

Polifonia Profession Working Group



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ERASMUS THEMATIC NETWORK FOR MUSIC

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Site visit Report
28-30 May 2006, Lisbon & Porto
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Schedule

Sunday May 28 (Lisbon)

- 10:00 Meeting with Filipa Poejo, Director of the Academia de Música Violinhos
www.violinhos.net
- 14:00 (Timo) Meeting with Mr. Luís Cunha
Violinist, chamber and orchestra musician, and music teacher at the National Conservatory of Music.
- 16:00 (Timo) Concert of the Violinhos Music Academy

Monday May 29 (Porto)

- 14:00 Visit to «Escola Superior de Música e Artes do Espectáculo»
Prof. Carlos Azevedo, composer, Head of the Music Department
- 15:00 Meeting with Mr. Pedro Guedes, Director of the Matosinhos Jazz Orchestra
<http://www.ojm.pt/english/>

Tuesday May 30 (Porto)

- 10:00 Visit to «Escola Profissional de Música Artave» (professional music school)
- 14:00 Visit to «Casa da Música», the *House of Music*, a newly built concert hall
Meeting with Mr. Pedro Burmester, renowned pianist, Director of *Casa da Música*
Meeting with Mr. António Jorge Pacheco, Co-director and artistic planning

This site visit focuses on challenges and developments in Portuguese music education, funding issues in the music sector (both levels of state funding and the development of private sponsorship), the changing nature of the musician's career and audiences. Above and beyond these factors, changing demographics and the rural exodus play an important role in the disappearance of certain forms of traditional music.

Portugal is facing a number of significant challenges in relationship to the music profession: music education is growing and yet is hampered by an overly traditional state-imposed curriculum; changing demographics are leading to the disappearance of certain forms of traditional music, especially in the countryside; state and private funding are often problematic and there is a need to sensitize businesses to the advantages of sponsorship. The current context requires that musicians be comfortable with a portfolio career and that they also master basic management, marketing and communication skills.

There were significant problems in planning this visit from an organizational point of view: people were often not willing to commit themselves to a schedule more than 2 days in advance, and in some instances appointments were forgotten.

Almost every appointment was only confirmed 24 hours beforehand. It seems that there is need to create more functional working culture where people answer their phone calls, keep their promises and timetables. Finally, one of the key issues for the future development of cultural life in Portugal will be the growth of the volunteer sector so as to strengthen cultural institutions and associations.

The Context

Since the fall of the dictatorship in 1974, Portugal has been governed under the constitution of 1976, which established a parliamentary republic. The structure of the state government is heavy and bureaucratic. Musical life and music education are strongly controlled by the state and this in turn has an important influence on musical life in Portugal.

Musical life is gaining in strength: in the last few decades, concert audiences have grown (1.5 million people attended concerts in 2005) and traditional Fado folk music is still essential to the country's cultural life. The country boasts 4000 music teachers, 500 musicians in the military and about 500 full time orchestral musicians.

As there is still a significant lack of economic resources, cultural institutions struggle to get sufficient state and private funding. Big companies do not find sponsoring culture to be an attractive option, and sports take the lion's share of sponsorship monies. On the whole, cultural life is overly dependent on the state.

One of the big problems is that people has been moving from the countryside to the bigger cities located on the coast. 1 500 public schools have been closed. The survival of the previously vibrant wind orchestra tradition in the countryside is threatened.

As with all European countries, Portugal is facing the cultural problems associated with global markets and a pop-rock oriented technological society. Children are often not interested in going to classical concerts even if they make music as a hobby.

Music education

Meeting with Mr. Luís Cunha

Music education has developed significantly in the last 20 years. The number of music schools has increased from 56 to 100. This means that there are many more students participating in music education and there are many more concerts taking place as well.

Music teaching in public schools has increased children's interest in music and has led more children to study in music schools. Families' improved social and economic situations allow them to support their children's music hobby. The public perception of the importance of culture has grown overall.

The problem in music education is that there is only one - very classically oriented - national curriculum for music schools. The curriculum is considered too heavy, out of touch (the string program dates from 1934), and uninteresting for students. Most of them (80-90%) drop out after a few years of study.

It is normal in Portugal for teachers to teach and perform many kinds of music, from classical to Fado and jazz. Many teachers think that there should be at least two national curricula for

music schools (one for amateurs and one for professionals) while also allowing more room for jazz, world music and pop-rock.

Fado music, while immensely popular, is a “closed system” and at present there are no schools teaching it.

Portugal is a small a market for musicians and making a living solely as a performer is very difficult. Most musicians are obliged to take other jobs, such as teaching, to earn a living. For example, there are many “Rock lawyers“ in Portugal. In the future a system should be developed to provide free lance musicians with proper social security.

Os Violinhos – Music Academy & Orchestra

Ms. Filipa Poejo

Currently completing its second year of existence, this private music school located in Lisbon is already considered by many to be a successful model. It started its activity in September 2004, during a period of economic recession in a city where many private music schools exist already, and now has over 200 students enrolled.

There are several innovative items associated with this school:

- Management: the board of directors is comprised of two teachers (mentors for the project) and 5 parents with different backgrounds and areas of expertise (a manager, a sociologist, a financial expert, an architect, and a designer) – all working *pro bono*.
- Financing: most of the private music schools are supported by the state up to 50% (the other 50% comes from tuition fees). This school practices the average tuition fees and is not yet supported by the state. They have established many partnerships with private companies which provide professional services in exchange for publicity (for example: auditing, accountant, graphic design, mobile phones, public relations).
- Programming: the working culture of the school differs a lot from the typical Portuguese way. Os Violinhos is well organized and the planning is done in advance – as a result, it is seen as being more trustworthy and reliable by its partners.
- Cultural exchanges: cultural partnerships have been established with other schools, concert venues, and museums.
- An all violin orchestra includes some 40 students, with an annual programme in a major concert hall which offers huge publicity for the school and its partners. Orchestral activities are sponsored by private institutions and donors. This is the only non-professional music organization in Portugal to obtain this kind of sponsorship.
- The Educational Program: children can start from the age of 3 with a Suzuki Method approach. This method was reformulated to serve the needs of the music school and the Portuguese social and cultural context. For instance most of the students start reading notes at quite an early age. The whole pedagogical program has been designed to develop the students’ motivation from an early age.
- The involvement of the families in the school is a cornerstone of the whole project, and parents also take an active role in the learning process. Without families’ participation, the learning outcomes would not be so good.

Strong learning outcomes and a high artistic level are important to partners and sponsors. Concerts are usually sold out and the quality of students is exceptionally high. This is naturally very important for marketing and promotion. The concert of the Violinhos last May was a shining example of the result of the work of the school, with an enthusiastic audience over 1500 people in attendance.

Escola Superior de Música e Artes do Espectáculo

Mr. Carlos Azevedo

There are 350 students enrolled at the *Escola Superior de Música e Artes do Espectáculo* and at the moment it's the country's only university with a jazz and teacher training program. The university's principal aim is to produce orchestral musicians.

Students are of a high professional level upon arrival at the University. There is a ratio of 2,5 prospective students for each opening.

There is a great need for training in sound engineering and music technology as well as in cultural management. At the moment there is no alumni policy at the University.

Student exchange programs are becoming more important, although there is still no concrete evidence that these influence the musician's chance for future employability.

Despite the university's lack of alumni policies, it appears that many former students/musicians have successfully created, marketed and promoted their own professional ensembles.

Due to lack of a national higher education plan, there is little instrumental diversity; the large number of students in various settings (universities, private schools) don't necessarily imply a sufficiently high level, which may dilute the overall quality of professional music training. According to Mr. Carlos Azevedo, professional training should be only provided the very best students.

Mr. Carlos Azevedo estimates that there will be a need for greater professionalization in certain areas, but that in general there are too many musicians being trained throughout the EU. He fears many will face unemployment in the future as a result. There will be fewer vacancies and short term employment will be the reality for many musicians. This means that is very urgent for musicians to develop extra-musical skills and that they embrace the "portfolio" career which includes teaching, performing and the like.

Professional music life**Casa da Música**

Mr. Pedro Burmester, Director of the Casa da Música

Mr. António Jorge Pacheco, Head of Artistic Planning

Casa da Música is a concert hall with 1 200 seats. As a cultural center, it organizes concerts in all musical genres: its policy is to provide programs for all tastes. Contemporary music and Portuguese music predominate. One of the institution's aims is to provide work opportunities to Portuguese musicians. Support for indigenous musicians and music is one of the key criteria for receiving state funding.

One of the Casa da Música's principal activities is cooperation with schools. Through its educational programs and community outreach Casa da Música is trying to create links among major artists, the public and music schools. Programs include artist residencies bringing many types of music to the schools. Educational projects are seen as a key to building future audiences. Working with children in educational projects requires that artists develop new competencies and skills.

Casa da Música finds it very important to maintain strong cooperation with Universities and the music world. New demands are being placed on musicians, and music management/organizers and musicians can learn from one another. According to Mr. Burmester, university training programs should include more marketing and practical career building and marketing skills. The profession as a whole needs more cultural management skills, as in the areas marketing and the organization of concert tours.

At the moment, the Casa da Musica's budget is funded for 80% by the state, with the remaining income coming from ticket sales. The director believes that in the future sponsorship money will cover a bigger part of the budget. He is aiming for a 60/40 financing ratio between state/private funding.

Casa da Música is playing a major role in creating a regular and professional musical activity in Porto.

Matosinhos Jazz Orchestra

Mr. Pedro Guedes

There are no vacancies in the Big-Band and its 18 players get paid after every project/concert. Their repertoire includes mainstream jazz, music of different styles and periods as well as popular/rock-pop music arranged for Big-Band. The band is performing music by Portuguese composers as well as new, commissioned works by contemporary composers.

The Big-Band is supported by the Ministry of Culture and for now, sponsorship represents only a small portion of the Big-Band's budget.

The Band seeks to create public demand for its performances. This means an ability to adapt and design "tailor made" programs for different target groups and audiences. The uniqueness of the band lies in its quality, its capacity to communicate with audiences, and its use of new and innovative marketing techniques.

The Big-Band players need to be familiar with all kinds of music -- at the beginning it was difficult to find players who were versatile enough to do so. Universities do not always provide the skills and competences for musicians familiar with multiple music styles. The situation is improving and more and more musicians entering the professional life are flexible and capable of adapting to these new demands.

Musicians and composers have to learn to manage artistic freedom, their careers and finances. If state funding requires artists to modify artistic content, their artistic freedom is seriously compromised. On the other hand, when there is no state funding, artists must reach out to audiences in innovative ways while also listening to both audiences and sponsors so as to be more "marketable". Artistic freedom is always a difficult question and it seems that neither the artist in the "ivory tower" (pure art) nor a purely market approach (pure entertainment) artist is healthy for the consumer or art itself. Porto's Big-Band has been trying to solve this problem by combining entertainment (Top ten pop songs) and high quality art by making arrangements of popular music of the best quality and artistic level.

The Portuguese market is too small for the Big Band to survive on alone, so the Band is looking to markets in the EU and beyond. Naturally, this implies more traveling as well as new challenges for management and funding. In the future the main goal of the band is to obtain greater state support and to provide musicians with monthly salaries.

Conclusions

Portugal has no classical musical background or tradition and the history of Portuguese music is limited to a few exceptions. Folk music has never been valued (with the exception of Fado), and jazz was marginalized until recent years. Cultural policy over the last 60 years reflects these realities.

If education is still the biggest task that any government has to deal with, music education is still the last on the list... Reform of artistic education has been under discussion for more than 10 years. The main problems are:

- lack of cooperation and articulation, and too much competition between schools and institutions;
- most of the courses have old-fashioned curricula (in some cases more than 60 years old) which bear little connection to the «real world», meaning graduates are not adequately prepared for professional life and teachers are not ready to teach;
- innovation is rare in the Portuguese music world : by way of example, the first jazz program in higher education was established 3 years ago;
- most music students drop out at an early age;
- cultural policies and funding are always changing and depend on election calendars;
- there is no regular music education in public schools
- there are almost no musicians' associations : the union is losing associates, there is no music council and no associations for music schools, composers, or teachers.

There are nevertheless several indicators that suggest potential positive changes over the next few years:

- the number and quality of music students is increasing;
- public and private funding has increased in the past few years;
- there are many ideas and projects starting, bringing more people to music and creating imaginative funding schemes;
- Fado music has found new expressions and forms, generating a larger public;
- The government is making an effort to start music education in public / regular schools (ages 6 to 9).

Text by Rui Fernandes and Timo Klemettinen