ is in the sense of its being music that is happening now. At the same time, the very genre diversification referred to above is itself an almost universal characteristic of contemporary music. Not only do the terms Pop and Jazz have less and less validity in terms of their demarcating clear distinctions but even the boundary between contemporary ‘classical’ music and its supposedly more popular counterparts is becoming

increasingly fluid.

If a 'contemporary orientation' in part means openness to this kind of genre fluidity, it also has an important component that is connected to the re-uniting of the acts of musical creation and musical performance. Classical music's rigid separation of the roles and statuses of composers and performers is itself a phenomenon that has existed for fewer than 200 years; previously the writers of music were mostly its performers, and improvisation or 'composing in real-time' was a basic competence of the well-trained musician. This skill is now most frequently found among players from the jazz traditions, and the music it produces often evokes jazz influences. However, this is not invariably the case, and the more genre-neutral title 'generative music' has been proposed for music of whatever stylistic derivation in which creation and performance are fused in a simultaneous and seamless act.

Generative music exudes excitement; an audience feels itself to be complicit in a unique moment of creation – and, indeed, there is far more scope for the audience to influence what emerges than is the case with a music bound to the principles of 'faithfulness to the work' or *Werktreue*. Conservatoire students focussed on the classical repertoire learn the skill-sets required for faithful performance but not those associated with generative music – in fact, they may often lose whatever capacity for improvisation they had before entering their training programme. A 'contemporary orientation' in conservatoire training would entail a turn (or, arguably, a *re-turn*) to an emphasis upon generative music-making. In the process, it would open up students as versatile, communicative musicians, able to reach out to a variety of audiences, whether knowledgeable aficionados or enthusiastic newcomers.

Cultural Stimulation:

Musicians exist and function in the culture that surrounds them. As artists, they follow an inner voice but also respond to external tastes. The 'chemistry' of this interaction is both complex and unique to each individual, but it is clear that, on some level, a musician must first find his or her authentic 'identity' if they are then to establish a communicative rapport with their audience. 'Satisfying' an audience is a matter of striking a balance between giving them what they want and expect and confronting them with the unexpected - and even the disconcerting. At the sublime extreme, musician and audience can be fellow-explorers finding, sometimes losing and then re-finding their way together across uncharted sonorous terrains. An artist may still engage an audience while temporarily alienating them provided that the audience's faith in the integrity of his or her identity is not broken.

If personal identity and audience engagement are therefore opposite sides of the same coin, an understanding of both is crucially important for the developing musician. Conservatoires tend to be strong on the former, but less so on the latter. Seeing their students not just as unique budding artists but also as future cultural players and cultural stimulators is an essential ingredient for building curricula that will equip students with the skills to 'be themselves' while contributing pro-actively to the development of their audiences.

The final part of the FULL SCORE objective speaks of wishing to 'encourage wider take-up of these approaches'. This is the challenge facing those most closely involved in the delivery of this objective. Based on a belief that, in the conservatoire world, the approaches in question are most prominently to be found amongst the departments and institutions where pop and jazz are taught, it is to the Pop & Jazz Platform (PJP) of AEC that primary responsibility has been given.

Developing an AEC/PJP Strategy for Audience Development:

Why?

- Conservatoires have a role as cultural organisations, providing musical stimulation for their neighbourhoods, cities and regions. Developing their audiences is a social obligation, but also a potential means of strengthening their own sustainability
- Conservatoire students need to be more than fine artists waiting for someone to offer them work; they must be creative entrepreneurs, constantly seeking new audiences, new ways of presenting their music, new venues and even new functions (e.g. in social projects, therapeutic interventions, etc.). Approached in the right way, their own development and that of their audiences can feed off of one another to their mutual enhancement

What?

- The strategy should consist both of a coherent plan of actions for the duration of the project itself and a set of proposals, arrived at towards the end of the project, for achieving further sustained realisation of its main objective. Therefore, by the end of the project, ***examples of innovative approaches to genre diversification, contemporary orientation and cultural stimulation*** should have been collected in a form that enables them to be easily and effectively disseminated, and a set of suggestions should have been produced that will ***encourage wider take-up of these approaches***

Who?

- The initial target group for the strategy consists of conservatoire leaders, departmental heads outside the pop and jazz genres, teachers and students
- Because audience development is a priority of the 'Creative Europe' programme, other organisations and networks are also pursuing it. AEC/PJP's strategy must address this wider grouping
- Because the priorities of 'Creative Europe' are intended to have an impact upon European society, it is important also to consider channels by which this wider audience, as well as the policy-makers responsible for decisions affecting it, is reached

How?

- Where it is not already, audience development must become embedded as a concept at the heart of the learning and teaching taking place in conservatoires. In this respect, it is important to affirm the idea that concerning oneself with one's audience and how it might be developed is not in conflict with the priorities for individual artistic development but complementary to them
- As well as the meetings of PJP, there must be more tangible and durable outputs (such as the bulletins that are proposed, but also including case-studies of good and innovative practice) that can be disseminated during the project but, equally importantly, consulted by institutions afterwards
- Other strands of the FULL SCORE project (the structured cooperation with EAS and EMU, the development of a European Agenda for Music, drawing upon the perspectives of young musicians, etc.) should be exploited wherever possible – as channels for dissemination and as sources of possible synergy

‘The Audience’ (Re-)engaged

In 2014, PJP already made ‘The Audience’ the theme of its annual meeting; now it is re-engaging with this topic and building upon its different ramifications through a sequence of three linked meetings, using support from FULL SCORE. The PJP is an ideal forum within which to do this; as PJP Working Group member Simon Purcell wrote in 2014:

Whether creating new relationships with listeners, or renewing, repairing or recovering interest within communities that in Peter Renshaw’s words are ‘lost to music’, without deep engagement and generating curiosity and trust of musical ritual, some musical art-forms are vulnerable to extinction as a result of corporate domination, or at best historical preservation within institutions often perceived to be artificially subsidised and set aside from the needs of the wider society.

Jazz and pop musicians are generative music makers and possess a critical role in this challenge. Their ability to create music in context is highly adaptive and likely to afford musicians the best chance to begin the process of renewing trust through making art in common languages as distinct from promoting a canon in abstract, or from a position of superiority.

For the first of its three meetings, in February 2015, PJP focussed on ‘Developing Diversity and Identities among Artists and Audiences’. This theme implies, amongst many issues, re-thinking the relationship between these two groups. The provider-receiver model is an increasingly inadequate way to characterise what goes on in our culturally and technologically dynamic world of musical production and consumption. The overall title of the 2015 meeting, ‘Jazz, Pop and ME’, may also be seen as reflecting the needs of young and upcoming artists – our students - to find their own voice and survive in the globalised business of music. It could also be a call to ask ourselves as artists and Music Educators: Who are we? How can we use diversity to build identities? And, in the ‘ME’ that lies at the centre of each of our musical identities, to what extent do we, too, continue to develop ourselves as audiences for the music of others?

The 2015 meeting was the first of a 3-year planned sequence of PJP meetings, elaborating themes relating to audience development in a connected and cumulative way and featuring, in the second year, a ground-breaking joint meeting with the Europe Jazz Network (EJN) and the International Association of Schools of Jazz (IASJ). The sequence is set out below with the provisional titles and descriptions of the 2016 and 2017 meetings included to indicate how the events are intended to build cumulatively towards a series of conclusions that will form the outcomes of this strand of the FULL SCORE project:

- 2015: **Jazz, Pop and ME. Developing diversity and identities among artists and audiences** – described above
- 2016: **Banding Together** – a joint meeting with EJN and IASJ exploring new ways of strengthening the connections between higher education training for pop & jazz musicians and the professional ‘ecosystems’ of European festival, venues and activists that promote these genres. The challenges and opportunities of developing and evaluating students’ skills and competences in a learning environment that is partially embedded in the ‘real world’ of concerts and audiences
- 2017: **Making Art; Meaning Business** – educating musicians to combine craft and integrity in their music-making with a readiness both to engage with commercial structures and vested

interests and to assume the role of cultural citizens and leaders. Using the challenge of audience engagement as a creative spur to re-thinking musical languages and performing contexts

These three events form the 'spine' of the project, around which the various outputs are grouped. Below is a year-by-year list of objectives, actions and expected results for the project:

Year 1

Objective:

To hold an event on internationalisation in contemporary musics, sharing innovative approaches to genre diversification, cultural stimulation and audience development

Actions:

- Adopting a 3-year strategy (The Audience [Re-]engaged) to widen the scope of the AEC PJP meeting across this period
- Organising the first meeting of this strategic initiative
- Producing the first Platform 'bulletin'
- Taking forward liaison with EJM and IASJ

Expected Results:

- A successful PJP Platform delivered on internationalisation and audiences, with exchanges of innovative practice
- First 'bulletin' resulting from this Platform
- A 3-year strategy (The Audience [Re-]engaged) presented to delegates as part of this meeting
- Memoranda of cooperation signed with EJM and IASJ to stimulate synergies

Year 2:

Objective:

To hold a joint PJP/EJM/IASJ event exploring new ways of strengthening the connections between higher education training for pop & jazz musicians and the professional 'ecosystems' of European festival, venues and activists that promote these genres, examining whether there are lessons from this area for the development of an entrepreneurial perspective across higher music education as a whole

Actions:

- Delivering jointly with EJM and IASJ a PJP platform on musical 'ecosystems' and audiences, as part of the strategy *The Audience [Re-]engaged*
- Producing second Platform bulletin
- Implementing agenda for continued cooperation with EJM and IASJ

Expected results:

- A successful Platform on Audience Development delivered jointly with EJM and IASJ, in line with strategy *The Audience [Re-]engaged*
- Second Platform 'bulletin' published and widely disseminated
- AEC-PJP statement of purpose updated to reflect 3-year strategy
- Cooperation with EJM and IASJ enhanced, with reciprocal attendance at the partner organisations' meetings sustained

Year 3 (provisional):

Objective:

To address the roles as cultural citizens and leaders taken on by musicians who engage in innovative approaches to genre diversification, contemporary orientation and cultural stimulation, and to link these to audience development

Actions:

- Organising the final meeting of the 3-year strategy *The Audience [Re-]engaged*, addressing the roles of contemporary musicians as cultural citizens and leaders
- Producing a final publication on audience development with reflections drawn from all three Platform meetings
- Producing a new strategy for 2018-2020, including structured cooperation with EJN and IASJ

Expected results:

- A successful third Platform delivered as the culmination of three-year strategy *The Audience [Re-] engaged*
- Updated AEC-PJP 'Statement of Purpose' adopted by delegates
- Final publication on audience development strategies in relation to contemporary music, with reflections drawn from all three Platform meetings
- A fresh 3-year strategy (2018-20) formulated, including sustained cooperation with EJN and IASJ

In the Appendix attached to this document, there is a diagrammatic summary of the strategic programme that attempts to show how each of the elements and actions contributes to the overall objective within FULL SCORE relating to audience development.

Appendix: Conservatoires as Innovators and Audience Developers

A Three-year Strategic Programme, 2015-17

'The Audience' (Re-)engaged <i>To share examples of innovative approaches to genre diversification, contemporary orientation and cultural stimulation that have been implemented by European conservatoires, and to encourage wider take-up of these approaches</i>				
	01/09/14 – 31/08/15	01/09/15 – 31/08/16	01/09/16 – 31/08/17	01/09/17 –
	Jazz, Pop and ME Developing diversity and identities among artists and audiences	Banding Together Musical 'ecosystems' and audiences	Making Art; Meaning Business Contemporary musicians as cultural citizens and leaders	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening AEC's support to CCHE, sharpening the focus of its support to members and reinforcing its connections and synergies with other European organisations • Successful completion of a major initiative in audience development and increasing audience engagement, based around developments in the contemporary music scene that merge genres and reintegrate the activities of composer and performer in 'generative' musical styles
Strategy	Adopting the strategy	Implementing the strategy	Formulating a fresh strategy	
AEC/PJP meetings	Valencia, February 2015	Rotterdam, February 2016	London, February 2017	
Bulletins	Production of first bulletin	Production of second bulletin	Production of final publication, drawing on all three years (to include case studies of innovative approaches)	
Cooperation with EJM/IASJ	Liaison taken forward (signing MoC)	Agenda for enhanced cooperation implemented	Plans established for extending cooperation	
AEC/PJP Statement of Purpose		Statement of Purpose updated to reflect Strategy	Adoption of updated Statement of Purpose by PJP delegates	
Other		Coordination of PJP Rotterdam with European Forum on Music Education and Training, Leiden	<i>To be confirmed</i>	