

**Site visit report
3-4 April 2006, London**

IMPRESSIONS AND REFLECTIONS BASED ON SITE VISITS IN LONDON

The focus of the London site visits was communication and interaction between the rapidly developing community based music activity in the city and the conservatoires.

Visited sites:

- *Trinity College of Music*
- *London Symphony Orchestra and LSO St. Lukes, the UBS & LSO Music Education Centre*
- *MusicLeader London*
- *Jazz Services*

Trinity College of Music

Gavin Henderson, Principal
Claire Mera Nelson, Dean of Studies
Andrea Spain, Head of Professional Skills

Trinity College of Music is based on the principle of creating a broad bridge between the college and the profession, namely everybody's right to participate in music. The main aim of the school is to educate "a team of successful spearhead musicians" who will work professionally to enhance this principle.

According to the school's leadership, the institution puts an emphasis on seeing, understanding and responding actively to the changing needs of society. They highlight the following circumstances as important prerequisites in this context:

- Moving to a London community which culturally, socially and economically is very diverse and contains immense contrasts. The school is able to relate closely to this community, and puts an emphasis on playing a proactive role in it.
- Entering into partnerships with other art schools: dance (the Laban Centre), digital production (Ravensbourne College of Design), musical theatre and a number of local national and international musical organisations, schools, music services, and business organisations. Behind this is a realisation of the fact that music no longer lives in isolated artistic rooms any more. From an artistic perspective, the creation and performance of art increasingly cross the boundaries between the traditional art forms.
- Involving mentors from various professional orchestras to work with the students.

In practical terms, the courses and modules aim to:

- pick up and reflect contemporary challenges in the musical life of the local community and the nation, in order for the students to acquaint themselves with these challenges
- enhance attitudes of openness, entrepreneurship and risk-taking among the students, so that as graduates they enter the profession as profiled individuals, each of them different from the others
- prepare the students to be able to cope with changing tasks and challenges through a long professional career, by involving them in a variety of projects.

The college realises that traditionally, most applicants to conservatories are focused on their own personal development as performers or composers. Since the school wants its students to have a broader perspective on their education, its entrance examinations are based on a broad portfolio assessment including e.g. improvisational skills and a personal statement.

The leadership of the college maintains that their strategies have produced the results they were aiming at. Today, the school community is open, sound, energetic, and built on a sense of ownership from students and staff.

Ten years from now, the situation will have changed drastically, according to the Principal. It is important that arts institutions be at the forefront of this change to help people – in particular young people – to cope with the changes. Music and the other arts can form a kind of “action zone”, in a spiritual sense, which will establish connections between tradition and the future. Educational institutions in the arts need to be aware of their responsibility in this respect. Their graduates will have to lead the establishment and development of such zones.

It is difficult for us to assess the immediate and long term consequences of the school's strategies. We are aware of some individual graduates who have stood out as musical entrepreneurs and leaders. However, the school was not able to provide evidence on a broader scale for the effects of its endeavours. It was pointed out that a sustainable alumni programme keeping track of graduates and their professional careers would be very expensive to maintain.

www.tcm.ac.uk

London Symphony Orchestra and LSO St. Lukes, the UBS & LSO Music Education Centre

Andrew Burke, *Head of LSO Discovery*

Jeremy Garside, *Head of Technology, London Symphony Orchestra*

LSO has developed a broad range of education activities under the umbrella *Discovery*; the driving force seems not to be a need to develop audiences for future symphony concerts, but a social and artistic responsibility the orchestra – as a body of some hundred individual artists with very high and indeed varied musical competencies – feels it has to the community in which it works. The orchestra acknowledges that various people want to be involved in music on different terms, and they see it as their duty to respond to a wide variety of these terms.

Even though the LSO is first of all an organisation – a body of musicians - and an internationally renowned orchestra, and even though it is working in one of the largest musical metropolises in the world, it is concerned about the individual aspect of its work. It takes into account the uniqueness of each individual player's artistic and educational resources, and aims at building long term musical relationships with individuals, especially individual young people.

In order to meet the many different needs of its audiences, the LSO has enlarged the normal orchestra to include special workshop leaders who do not play in the orchestra but ensure continuity in the educational work. The LSO does not see itself “only” as an orchestra but also as an organisation offering musical experiences of great variety.

LSO *Discovery* is well aware of the importance technology is playing for many people today and will play in the future, and of the opportunities technology offers relative to musical creativity, participation and experience. They see it as a challenge to use the potential offered by technology to capture the magic of the live performance. In their technology based workshops, they adapt the basic idea on which an orchestra is founded, i.e. people playing together. By the help of computers, they enable people to work together and indeed perform for others fairly quickly. They see performance as most important for those who engage in music making.

We discussed the effects of education work on the orchestra and its players. It was maintained that the educational activities seem to have a two way impact. Through involving itself directly with young people in the community, the orchestra has an immediate impact on these individuals. This, in turn, reflects back onto the orchestra in the sense that the players experience an increase in the relevancy of the orchestra to the community.

In our conversation reflections were shared about the relationship between the LSO as a top level orchestra and the conservatoires. On the one hand the orchestra has clear opinions as to what students should be prepared to do when they graduate. On the other hand there seems to be virtually no dialogue between the orchestra and the conservatories which surrounds it, even if the LSO is a next door neighbour of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and quite a few of LSO's players teach at the Guildhall School and other music schools.

The representatives of the LSO Music Education Centre maintain that young musicians are more curious and open-minded than conservatory graduates normally were in the past. At the same time they find most conservatoire programmes fairly conservative. Based on their own perspectives of what an orchestra institutions is and should be in the future, they stressed that graduates from conservatoires should, in addition to playing well, be

- familiar with the technological world and its potential for artistic communication
- trained to talk intelligently about what they do as performing artists
- open to a variety of ways of working with music
- open to a broad range of musical expressions.

None of these competencies can be obtained through books or short introductory courses only. They can only be acquired through long term practice.

www.lso.co.uk

MusicLeader London

Kate Atkinson *Manager, MusicLeader London*

As a training and professional development initiative for those working with music and young people in London, MusicLeader works with all types of musicians and all genres and styles of music, and relates actively to a wide variety of settings in which young people are involved in music. MusicLeader is an England wide initiative with 4 other centres and more coming on board in 2006/07.

In a city such as London, a vast number of musicians are involved in music making and educational and community work based on music. Many of these musicians feel they are "alone" in their work. Through MusicLeader many of them have discovered that they are not alone - "I didn't know so many people did what I'm doing" - that there are others with whom

they benefit through communication and interaction, and there is an openness amongst them to share and learn from others.

Be it conservatoire graduates or artists who are self-taught or who have obtained their skills through peer-learning, there is a great need for most musicians to develop the special competencies required to work in educational and community settings. Examples of areas much asked for are technology, improvisation, knowledge of “the other musics” – e.g. world music, management, fundraising, leadership, partnership work, taxation rules, contracting, and other legal issues.

MusicLeader’s impression of the conservatoires is that they are not aware of the wide pallet of trades musicians are involved in, or they do not consider these trades to be of equal value. Conservatoires never approach organisations such as Sound Connections (which runs the MusicLeader programme), and when they are approached by these organisations the conservatoires seem not to involve themselves seriously in their concerns. For Sound Connections it is, however, not necessarily obvious that conservatoires should include every possible aspect of the various musical trades in their educational programmes. In any case, they are of the opinion that conservatoires should have knowledge of the whole pallet of musical trades, value them, and to some extent prepare their students for the wide variety of professional options which they’ll be facing. They were particularly concerned with the attitudes conservatoire graduates bring to the real world of music.

www.musicleader.net

Jazz Services

Ivor Widdison, *Chair*

“The man, who only music knows, knows not music” was the backdrop for our conversation with Ivor Widdison.

A number of conservatoires have introduced jazz programmes, and today, some 50% of English jazz musicians have a conservatoire background. Nevertheless, there are big holes in their competencies from the perspective of the jazz trade. It is obvious that they need strong performance skills – and many of them do have that, but it is equally important to have high skills in marketing (a jazz musician must market him/herself and needs to be able to get on with people, be reliable, and have a good stage appearance and rapport with the audience), and business (organise one’s time, prioritise, do bookkeeping etc.). It is also necessary to manage a broader musical pallet (styles, genres) than most conservatoire graduates are equipped with. It was also argued that the conservatoires do not give their students an adequate background for artistic and intellectual reflection.

The English (and international) jazz scene offers a number of interesting jobs today, supported as it is by public money. However, many players are not prepared or equipped to take advantage of the possibilities offered.

Both Jazz Services and the Musicians’ Union offer support to jazz musicians to cope with the requirements of the trade. The Musicians’ Union offers courses, and Jazz Services have established advisory panels with experienced people to support musicians.

There is very little dialogue between the main conservatoires in England and Jazz Services. The schools do not seem interested in such dialogue, or, at least, do not give it priority. It

was maintained that conservatoires seem not to have to answer questions about quality, i.e. they do not have to take a stand with regard to the various qualities which are important in the music industry.

www.jazzservices.org.uk

A few reflections

The conservatoire leader we talked with seems to be aware of the changes that take place in artistic and cultural life. He most convincingly gives the impression that his school adapts and takes new professional demands into account in their educational programmes. His school clearly provides a number of courses, projects and other initiatives aiming at preparing students for a variety of professional options and challenges.

At the same time, leaders of musical organisations working in various sectors of the profession outside the classical concert hall-based sectors do not to any great extent experience conservatoires as developing institutions, actively involved in and responding to the changes taking place in the musical habits of people.

Being well aware that general conclusions should not be drawn on the bases of our London conversations, our experience has triggered the following reflection:

Conservatoire leaders may well be aware of many of the demands in the music-industry of today, and they may want their institutions to be part of the changes taking place and indeed respond to new demands. The easiest and fastest way for them to handle this challenge is to hire a few “new” members of staff, young musicians with a “different” background, and they invite these staff members to set up new courses or projects which they make optional or even compulsory to students. These initiatives prove to be successful from the point of view of the conservatoire leader as well as of the students, and they are all happy and claim that they are responding to a changing musical world. Which in a way is true! However, the rest of the educational programme remains more or less as it was before, and the majority of the teaching staff continues as they did before, simply because that is where their competency lies. The impact of the “new” people and their activities hence is very limited, except, perhaps, on a few individual students; most likely much more limited than the leadership and even a good number of the staff would like it to be or even believe that it is.

Simultaneously, in the various musical communities, conservatoires are on the one hand admired – even envied - for the very high level of their artistic and academic work. On the other hand they are considered cultural castles to which you need to know the right (classical and indeed complicated) code in order to be let in through their gates.

What is needed?

As there seems to be a number of conservatoire leaders genuinely interested in responding to a much broader spectrum of the needs, and as there definitely are musical workers desperately in need of developing their competencies in a number of music-related areas, it seems that the most urgent need is *communication and dialogue* between those who want to change the education of professional musicians, and those professionals who, every day, have their fingers, minds, and engagement in sharing musical experience and knowledge with the numerous sectors of the total audience – which in fact consists of *all people*.

Text by Fiona Harvey and Einar Solbu