

## **RENEW External Evaluator Report – Tony Woodcock**

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### **Program Abstract**

The Strategic Partnership Erasmus+ project RENEW - 'Reflective Entrepreneurial Music Education World Class' aims to promote entrepreneurship as an important component of higher music education (HME) programmes; to establish entrepreneurship as a catalyst for curricular innovation in European HME in general and particularly in the partner institutions involved in the project. RENEW will thus contribute to improving the employability of future music graduates through the artistic, pedagogical and entrepreneurial development of higher music education studies.

The project prioritizes the promotion of entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurship among young people, as well as an open and innovative higher education network, embedded in the present digital era. Moreover, the project builds on the value of entrepreneurially oriented teaching as an important tool for the training of transversal skills vital for the musician in the 21st century, such as team working, peer-learning and reflective practice. These skills will prepare musicians to be effective entrepreneurial practitioners in their future portfolio careers, which although rooted in music, may embrace other domains of activity.

By addressing teaching and learning from an entrepreneurial perspective, and ensuring future sustainability through the creation of Joint European Modules in Entrepreneurship, this project will contribute to the promotion of an open and innovative education and training within the field of Higher Music Education.

The participating Conservatoires were:

- Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium (DJM)

- Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC)
- Hogeschool der Kunsten Den Haag (KC)
- Guildhall School of Music and Drama (GSMD)
- Sibelius Academy of Music (SIBA)
- Norges Musikkhøgskole (NMH)

### **My Contracted Terms of Reference**

- . Article 4 / Obligations of the Expert: The Expert shall undertake:
- . To execute evaluation tasks throughout the entire project period, which will be done through the attendance of two project activities, and by studying the project documents, publications and website;
- . To produce two short activity reports and a final evaluation reports (see Article 8);
- . To forward to the Contractor any information or document that the latter requests and that is needed for the management of the project;
- . To decide, together with the Contractor, on the role, rights and obligations of both parties, including those concerning the allocation of intellectual property rights.

### Article 8 / Reports

The Expert shall send:

- . A brief evaluation report following his attendance to the two project activities;
- . A final evaluation by 31/10/2018 at the latest. These reports will be attached to the Final Reports to the European Commission.

### **Schedule**

#### **London GSMD 2 – 6 October 2017**

“Refection and the place of the artist in the C21.”

11 students

9 tutors

3 entrepreneurs

#### **Aarhus RAMA 27 November – December 1, 2017**

“The musician in a corporate context.”

15 students

4 tutors

3 jury experts

#### **Oslo Norwegian Academy of Music 12 – 16 February 2018**

“Music Now! The artist as citizen.”

17 students

4 tutors

2 entrepreneurs

#### **Helsinki through the Sibelius Academy Kallio-Kuninkala 9 – 13 April 2018**

“Skilled, happy and balanced professional.”

16 students

9 tutors

4 entrepreneurs

## **The Hague Royal Conservatoire 24 – 28 September 2018**

“Socially engaged artistic practice.”

19 students

3 facilitators

9 tutors

Followed by the **RENEW Conference** attended by 91 delegates representing 30 conservatoires in Europe plus one each from Australia and the US

### **Methodology**

I attended the Boot Camps in Aarhus and Helsinki and the final conference at The Hague. Helsinki was an addition to my original contract and included at my request. I felt it important to see as much of the work as possible and limiting my evaluation of the program to just one Boot Camp would not in my view have provided a holistic assessment of the project. I am grateful to Keld Hosbond at the RAMA for raising the financial support to cover the expenses for this visit (I also waived any additional fee in order to make the visit possible.) In an ideal world I believe that the external evaluator should attend all aspects of the program if the objective is to have an in depth and rigorous report. This report is the result of one in depth visit at Aarhus where I was given free range to attend all events, a more limited visit in Helsinki where I spent more time with the Working Group, and then participation in the final conference.

Brief activity reports were submitted after the Aarhus and Helsinki projects.

My approach was always to spend as much time as possible with the students learning about their experience and hearing their ideas. I attended and observed their working sessions, projects, presentations and discussions as well as making a point to socialize.

I was invited to attend meetings of the Working Group, which represented the management “engine” for the whole project.

I was included in the SLACK communications network and was able to see how discussions on line were developing and to read about ideas and concerns. It was a valuable source of information and communication. This was in addition to studying the web site and other materials.

My overall approach was informed by a deep passion for the subject of entrepreneurship and a concern for the future of the art form and the current curricula offered in music higher education.

### **Report Summary**

This project was unique for many reasons. It was about new ideas; it was an international collaboration between five of Europe’s most respected conservatoires plus the AEC; it provided a valuable learning experience for the students; and it was a rare example of a research and development project in the field. The project proved to be a successful collaboration and partnership, which

delivered an important project with outcomes that can benefit other conservatoires. Like all R+D projects it was not perfect and I have outlined various issues in the body of this report and made recommendations in the appropriate section.

One area for serious consideration is the use of the term entrepreneurship, which to many is confusing and misleading. It may even be an effective deterrent for many conservatoires examining new ideas for the future. The program was essentially about technical/career skills and not entrepreneurship (Aarhus was an exception.) There is nothing wrong with this as it provides valuable skills that will help any young artist starting a career, but it needs to be defined as such. There is a clear incremental relationship between technical/career leading to entrepreneurship, which can be examined.

There are important new skills both musical and non-musical that could have been a feature in the program such as technology including the place of enhanced reality (ER), virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI); data analytics in helping to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the field which in turn would help inform curricula development; and consideration of contemporary musical skills to reflect changes in the industry.

### **Reliance on Technical Skills and Dependency**

Technical skills are normally provided through a Career Skills program at some conservatoires. These are seen as the essential skills needed to establish a portfolio career, that is, a career based on the objective of finding differing work activities and sources of income. This could be said to be part of the gig economy. Such programs provide classes on technical skills such as marketing, presentation, pitches, project management, concert production, networking, finance, web site design and so on. I am not saying that such skills are not valuable. They provide some sense of a real world perspective and, when done well, can actively help a young musician enter the professional world. But it would be misleading and confusing to promote such a program as entrepreneurial. The program oscillated between introducing entrepreneurship and providing a technical skills toolkit. With the exception of the Aarhus project, this was the great shortcoming of the program.

As a supplement to my own criticism, perhaps we should acknowledge the need to provide valuable Career Skills that will help the employability of our students, allowing them to be more successful and to make a bigger contribution to society. These could certainly be defined as part of the curriculum and may even be popular with faculty. From existing successful models we could create a helpful framework for the dissemination of a Career Skills program and case studies to other conservatoires that would provide valuable expertise. Such programs after all are not universal and models of good practice could inform and encourage the development of new programs at conservatoires around Europe

Staying with the idea of technical skills, I felt that Technology should have been included in the program's curriculum. Technology is not something that has impacted the conservatoire system and opportunities for its development and inclusion are being lost as a result. I would have liked to have seen discussion about the application of on line learning, the use of platforms such as YouTube, basic computer skills and the potential for the inclusion of Enhanced Reality, Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence in teaching and learning as well as concert production.

## **Entrepreneurship and Recruitment**

Entrepreneurship is real world contemporary thinking, focusing upon identifying a gap or problem in the market, which can be turned into an opportunity and then the creation of a structure to deliver this opportunity, The Start Up. It provides value to the world. This requires a structure involving prototyping, creating a value proposition, proof of concept, finding investors, key performance indicators and of course going to market. Entrepreneurship creates something extraordinary, which contributes to our lives.

All the young musicians involved with this program were just putting a foot on the terra incognita of this brave new world of Entrepreneurship. Inevitably they quickly fell outside their comfort zone and then relied heavily upon wanting to return to basic technical skills.

Entrepreneurship has as its default setting all the technical skills you would expect and that are outlined in this report. But it builds from there. The classical music world is facing a critical time in its history and there are huge opportunities for the creative entrepreneur to find new pathways and models. But if musicians are limited in their thinking to imagine that Entrepreneurship is just a series of classes where you learn technical skills then we are losing a vital opportunity. This was the biggest limitation facing the program and it in turn related strongly to the student recruitment process.

There are always other considerations and factors as a new initiative finds its way into an already overcrowded schedule but I believe the student selection process could have been more thorough. The program really demanded musicians who already have some real world experience, with the entire basic technical skills set, in place and well rehearsed. It demanded musicians who have already experimented with Entrepreneurship and are developing an entrepreneurial mindset (a phrase that is constantly used generically but I suspect is one that is not fully understood.)

If recruitment had been more specific then the program would have identified a cohort of musicians with the potential to become truly innovatory leaders in the field of musical entrepreneurship. It would also have produced a training model based upon sound research and experimentation that could be adopted by other conservatoires. This could be the catalyst for systemic change rather than small modules of development. I consider the adequate resourcing, prioritization and

understanding of entrepreneurship within conservatoires to be the most important central issues facing its development.

In addition the program needed to identify musicians to work intensively in an entrepreneurial program for a 12- month period. Limiting the student involvement in the program to one or possibly two Boot Camps merely touched the surface of the program's learning potential. It required a longer arc of discovery for the young musician. This would have provided more in depth experience for the student and more ambitious outcomes.

### **The Hague Conference and Boot Camp**

There should be no need for me to comment on the RENEW conference. A quick examination of the program will give a clear idea of its contents and objectives. It attracted some 30 conservatoires from across Europe and more than 90 delegates and inspired debate both on and off the podium. The ripple effect from this event should have a positive effect in promoting new ideas and thinking in the field. I hope that there will be a follow up discussion at the AEC conference in November 2018 on the whole project.

Although I was not invited to observe the Boot Camp or the Teaching program, the work made itself manifest in the various report backs during the conference and I would like to comment on two aspects that caught my attention.

The first was the almost complete absence of students at the conference. There were two token students, Camilla Rasmussen (RAMA), the student representative on the Working Group and Sophie de Klerk (NAIP) who I believe attended nearly all the Boot Camps. These two young musicians impressed everyone with their ideas, experience and intelligence. It was obvious that the conference was interested in the student perspective (at one of the smaller groups I attended on the "holistic concept" the questioning was directed almost exclusively to the students in the audience and they weren't even presenting!) and I felt an opportunity was lost for greater involvement by the end user, aka the student. I am sure there were financial and budgetary pressures but at the end of the day it's a question of how resources were prioritized. If all or even some of the Boot Camp students had been invited to attend the conference it would have opened up a whole new dimension to the discussions.

It is my understanding that the Boot Camp separated the students from the teacher-training program. They were each given their own assignments although these were complementary and supportive. The presentation led by Zoe Smith from the teacher's side on the creation of a new curriculum (one of the assignments of the week's work) was fascinating and impressive and the result of a great deal of super fast work. But the teaching group did not consult with or involve the students, the end users. This deprived the assignment of legitimacy with the most important voice, not in the room. It also gave the appearance of top down management and thinking.

The students are not just the end users, they are also the clients and their exclusion from both the conference and some of the teaching discussions speaks poorly to our attitudes and priorities. There is an African saying that sums this up nicely “If you want to cut someone’s hair, it is better if they are in the room.”

### **Contemporary Skills**

We tend to separate musical skills from non-musical skills and in so doing a natural resistance develops one to the other. Faculty see their main responsibility to help shape and create an artist, which in turn means great dedication and many hours of practice by the student. The non-musical skills needed to create a successful career are often seen as having nothing to do with being a musician. This seeming conflict is inevitable given the current hierarchy in the conservatoire world. We need to think about the best way to integrate our different approaches as a reflection of the changing world around us. For instance the orchestral program is still the dominant program in most conservatoires at a time when the orchestral world is diminishing and job opportunities reducing. The growth market now is the smaller ensemble seen as more flexible, with no fixed costs, contemporary in style and promotion, and attractive to a new younger audience. The skills to be successful in such a new world are not necessarily taught at the conservatoire level. They include the ability to play in any genre from pop, hardcore, contemporary, to early music; staging and production: extended instrument techniques; click tracks; acting and drama; the ability to lead workshops and technology.

A more integrated learning approach could be redefined as “contemporary skills” so that there is one approach to what is needed to be successful as a musician finding a job today. “Contemporary skills” could then be used as the holistic description embracing and not making any distinction between different types of skills. For instance: ensemble playing, and story creation; ear training and planning; music history and click tracks; etudes and creative writing; duos and technology; studio lesson and working across all styles of music; orchestra and an intimate knowledge of extended instrumental techniques; Paganini caprices and production and presentation. I am not proposing these, they are merely ideas illustrative of a discussion that the field needs to have. This holistic approach could have wide benefits in making the need for curricula change better understood and better supported by students and faculty alike.

### **Alumni**

The alumni are an important stakeholder group within the relationship orbit of all conservatoires but were not a feature of the program. Often this relationship is ignored at a time when many graduates need further help and advice particularly with areas surrounding career skills and development. The term “Alma Mater” which we all proudly use, means “*nurturing mother*” and this in turn expresses the need for an on going relationship. An active relationship with alumni could include longitudinal studies, case studies on career development to be shared with current students and opportunities for continuing study and involvement.

## **The Joint Working Group**

The Working Group was really the engine for the whole project from concept to implementation. Representatives from five very different musical institutions in various states of evolution in terms of entrepreneurship, managed to come together and collaborate effectively. AEC was also part of this group. They created through RENEW a useful Research and Development project, which will provide long-term benefits in the field. They are to be congratulated.

I enjoyed working with the group and we became involved in some excellent debates. The group was good at problem solving, ideation and the prototyping of new models and concepts. It was also alive to many of the issues I have mentioned in this report.

I would have liked the Group to have strengthened its relationships and contact with the students. The students represented the end user and were a vital source of information about the program and the student experience. More informal discussion rather than the set piece Q&A and feedback sessions, I believe would have provided more insight into the nature of the program.

From time to time I noted that the Working Group lost the narrative of the project and did not revisit or reestablish goals and objectives. Sometimes there was a tendency for the group to retreat into interest groups. But my conclusion is that this group worked well together and implemented a worthwhile project.

## **Student Experience**

From the two Boot Camps I attended I would conclude that the students were very well looked after with great thought given to the curriculum. The environments for both Camps were also well prepared. In Aarhus the students worked in Gobsbanen, a disused railway yard fairly close to the RAMA campus. The old railway yard has been converted by the city into an entrepreneurial environment and this was an impressive setting for the project. In Helsinki the setting was Kallio-Kuninkala, some 35km outside Helsinki, provided an exceptional retreat environment away from city life and the usual pressures of work.

In speaking to the students about the program and experience in Aarhus I learnt about their concerns relating to prototyping, one of the main techniques used by entrepreneurs. This was seen as being outside everyone's comfort zone and they struggled to meet its demands. Further investigation revealed that students were just not prepared for long distance collaborations via SLACK and there had generally been insufficient preparation of the assignments prior to the Boot Camp (the use of SLACK had improved immeasurably by the end of the project). They felt that the demands of the program did not provide sufficient time for reflection, which I found curious, given the criticisms leveled at the first Camp at the GSMD for providing too much! They also mentioned issues of the diversity of skills, maturity and experience within the group even though everyone



supported the notion of diversity. In particular they felt they needed a toolkit prepared for them to undertake their project work with teachers helping to guide them. This was of concern to me as I felt it reinforced technical skills in the form of dependencies.

Positive comments from the students included the content of the program; overall group dynamic; the international aspect of the program; networking; the opportunity to rehearse some of their hard and soft skills; the creation of a special student representative position on the Joint Working Group; the ability to experiment with transferable skills; and that it was refreshing to be creative outside the realm of playing their instruments and the overall working environment.

Teachers were thoughtful and responsible and in general the students worked with them in their groups without any sense of hierarchy. There was a general feeling from the students of concern or anxiety about their autonomy and responsibility for their own education. All of which provided a high energy level and sense of purpose and focus. They were not being told what to do and they had to create their own discipline with regards to matters such as research and invention. This provided the opportunity to test their own skills and strengths, which on many occasions surprised them. Collective group skills became the default thinking rather than the usual linear approach and educational autonomy stretched their abilities and expectations.

Some of these issues related to recruitment and to the general cut and thrust of a new Research and Development program. On balance the student experience should be seen as very positive.

### **The Future of the Program**

A few conservatoires such as the Royal Academy of Music Aarhus, Trinity Laban in London, and Berklee Boston/Valencia are already deeply involved in developing fully-fledged entrepreneurial programs. If we look at a 10-year arc of development it would be helpful to the field to monitor their progress and create case studies of their experience as others start to move from technical skills related programs into the new world of entrepreneurship.

We need more research and development projects such as RENEW and I hope that the AEC and others will make this a priority for the future. Developing entrepreneurship is much more than just introducing a new academic program. It requires resources and major investment. It needs a new curriculum focusing on prototyping, data analytics, scalability, business planning, value propositions, and key performance indicators. In other words, a different curriculum with a different faculty. It also requires an infrastructure of support involving expert faculty, incubators, accelerators and, most important of all, investors. The latter goes much further than just providing small grants for interesting student programs. It means real investment in completely thought through projects that deserve implementation.

For this to happen in the conservatoire world there will need to be systemic change. This will be difficult given the strength of the culture of the conservatoire model. It has a rich and deep history and can point to many achievements. But these traditional frameworks and constructs are being questioned by a world, which is changing the way we think about teaching, learning and higher education. Protectionism is not the answer to such challenges. What needs to be considered is the management of change and how this can be effectively modeled. This report is meant to be helpful to this process in providing a platform for further debate and discussion as well as producing a clear evaluation of the project. Already at The Hague conference many delegates were animated by the idea of embracing developmental ideas that would help to bring the field into greater alignment with the contemporary world. The usual cry of “well it just can’t happen at conservatoires” is not longer appropriate. The question is how can we make it happen.

## **Recommendations**

- For the time being, suspend the term entrepreneurship as a generic description of the program and instead encourage a technical/career skills approach. Acknowledge that such skills are valuable and vital in providing real world awareness. These skills can be started as a series of electives leading to their inclusion as a requirement. Career skills will be new to many conservatoires, which would benefit from the dissemination of case studies and existing well-produced curricula.
- Monitor closely the small number of conservatoires, which are deeply invested in the development of entrepreneurship with a view to producing case studies. There needs to be linear development from career skills to entrepreneurship. Exemplars in the latter will have a strong and positive effect as leaders in the field.
- Promote a regular program of Research and Development projects similar to RENEW based upon a foundation of international collaborations and partnerships.
- Include in technical/career skills other important skills often omitted at the conservatoire level such as technology including ER, VR and AI as well as basics such as computer management and making a recording; plus data analytics that can provide for both students and faculty a deeper insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the music industry. Data analytics will reflect the changing attitudes and demands of the contemporary world and should act as a catalyst for curricula development.
- In considering new pathways avoid any sense of protectionism and promote opportunities for change. New ideas should be encouraged from the grass roots as well as from senior management.
- Promote discussion and debate about the need for Systemic Change within the conservatory world. The RENEW project illustrated how positive such discussion can be in breathing oxygen into the system. Further R+D projects will make this task easier.
- The student selection process for a program devoted to entrepreneurship needs to be more carefully considered and based upon a cohort of

students who already have all the technical skills firmly in place. A cohort of highly skilled students would be powerful in the management of change.

- The program should involve the same students throughout its duration with an incremental program of development.
- The student voice is important and needs to be heard. Students should be around every discussion table and a major presence at any conference helping to advise and share their experiences and ideas.
- Consideration should be given to the development of contemporary skills. These can be seen through the joint prisms of technical non-musical skills and new musical skills. Such skills need to confront and embrace the challenges and opportunities of the new world we live in. They also need to reflect the changes in employment moving away from the traditional orchestral model to a more ensemble-based model. A program based on such skills could be an important interface between the music industry and real world development.
- Alumni should be embraced as super important stakeholders with an on going relationship allowing further study, advice, and longitudinal studies that could provide excellent data on career development and how curricula needs to reflect changes in the world, as well as career case studies and presentations to existing students.
- AEC should consider monitoring and producing conservatoire case studies based upon a 10-year arc of development in the areas of technical skills and entrepreneurial initiatives aligned to curricula changes.

## **Conclusions**

The RENEW project was in many ways seminal. To begin with it was a rare example of R+D embraced by five leading teaching institutions and the AEC. This was new territory in the conservatoire world. You could possibly look at RENEW as just another opportunity to examine a new part of the curriculum leading to the inclusion of a new academic program. But I believe that would be wrong. It was much more than that. In many ways it was germinal, providing an interface between the conservatoire world and real world development.

The project raised many difficult issues and questions about the future of the current conservatoire model which were clearly voiced during the conference:

- How can systemic change happen?
- What is the role of a musician in the contemporary world?
- Are we training musicians with real world skills?
- What are the skills that are needed to be successful and to start a career?
- Where and what are the future opportunities?
- Are students been given the skills to deliver these opportunities?
- What are the changes and dynamics affecting the whole world of higher education?
- What curricula meet these demands?

Such questions need to be discussed openly at all conservatoires and at all levels from the students to the faculty. It need not be about protectionism but about understanding the contemporary world at the most significant inflection point in our history. The classical music and jazz worlds are much more than a niche market for the social and economic elites. Such a limited social trajectory would guarantee our invisibility for the future as well as negating the power of an art form we all feel passionately about.

RENEW in its small way was showing us a new path. This path will not vanish and many people will return to it asking the same questions about our place in the world. To stay on this path requires courage and a great deal of obstinate determination. But in many ways there is no other alternative than to keep examining where it might take us.

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