

VOCON meeting at Trinity Laban 19 feb 2017

The Morning After at Trinity Laban

In London Trinity Laban, 'the morning after' a great conference of AEC/PJP, fourteen members of VoCon, from all over Europe met to share thoughts on various topics in vocal singing, learning and teaching.

The meeting was organized by the VoCon core-team, being Maria Pia de Vito (Italy), Annemarie Maas (the Netherlands), Anders Ørsager (Denmark) and Brian Zalmijn (the Netherland/Spain). Helle Henning (Danmark) joined the core group at Trinity Laban while preparing the content of this VoCon meeting.

VoCon is open to all vocal teachers in higher education within Europe that are eager to share cultural, pedagogical, didactical, methodical insight. VoCon is a learning community of critical friends. All members agree on the VoCon manifest stating that music is a living thing and wants to communicate and engage in and with a world that is in need of (the reflection of) art, music and vocal music in particular.

Mind and soul, body and sound

The core-team set up a morning that combined discussion and reflection with singing and physical activity. Somehow meetings like these tend to stay rational and stay far from experience and connecting through making music. Since singers ARE their own instruments, for everything a vocalist does IS musical communication (from physical behavior to making sound), to a vocalist the connection between mind and music is deeply connected. Hence the core-team's desire of constantly combining 'logos' with 'ethos' and 'pathos'.

After introducing ourselves and our affectations in vocal education, the core group presented a list of topics to chose from. These topics were gathered partly on the spot, partly shared in advance at the closed VoCon facebook page:

- **Directive teaching versus coaching**
- The vocal performance (awareness, connection, the human source – how do you work on that)
- **Balance between technical skill and artistry**
- **Vocal improvisation (why, what, how)**
- Leadsheets in the lessons (yes, no, how, why)

All subjects briefly were discussed which already led to a lot of useful exchange of information, such as the fact that at Pamplona Conservatory an online drive, offering a huge database of (corrected) lead-sheets and scores, uploaded and downloaded by students. The Italic subjects were ranked top three by VoCon members. We split up in smaller groups to be able to go in deeper discussion on a topic for half an hour. The outcome of each lively discussion then was shared with the other groups. After that groups switched topics and group-structure. In between these in-deep discussions vocal improvisations were led by various members of the group, to put us back on both (dancing) feet and into the 'now' again.

Afterglow

This way of sharing thoughts and information, altered by vocal improvisation, appeared to be very fruitful. Didactical work-forms were presented, philosophical questions were posed and cultural differences were exposed. Yet, despite all differences what stroke every member is the fact that we (vocal teacher throughout Europe) are very much 'in sync' or/and 'open to' various approaches in learning and performing. We're eager to learn from each other and also willing to present and perform our ways of teaching. We're equal when making music. VoCon is becoming a platform that really implements 'learning by doing' and 'practice what you preach'. From this point of view the idea came across to present topics in 'pecha kucha' style, present work-shops in practical work-form, execute your most beloved vocal exercise with VoCon members.

Many inspiring and informative thoughts came across as we increasingly went deeper into presented topics. VoCon again proved to be a group of vocal teachers in higher music education that dares to share and is willing to feed on, feed back and feed forward knowledge; to improve and expand our awareness of what's going on in vocal jazz and pop education. This is what gives every VoCon meeting extra value: the safe environment, the number of participants in session, the 'content first – business later' vibe, the 'learning by doing' approach.

Yours sincerely, the VoCon core-team: Annemarie Maas, Maria Pia de Vito, Anders Ørsager, Brian Zalmijn

'the day after ' at Trinity Laban VoCon PARTICIPANTS and their ever growing affectations

- . Annemarie Maas – HKU Utrecht Conservatoire, Netherlands; coaching, Critical Reponse Process, genre-free
- . Maria Pia de Vito – St. Louis Music Academy, Rome, Italy; improv, creative singing
- . Philip Sageder – University of Music and Performing Arts/Institute of Popular Music, Vienna, Austria; pop
- . Ineke van Doorn – ArtEZ, Arnhem (also member of EVTA), The Netherlands; improvisation

- . Brian Zalmijn – Valencia Berklee College of Music, Spain; vocal recording/vocal production
- . Helle Henning – Syddansk Musikkonservatorium SDMK, Odense, Danmark; mind & body; harmonic balance
- . Jenny Robson – Helsinki Sibelius (jazz) & Korelia (pop), Finland; combining pop & jazz
- . Susanne Abbuehl – Lucerne School of Music, Luzern, Switzerland; making/teaching/art

- . Trudy Kerr – Trinity Laban & Londen Center Creative Media – pop; vocal technique, vocal arranging
- . Hilde Norbacken – University of Norway – vocalists in bands, improvisation, own material
- . Giovanna Montecalvo – Conservatorio di Musica N. Piccinni, Bari, Italia; technique, radical improvisation

- . Susannah Stilvali – Pescara Conservatory, Pescara, Italy; jazz, ensemble, songwriting
- . Claudia Phillips – Studio de Variété & P&J department Dijon; trains teaching (also EVTA secr.)
- . Theresa Lujan – Pamplona conservatory – jazz, improvisation-internalizing