

PJP Trieste 2014

Audiences: who is listening?

Now, in the 21st century, in a time of unprecedented change and financial difficulty, musicians are rightly concerned about their future. The institutions that train many of those musicians are also right to be concerned.

The health of the music industry is uncertain. As a result of excellent courses across Europe, young artists are making better music than ever and there is a hunger to reimagine music alongside soaring technical standards. Through some inspired learning and teaching, jazz conservatoires are developing pedagogies that focus on group-based learning and methods that foster entrepreneurialism, imagination and collaboration resulting in a diversification of genres and style.

Meanwhile, the major labels are unhappy because they are no longer making money from music and are having to rethink their business model. Musicians aren't that happy either; revenue streams continue to be unclear as most music is downloaded illegally whilst popular music is being used more and more to drive giant brands and sell products such as Converse and Red Bull through festival promotion, publishing and on-line campaigns. However, through entrepreneurial initiative, musicians are forging their own opportunities, for example: the as the Jazzwerkstatt Wien, Berlin and Bern, the Chaos Collective in London, Dirty Loops from Stockholm and programmes such as Gerard Godley's 12 Point Festival amongst many other exciting innovations happening around Europe.

The audience, the people who consume our music are delighted. You can listen to any music you like for nothing on Spotify or YouTube. It is affordable to go to live music events and the festival scene is in good health. And perhaps, the artists and musicians have a reason to be happy, because if you are smart you can sell your music to a global, networked audience, a community of niche fans for a fraction of the cost a decade ago. But there is also crisis in audience literacy, a corollary of the sad decline in the visibility of Jazz as an art form in the mainstream media and popular culture.

The decrease in Jazz audiences in concert halls and clubs is widely recognised, with data from America and the UK revealing that Jazz audiences have significantly fallen away over the last thirty years and in addition to growing older. Studies also suggest that if you haven't fallen in love with a niche art form by the age of twenty-six then it is unlikely that you ever will. This presents a crisis for Jazz and the future of Jazz education. Audiences help us to make sense of our music and bringing meaning to it.

Elsewhere, research also indicates that people participate in artistic activity more than attend, and that many audiences are made up of people who take part in the arts. As conservatories we need to work hard to develop and energise our audiences through reaching out to young people through bringing musicians into schools. For people in hospitals, prisons and for marginalised population, music becomes something to hold on to and is often a ray of light in an otherwise challenging world.

Historically Jazz has always been a community art form, from its early roots through to the Community Music movement in the seventies. Recent times have seen bold projects from jazz and popular music, such as Tomorrow's Warriors alongside inspired programming at

the South Bank Centre. These projects recognise the need for audiences to take part and provide a challenge for the artist to think differently about how they perform and present their work.

The generative skills involved in rehearsing a band, song writing and improvisation lend themselves well to participatory projects. The discreet qualities such as social entrepreneurialism, camaraderie, empathy and autonomy are important skills that can be gained through work-based learning, and skilful mentoring. We need to create a study that places these skills at the heart of our students' learning.

What might this curriculum look like and how might it be structured? Trinity Laban has created a course called Engaging Audiences that teaches leadership, community performance, marketing and self-led projects that all students participate in as a core part of principal study. In addition, all students participate in CoLab, a two-week festival that provides a place where students can experiment in a socially constructive way to try out new ideas and ways of working.

As representatives of conservatoires we are in a position to seize the moment and be leaders in music enterprise, shaping art and culture and using our music as a tool for social change and to affect the cultural landscape.

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”

Paulo Friere, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Our aim here in Trieste is an invitation and a challenge to discuss and jam with the idea of audiences and their relevance to the learning and teaching of our art.

Joe Townsend - Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Gerard Godley – add title