

Polifonia Profession Working Group



ERASMUS THEMATIC NETWORK FOR MUSIC

polifonia

Site visit Report 18-20 January 2006, Paris

The focus of this site visit is on specific funding schemes and innovative practice as it relates to audience development, notably through the use of new technologies, multimedia and online resources, community outreach and educational programs.

Programme

Wednesday January 18

Interview with Philippe Coulangeon, about the 'Intermittence' programme

Thursday January 19

IRCAM - Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique / Musique

Thursday January 19, 9.30

Interview with Andrew Gerzso, Head of Pedagogy

11.15 Médiathèque Cité de la Musique

14.00 Banlieues Bleues with Xavier Lemette, Director in their new space at Aubervilliers- La Courneuve

18.00 Meeting with Jean-Pierre Loasil, Classical Director (« Naïve » record label)

Friday January 20

18.15 Médiathèque Cité de la Musique, meeting with Marie-Hélène Serra, Head of Pedagogical Programs and the Médiathèque

“L’intermittence” – the French unemployment insurance scheme for artists

Interview with Philippe Coulangeon, sociologist

Philippe Coulangeon is a sociologist who has undertaken significant research for the French Ministry of Culture, most notably on music performers in France (all categories). Our decision to include Mr. Coulangeon in the site visit stemmed from the importance of understanding and highlighting this specifically French, relatively generous unemployment scheme for artists and the impact it has had on the music profession.

Definition of “l’intermittence”

“L’intermittence” is a status referring to artists and technicians (termed “intermittents” or intermittent workers) in the audiovisual and artistic sector, be they music, dance, theatre, cinema, television, or radio, who benefit from this specific unemployment insurance scheme. Artists choosing this status, as opposed to those on long-term contracts, such as orchestral musicians or full-time professors, are thus protected through a fund which takes into account shorter, interrupted periods of activity with a variety of employers. The system counts the number of hours accrued over a specific period of days per year and provides generous eligibility benefits. Employers and employed alike contribute to the UNEDIC (Union Nationale pour l’emploi dans l’industrie et le commerce), a large unemployment fund which receives

contributions from other categories of workers as well. Due to the generosity of the “intermittent” scheme, UNEDIC is referred to by some as the biggest arts patron in France.

The number of hours which “intermittents” need to accrue is significantly lower than other employment categories, provides significant flexibility and even allows beneficiaries to sign new contracts while they are being compensated by the scheme. Open to foreigners and French alike, “l’intermittence” has attracted a significant number of foreigners, especially among jazz musicians. Each year, the “intermittent” needs to start counting again from scratch to accumulate the requisite number of hours, and clearly those who have disappeared from the system find it virtually impossible to re-integrate it.

The Impact on the Profession

The existence of this scheme has led to exponential growth in the number of musicians registered at the UNEDIC : in the mid 80’s there were some 5500 musicians “intermittents” and some 15 years later that number had grown to 26,000. The level of activity among those registered can vary significantly: some 10% of the total receive salaries from orchestras, and some teachers who are only paid at an hourly rate may also figure in this category. Widespread abuse of the system, including under-estimating revenues and considering full-time positions “intermittents,” and the fund’s growing deficit led to significant reforms as of 2004: the base of 507 hours and a minimum of two contracts accrued over twelve months required to justify this status was changed to 507 hours over a ten-month period.

“L’intermittence” has allowed for numerous small ensembles to grow and flourish over the last 20 years, particularly in the areas of baroque and contemporary music, and has contributed to expanding musical activity in the provinces. However the 2004 reform, while it has not reduced UNEDIC’s deficit significantly, has led those with situations that were already most precarious to become more so : the young, artists who make riskier programme choices, those who are most creative, and those whose activities are far from Paris. In addition, due to the greater numbers of opportunities in Paris and the need to justify greater activity over a shorter period, the decentralisation so touted in the 80’s and 90’s has in fact diminished, with statistics showing that today 70% of “intermittent” artists reside in Paris and the surrounding region.

Conclusions

Mr. Coulangeon sees 3 possible long-term scenarios:

- 1) an unlikely scenario would be for the rules guaranteeing access to the system to be so restrictive as to favor the emergence of a black market due to the difficulties of gaining access;
- 2) a more probable but somewhat sinister, Malthusian scenario would be favor a market approach through a tightening of the system, limiting access to a solid core of hyper-active artists – this would inevitably lead to more conservative artistic approaches and greater conformity, thereby discouraging artistic risk-taking;
- 3) a yet more complicated scenario would entail the emergence of a “cultural service economy” whereby a certain number of peripheral activities (such as teaching or outreach) would contribute to supporting artists’ work, but the consequences of this are hard to gage.

The increase of musician “intermittents” is doubtless linked to a significant growth in the offer of musical training during the 1980’s, particularly outside of classical music and notably with the development of schools for rock music and jazz. Maurice Fleuret, who was largely responsible for the extraordinary development of conservatoires in the 80’s, believed this would enlarge audiences for classical music, whereas the effect seems to have been to simply increase the number of practicing professionals.

IRCAM - Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique¹

The choice of a site visit to the IRCAM was made because of this institution's historically innovative international leadership in developing research and new technologies in the areas of musical composition, performance, acoustics, and computer software.

Interview with Andrew Gerzso, Directeur de la Pédagogie

Andrew Gerzso is the Director of Pedagogy at IRCAM. He describes his function as being that of a "bridge between composers and IRCAM." Created by Pierre Boulez in 1977, it provides a single institution where scientists, technicians and composers could work and interact. Until then, Boulez had worked mainly with electronic equipment available through the radio, and was looking for a way to adapt and develop these tools to music.

Actually what IRCAM created were modern extensions of existing traditional practices, mainly in four fields:

1. Composition

Exploring different ways of writing music and translating composers' rules via computer-aided composition.

2. Interpretation and Performance

IRCAM has always been dedicated to live electronics. Originally this encompassed electronic sounds and instrumental performance using electronic sounds in a complementary way or in an integrated way. However live instruments playing with a tape did not flourish for long, as musicians felt they were prisoners of the tape. Creating technology capable of real time transformation became a major challenge from the beginning at IRCAM, requiring the creation of appropriate software and machines. This involved the synchronization of electronic sound transformation with the instruments.

Out of this emerged the development of 'score following' or score recognition. The score that the musician was to play was "memorized" by the computer. New practices and skills have thus emerged, including familiarity with microphones and their placement, with sound synthesis transformation and with score following. The pedagogical department is organising masterclasses using specific pieces of music to enable musicians to become familiar with these concepts.

3. Performance halls

Today the acoustics can be adapted to the music musicians wish to play. In the past, acoustics could be modified with the help of panels; now it is possible to do this electronically. Starting with a space that is acoustically neutral, the configuration is modified to adapt to specific instrumental or ensemble needs through the use of reverberant microphones in the walls. Surround sound, virtual room technology and three-dimensional audio are tools which have been developed to facilitate this placement and movement of sound in space.

Sound specialization, or making sound move in space, can either be set up beforehand or determined in real time. Composers and instrumentalists alike need to be familiar with the possibilities offered by virtual sources and spatialisation and how to best use them (see below under "Musical Assistants").

4. Instrument building

New electronic possibilities offered by computer technology can be seen as yet another form of instrument building, a modern extension of traditional practice, ranging from the sound of

¹ www.ircam.fr

an instrument in real time during a concert to generated sounds. More and more, instrumentalists are asking to learn how to adapt these concepts to their practice, and this in turn has encouraged IRCAM to become more active in connection to composers and performers.

What can we expect in the future?

Wave field synthesis includes panels and little speakers which ideally are placed all around the room, providing different information in changing configurations, helping to place sound with greater perceptual accuracy and thus leading to the possibility of developing richer sounds. Wave field synthesis is perceptually even and can thus create 'an even well-tempered listening space'. This allows you to give the illusion of instruments being placed in space.

Possibilities for sound installations involving programming sound so that it follows the performer or appears to stay in the same place.

Musical Assistants: a new profession

These new practices have resulted in the need for *musical assistants* who can assist composers and instrumentalists in mastering the concepts and the technology. This position, created by IRCAM, refers to highly knowledgeable professionals who combine scientific and musical backgrounds, capable of connecting consumers (artists) to the producers (the people making software). At present, there is no existing training for musical assistants. They either come from 'hard core music technology' or 'soft conservatory' backgrounds. Sometimes they have been trained as sound engineers. IRCAM currently employs 12 to 15 musical assistants. In the pedagogy department musical assistants work teaching young composers how to master technology. Recruitment of musical assistants and on-site training takes place informally and most of these people are known through the network of people working at IRCAM. Mr. Gerszo felt that conservatoires should be more pro-active and take the lead in training musical assistants.

Funding

IRCAM was fully state funded until 1990. Government support now accounts for 65% of the overall budget. Research and development is particularly innovative and is thus able to attract 57% external funding. Outside funding comes from industrial contacts, patents, and European projects.

European projects

IRCAM has many contacts in the industry, and is involved in European projects such as 'Semantic HiFi', dealing with knowledge of sound specialisation, gesture pick up and sound representation.

International dimension

Right from the beginning, IRCAM has worked with partners around the world, be it related to performance or research. These include leading educational institutions such as Stanford University and MIT in the U.S., but also France Télécom for example.

Musiques Actuelles

IRCAM wants to broaden its scope by paying more attention to 'techno' and 'rap'. It is important to make these new techniques (and technologies) more accessible to a broader musical audience.

Summary of challenges facing IRCAM:

- Creating high quality artistic products
- Broadening the scope of IRCAM's reach: working in the sole realm of contemporary music is, from an aesthetic point of view, too restrictive
- Setting priorities, given the growing number of people involved in developing new technologies for music: what should IRCAM's role and primary focus be?
- Recognizing IRCAM's specialties and developing these yet further:
 1. Real Time Technology
 2. 3-dimensional audio
 3. Sophisticated tools for analysis
- Developing relationships/partnerships that are complementary (and which can be commercial in nature), for example with software applications such as Finale and Sibelius
- Product of real time applications: MAX.

What is crucial is to maintain a balance between pedagogy, artistry and science, because these are what make IRCAM unique.

Médiathèque Cité de la Musique, meeting with Mme Marie-Hélène Serra, head of Pedagogy and the Médiathèque²

The decision to include the newly-opened (Fall 2005) Multimedia Library at the Cité de la Musique in this site visit was due to its unique and innovative nature: it combines the resources of a sizable instrument museum, a major performance venue dedicated to classical music, jazz, and world music, and regroups three information centers in a collection of some 70 000 print, sound, audiovisual and multimedia documents and most unusually, a specifically developed on-line portal. Over 950 audio and visual recordings of performances held at the Cité de la Musique are featured in the on-line educational tool developed by the Cité for music lovers, which in turn cross-references information from the three resource centers. Covering 800 square meters, the library has 42 computers and 90 head-sets, is open to the general public and free of charge.

The goal of the Multimedia Library is:

1. To bring together three resource centres:
 - the Music Information Service providing announcements and information about the music profession, international music competitions, and music activities for amateurs;
 - the Pedagogical Music Library
 - the Documentation centre of the Instrument Museum, including some 1100 technical drawings;
2. To create a digital library and thus an extensive educational tool for music lovers which develops musical understanding and culture through sophisticated software and an on-line portal. The portal cross-references and provides access to listening guides, data bases and informational documents, and of course the audio and visual recordings of classical music, world music, and jazz performances held at the Cité de la Musique since 1995.

Strengths of the Médiathèque include an international collection of books and magazines featuring organology, musical acoustics, ethnomusicology, sociology, law and economy of the music profession, as well as an extensive music pedagogy collection.

The challenges of the Médiathèque Cité de la Musique were to create software capable of providing the sophisticated musical analysis of concert recordings while also cross referencing the large data bases already in existence through the Music Information Service, the Pedagogical Music Library, and the Instrument Museum. The legal aspect of the Cité's project is very important: artists who perform there agree (or not) to have their performance

² www.mediathèque.cité-musique.fr

recorded for use at the Multimedia Library and for this they receive a nominal fee in return. Producing and analysing the concert excerpts for the portal is very time consuming; this in addition to analysis and introductory texts developed specifically for the portal makes the project an expensive one. The public can only access these recordings on-site, though the Media Library is currently negotiating with a network of libraries in France which, for a set fee, would also be able to provide access to their users to the Cité's portal.

While it is too early to assess the impact of the Cité's library, clearly it combines cutting edge technology with an innovative approach to audience development and the education of music lovers through resources that combine recordings, data bases, and analysis. The information and cross-referencing available on the music profession are a gold-mine for professionals – it would be wonderful if such tools could be developed elsewhere in Europe.

Naïve Classique - meeting with Jean-Pierre Loislil, Artistic Director, Classical Division³

Naïve Classique was included in the site visit because while still young, it is the largest French classical record label and has proven to be both artistically and financially viable while maintaining a commitment to recording of the highest quality. Its "network" approach to promoting its artists has clearly been successful, and it makes a point of developing long term relationships with artists.

Established in 1999, the Naïve record label currently employs 100 employees in 4 divisions: pop, jazz, children's music, and classical music. It is the largest French label in the classical field, and unlike many classical labels in Europe, it has managed to break even in a sector widely considered to be financially not viable: 50% of its revenues come from the catalogue, 50% from new releases. The artists' list includes both well-known and lesser known names. The approach could be considered old-fashioned: there is no attempt to jump from artist to artist, but rather to stick with artists over the long term, and to offer ample recording time to guarantee the highest possible quality product. Two to four sound engineers and technical staff participate in each recording, and the firm doesn't hesitate to take 10-11 days to record operas for example, while maintaining affordable prices for consumers (25-30 € maximum for an 140' opera).

Naïve Classique produces recordings by soloists, orchestras, and composers: the artists featured are 30% French and 70% foreign. Considerable attention is given to image: CD-covers and booklets are attractive, unconventional, and resolutely modern: the firm employs well known photographers and graphic artists. The recording, in this scheme, becomes a means to promote the artist, but does not provide recording fees to participating musicians.

Several points are worthy of note:

- the conviction that it is important to develop a long-term relationship/partnership with artists, and to follow them over the course of their career;
- the decision to provide generous time and recording staff for recordings;
- the significant investment in marketing and "image";
- the commitment to a few follow selected composers over the long term;
- the promotional rather than a strictly "marketing approach" through the development of a network which includes agents, concert halls, radio stations, journalists from independent newspapers and magazines, and broadcast stations;
- the total artistic and financial independence of the classical section at Naïve, and more exceptionally its ability, in a tough market, to break even.

³ www.naive.fr

Banlieues Bleues – meeting with Xavier Lemettré, director⁴

Banlieues Bleues (or Blue Suburbs) was included in this site visit because it has proven to be innovative both in developing a strong music program in jazz with pedagogical activities in an impoverished multicultural region. The opening in March 2006 of a permanent home to the festival promises to provide new possibilities for jazz musicians in the Paris region.

Banlieues Bleues – Jazz en Seine-Saint-Denis was created in 1984 in the lower-class northern suburbs of Paris and has a strong social, political, cultural and pedagogical dimension. A winter festival of international repute, Banlieues Bleues presents the full gamut of jazz styles and in addition coordinates a European jazz platform. Some 40 groups perform 30 concerts over a 5 week period in 17 different towns; in addition, the festival has created a number of creative musical activities (“actions musicales”) which involve professional and amateur musicians, journalists, local associations, social workers, teachers at levels ranging from primary to high school, and pupils from some 40 schools: these activities, which generally involve the residency of a world-class musician, result in performances which are given throughout the region. The Festival has over 40 partners and receives state, regional and local support, as well as private funding. In March 2006, for the first-time ever the Festival will move into permanent quarters in a renovated factory in Pantin, thereby creating the possibility of developing year-round residencies and performance possibilities for jazz musicians – a first for the Paris-region.

From the beginning, Banlieues Bleues has been anchored in a region notorious for its poverty and multi-cultural immigrant populations – this very same area was the theatre of riots in November 2005. Banlieues Bleues has consistently seen itself as a motor for intercultural dialogue and provides the possibility for those who rarely do so to express themselves creatively through participation in well-crafted high quality music productions. For example, teachers of high school students who have participated as rogue journalists in the newspaper produced by the Festival have noted the participants’ increased motivations and improved written French; likewise, participation in the musical activities and performances led by world-class performers for less privileged children has often produced an improved attitude and results in the classroom, creating a forum where people can come together in a joyful, creative setting.

The creation of a publicly funded venue open to jazz artists for performances, rehearsals, and recordings, is particularly important at a time when numerous jazz clubs are either closing or becoming inaccessible due to high entrance fees. It will doubtless revitalize the profession and develop new audiences through the year-round access thus provided. The project is of major importance in the area’s slow but steady revival, although concern was voiced about diminished national support due to changes in political leadership.

Conclusions of the site visit

1. There is a real “specificity” to the French music world, and the State clearly feels a strong responsibility to support culture. While one could argue that “intermittence” doesn’t always favor musicians taking a pro-active stance, clearly it has contributed to the development of numerous ensembles, especially in the baroque and contemporary fields.
2. Generous start-up funding from the state has enabled France to take a “cutting-edge” and innovative approach in developing new technologies at (IRCAM) and resource tools such as the Cité Multimedia Library’s portal.

⁴ www.banlieuesbleues.org

3. Accessibility to a broad range of social groups and a real commitment to the democratization of culture, is clearly important in France and is perhaps becoming more so, especially in approaches to audience development. This can be seen with Banlieues Bleues which, it must be stressed, was particularly well-funded when more left-wing politicians were in power in the Paris region. This access to culture is also at the heart of the Cité's on-line portal and educational tool, for which no expense has been spared, and yet which remains open to the general public and free of charge; likewise IRCAM's approach to "musiques actuelles" is a way of broadening audiences and accessibility.
4. Innovation and entrepreneurship were clearly evident in programs and institutions visited. Naïve is one such outstanding example.
5. The tools developed by the Cité de la Musique's Médiathèque are extremely valuable for the profession. If conservatoires and public libraries could develop/adapt such a system, it would doubtless prove to be a tremendous resource for professional musicians.
6. Competencies demonstrated include
 - Combining of artistic, technological, and pedagogical skills ("musical assistants" at IRCAM for example)
 - Entrepreneurship skills
 - Finding new audiences (Banlieues Bleues, Médiathèque)

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Text by Gretchen Amussen, Katja Schäfer, Rineke Smilde