

VoCon : a first official meeting.

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Berklee College of Music, Valencia Department, Valencia, Spain

What is VoCoN: Born from an initiative of Maria Pia De Vito from Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia, Roma, Anders Ørsager from Rhythmic Music Conservatory, Copenhagen, and Annemarie Maas from Utrechts Conservatorium (HKU), Utrecht and introduced for the first time in a preliminary meeting in Trieste (PJP meeting 2014), VoCon it's a platform for vocal teachers jazz/pop/from Academies and Conservatories adherent to AEC, founded for the purpose of exchanging cultures, good practices, discussing methodologies, exchanging research findings, etc. In brief, Vocon intends to be a learning community.

This years meeting in Valencia we had 14 active participants,

Sidsel Endresen from Norges Musikkhøgskole, Oslo, Norway

Gun-Britt Gustafsson from Kungliga Musikhögskolan, Stockholm, Sweden

Ingela Hellsten from Academy of Music and Drama (HSM) Gothenburg, Sweden

Helle Henning from Syddansk Musikkonservatorium Odense (ODNC), Danmark

Sirje Medell, University of Viljandi Culture Academy, Viljandi, Estonia

Susanna Mesia from Metropolia, Helsinki, Finland

Ken Norris from Hochschule für Musik und Theater, Hamburg, Germany

Brian Zalmijn from Codarts, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Carla Marcotulli, Conservatorio di Musica “Licinio Refice”, Frosinone, Italy

Lilian Jensen from Universitetet i Tromsø, Tromsø, Norway

Jenny Robson from Sibelius Academy (Uniarts) Helsinki, Finland

Anders Ørsager from Rhythmic Music Conservatory, Copenhagen, Denmark

Annemarie Maas from Utrechts Conservatorium (HKU), Utrecht, the Netherlands

David Linx from Bruxelles Conservatory, Belgium

Not present, with acknowledgement:

Maria Pia de Vito from Academia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome, Italy

Bebiane Bøje Jazz departement of The Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus, Denmark.

Eliza af Vingelstad

Hilde Norbakke University of Agder, Christiansand

After a short introduction of the idea of the 'VoCon' by Anders Ørsager and Annemarie Maas , all participants presented themselves, telling in short about their school, their education system and their role in the departments.

A few examples:

-In the Music Highschool in Oslo (Oslo Musikkhøgskole) a student can choose between a pedagogic or a performance study.

Sidsel is in the performing department where there's a lot to do with improvisation. Improvisation is a subject for both jazz and classical students since 1994. There are about 4 full combo's in the department.

-In the Royal Conservatoire in Stockholm (Kungliga Musikhögskolan) there are different subjects given like singer-songwriting, jazz, pop, technique. Each year 2 to 4 vocal students are admitted of 30 -40 students in total. The program is called a 'jazz' program, but in fact it's not strictly limited to that.

-In Gothenburg, at the Academy of Music and Drama the department in which Ingela Hellsten works is based on an 'improvisation program'. Each year about 8 students, mainly working in ensembles. Also there is an educational program.

-In Odense in Danmark every year about 10 students are admitted. The students are jazz orientated and singer songwriters.

-The University in Tromsø has both a classica and a pop/jazz department. Together with a teacher focused on improvisation (Marit S. Lillian teaches technique. Each year 2 or 3 on a total of 10 new students are admitted.

-The Conservatoire in Frosinone has both a classical and pop/ jazz department. Carla Marcotulli is the jazz technique teacher, each year about 5 students are admitted. Improvisation and creating music is a goal.

-In Viljandi jazz, folk and education are main subjects. Each year about 9 students are admitted.

-At the Music Highschool in Hamburg (Hochschule für Musik und Theater) the department is

called 'jazz and related music'. There is also a classical department and there is a lot of space to cross borders. This year 5 singers are present.

-The RMC in Copenhagen admits about 25 students each year - 2-4 of them are singers. The system is based on the 'why' instead of 'how' question (why do you do what you do, and not so much how you do it). The artistic focus is wide. Students are called musicians instead of singers, guitarists... etcetera..

-In the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki there is a strictly jazz-department.

-At Codarts the jazz, pop, worldmusic and classical department are keen on crossovers in music. Artistic development is important; the question: 'who are you, where do you want to go' are important. Authenticity is a big goal.

-At the jazz & pop department of the Utrecht Conservatoire students are 'performers, creators and communicators'. To become the "best version of yourself" as a singer, being a well educated instrumentalist is important. All students also take the education program. Being part of HKU (fine arts, music technology, theatre, arts and economics) interdisciplinary courses are becoming more and more important.

After each member's introduction we started sharing main topics of interest:

- All singers present at this meeting love to share best practices, learn from each other, meet in conversation and in practice

- Jazz and/or pop: this is an issue that we teachers and institutions have. It seems students do not make or feel borders between different types of music.

- The perception of the future and what our students become: the workfield is very diverse and it's becoming even more diverse.

- Talk about difference in culture: values and problems

-The importance of 'educare', meaning: teaching from the inside out: starting with what's inside the student instead of just putting information in.

- Working together with colleagues: In the northern countries, peer reviewing, being a critical friend, life long learning is already common ground.

- Technique and differences.

- Being raised as a musician or being self-made/being classically trained or trained as a 'modern music' performer. In this group We have knowledge from both sides.

- Teaching jazz & pop to classical students: talking about the needs originating from the different sorts of music; acknowledging these different needs, not having to fight over right or wrong.

- Acoustic system: the voice itself and the amplified sound.

With so much to reflect and work about, it became clear that we needed more time to develop our discussions and start to make plans. We decided to use next days 'bar Camp' to have another meeting to decide on 'VoCon Next'

So, on the 14th of february, we met at the Cantina of Palau de les Arts,

and started with the question:

What kind of future would we like VoCon to have?

The need...

- To share information on the web one way or the other: articles, (methodological) research

- Solve technical problems; technology is out of reach for some participants, having problems keeping up with the information streams through Facebook, mail etcetera. At the moment we have a Facebook private group page, but have to find a proper web environment.

- To invite more teachers, colleagues from our departments.

- To meet in a one or two days seminar

- Talk about difference in culture: values and problems

- Work in smaller groups as VoCon members, for example visiting each other in our schools.

- Practice what we preach: trying out different workforms in a future seminar organized in one of the schools, showing practically how we teach.

- To meet in a bigger way: maybe already in 2016, adding an extra day to the AEC/PJP meeting at Codarts in Rotterdam?

The meeting has been followed by a very enthusiastic and warm e-mail feedback. Looking forward to our next meeting!

Maria Pia De Vito, AnneMarie Maas, Anders Ørsager