

Janssen, I. (comp.) (2004) *A portrait of the artist in 2015: artistic careers and higher arts education in Europe*; ed. By I. van Hamersveld, I. Janssen, C. Smithuijsen and J. Weijermars. Amsterdam: Boekmanstudies

Lifelong learning as a challenge: a portrait of the conservatoire in 2015

Rineke Smilde¹

The Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC) was responsible for an investigation conducted from 1999 to 2001 into the professional integration and continuing education of musicians.² A number of important representatives of European professional practice and research centres were involved in this investigation, which yielded amongst other things the following results:

- new graduates are insufficiently prepared for the job market; they lack adaptable life skills;
- conservatoires possess neither adequate processes nor learning environments for a pro-active response to developments in the market and society.

Such problems are not new but today's musicians face changes in their environments at an ever increasing pace (e.g. new social and cultural contexts generating new forms of music-making). These problems are more acute and require a solution. From this investigation emerged concrete recommendations for solutions, both for frameworks for setting up curricula within the concept of 'lifelong Learning' and in the field of promoting teacher competence.

What is lifelong learning?

Lifelong learning may be defined as a concept spanning an entire lifetime in a process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and convictions. In a fast changing world the experiences which people learn from also change continually. These experiences in turn create new learning experiences from which people go on learning all their lives. Lifelong learning may be seen as a conceptual framework that clarifies the aims and implications of a knowledge society.

The lifelong-learning concept goes further than 'permanent education': it is an important conceptual framework for the improvement of people's employability and adaptability. Rapid changes call for the constant refreshment of knowledge and skills. The innovative dimension of the concept of lifelong learning lies in a new approach to learning.³

Important characteristics of the lifelong-learning concept are:

- the distinction between formal (in an organised context) and informal learning (embedded in planned activities focused on important elements of learning). The emphasis is more on learning than on training;
- different ways of learning, including, for example, on the job or applied to the setting;
- professional development and personal development;
- diversity in learning activities and learning culture at an individual level;
- assessments via work-related situations.

¹ Flutist and musicologist Rineke Smilde is associate professor in Lifelong Learning in Music at the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen and the Royal Conservatoire at The Hague since January 2004. From 1994 till 2004 she was director of the North Netherlands Conservatoire. Rineke Smilde led two international working groups on Lifelong Learning and Continuing Education in Music for the Association Européenne des Conservatoires between 1997 and 2001. She is vice president of the AEC.

² Association Européenne des Conservatoires 2001.

³ Colardyn 2002.

The needs of graduates

A survey of the AEC on Continuing Professional Development for Musicians⁴, published in 2000, outlined four important areas of needs of graduates. These were performing and pedagogic skills, life skills and information exchange (life skills encompassing e.g. management, health, marketing, stage presentation, new insights into music).

These skills were taken as a starting point for questioning former students in the *Promuse* project, which started in 1999.⁵ This project asked former students from the EU countries about their professional life and needs after graduation. A wide variety of problems were mentioned in the answers, nearly all of which related to finding work. The students mentioned the fact that they had not had enough experience in the professional world before graduation. Some of them undertook additional work after graduation outside their field of study.

The three top skills that they had missed during training at the conservatoire were: health, improvisation, and participation in chamber music and larger ensemble performance. The three top skills that, according to the respondents, should be offered after graduation were further instrumental and technical training, marketing and further development of teaching skills. Skills in management were mentioned many times as well. The main tendency in the response was a strong need for life skills.

Students felt that their vocational preparation gave little indication of the world they would enter.

A changing music industry

The music industry is changing rapidly. This change was mapped comprehensively in a research project on the work, education and training of professional musicians in the 21st century commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and managed by Youth Music. The report *Creating a Land with Music*, which appeared in 2002⁶, gives an interesting overview of the broadening cultural landscape and the changing career patterns for musicians in the UK.

It looked at the roles or areas of engagement for the present day musician and identified more than 50 multi-related roles or skills. These were divided into related areas and four central roles were defined: composer, performer, leader and teacher. These roles do of course overlap and are relevant to all genres of music. This means, according to the report, that the musicians' training in the 21st century needs to offer quality, accessibility, diversity and flexibility. The report recommended the conservatoires to offer a wider curriculum, addressing the music activities that students would be engaged in in the future. Think, for example, of the diverse needs of community musicians and cross-overs between different art forms etc. It was concluded that the main function of the musician should be at the heart of any redefinition, namely engaging in the musical enterprise.

Lectorate in lifelong learning in music in Groningen and The Hague

The lectorate in lifelong learning in music⁷ of the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen and the Royal Conservatoire at The Hague was founded in January 2004 and examines the concept of lifelong learning and its consequences for musicians, with the intention of adapting the learning environment of both institutions. Why is this important? As a result of the changes in the musicians' workplace, they have to deal with a career consisting of several successive, brief and/or part-time periods of employment (portfolio career), which can include cross-arts, cross-cultural and cross-sector work. More than ever before, the future professional musician is confronted with questions of how to function in new contexts and how to exploit opportunities.

⁴ Smilde 2000.

⁵ Association Européenne des Conservatoires 2001.

⁶ Youth Music 2000.

⁷ A four-year research project in higher arts education carried out by a lecturer and a team of experts in the field.

The purpose of the lectorate is, therefore, to address these problems by creating adaptive learning environments in which conservatoire students can be trained to function effectively in a continuously changing professional practice. To this end, the lifelong-learning concept and its implementation are being investigated on the levels of organisation, curriculum, teachers, students and graduates. Knowledge will be collected, processed and generated (phase I). Concepts of lifelong learning will be identified, applied, made operational and measurable, tested via pilots with external partners and evaluated, adjusted and implemented in teaching programmes (phases II and III). Outcomes will mark the beginning of a process of change in the conservatoires (phase III).

In the research phase, the following questions will be asked: What are the major approaches to learning used by musicians? Which generic skills are needed to be adaptable and to function effectively as a contemporary musician committed to self-management? What knowledge, attitudes, values, and artistic/creative skills are of importance? What are the changes in the music industry and what are the implications for graduates? How can their training and learning environment enable graduates to anticipate and respond to changes and what core competencies do they need? What is the meaning of an operational and measurable concept of lifelong learning for the content and design of education for students and graduates? What does all this mean for the organisation and teachers in terms of competencies, culture and mind-set and hence reprioritising the core-business of the conservatoire.

The investigation should culminate in the development of a system of permanent educational innovation, continuing professional development and a model for the professional integration of students and graduates in the work-place (phase IV). In the end improved adaptable life skills should lead to increased employability of professional musicians in the future.

Case studies of examples of good practice

The lectureship has made an investigation into international examples of good practice in the field of lifelong learning (in the diagram listed as theory-generating case studies). Three of them are described below.

Informal learning: the *Connect* project of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London

Connect is a creative music project for young people between the ages of 8 and 18 run by the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in the London boroughs of Lewisham and Newham since 2002. It is funded by Youth Music and provides opportunities for young people to make music in a variety of settings, including instrumental and non-instrumental creative workshops, which in turn have led to the establishment of a number of ensembles. *Connect* is based on an artistic and educational philosophy, which promotes lifelong learning and transferable skills, and guides a team of experienced musicians, composers, apprentices and young participants in exploring a range of musical languages and approaches. It is an inclusive and collaborative approach, and embraces all kinds of repertoire as well as new work created through collaborative workshops. The project works with a number of partners in arts and education. Through this project the Guildhall School develops new models of learning in the field of participatory music-making.

Between January 2002 and July 2003 *Connect* undertook many ensemble and workshop-based projects in which 750 young people took part. Of these approximately 250 joined a *Connect* ensemble and have developed a longer-term relationship with the project. The *Connect* ensembles are the central artistic focus of the project. They compose, develop and perform new material and all have a strong identity of their own. The ensembles are highly varied, consisting of e.g. acoustic instruments, electronics and images, singing and work with visiting artists from Africa and Asia. The emergence of educational and musical pathways by the establishment of two apprenticeship schemes is of special interest. Experienced musicians and composers interested in developing skills as leaders in this field of work are the target group of the Professional Apprentice Scheme. The Young Apprentice Scheme gives young musicians under 18 the chance to work with the other tutors and develop their own musical leadership skills. Other key areas of *Connect* are the exploration of new approaches to instrumental learning and redefining musical excellence in the context of creative music making.

Students of the Guildhall School have, through this programme, the opportunity to learn about their possible future roles as composers and musicians in a variety of new community-based contexts.⁸

Personal exploration of career paths: the Arts Leadership Program of the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York

The *Catherine Filene Shouse Arts Leadership Program* of the Eastman School of Music was created in 1996 as a part of a huge curricular restructuring initiative, designed to prepare students better for "a rapidly changing musical culture and an increasingly competitive and diversified marketplace". The most important goals of the programme are "to inspire students with a personal vision, to equip them with the professional skills and experience that will allow them to take charge of their career prospects, and to encourage them to provide leadership in the musical culture and marketplace". Each semester, 12 to 15 courses are offered in the field of: Arts Administration/Music in Society; Career Development; Performance/Outreach Seminars; and Emerging Technologies. Examples of the first category are Concert Programming, Fundraising and Essential Economics; of the second category, Developing your Leadership Potential and Entrepreneurship in Music; of the third, Chamber Music for Children and *Reaching Out without Selling Out*; and of the fourth category, Sound Technology and MultiMedia, Online Self-Promotion, Webcasting and Digital Portfolio Creation. Guest speakers are often also invited to speak about career related topics. Unique in the programme is the possibility of paid internships in Rochester, as well as paid post-graduate 'externships' elsewhere in the USA, Canada and around the world.

The co-curricular programme gives students the opportunity to take personalized courses that are complementary to their primary areas of study. They have every opportunity to personally explore their potential career paths. The flexibility of the programme is meant to mirror the rapidly changing environment, which demands adaptability and informed decision making. One-to-one advice is available and the Career Planning and Placement Office helps students focus on their future.⁹

Continuing education: Sibelius Academy Continuing Education Centre, Helsinki

The Sibelius Academy Continuing Education Centre was founded in 1980 and is at present located in Helsinki and Seinäjoki in Finland. Its main mission is to offer diverse opportunities for "arts adult education in the context of artistic and scientific functions of the Sibelius Academy"; by using "the best skills and traditions of the music academy to support the further in-service training of professionals in music and the arts". Numerous seminars, training programmes and master classes are offered annually to former students, thus responding to the needs of professionals working in the field of music. A special part of the Continuing Education Centre is the Open University, open to all students, regardless of professional background or previous education. This really means open access to education in the field of music. Co-operative projects are also being organized with partners and arts networks outside Finland.

Examples of courses given by the Sibelius Academy Continuing Education Centre are: continuing education in music technology, performance and communication skills for musicians, and jazz studies at the Open University. The most important clients include music schools, orchestras, arts organizations and others working in the field of music and arts. The main partners include community colleges, summers schools, music associations and pedagogical associations. The centre produced, for example, the first Finnish Arts Management postgraduate programme. One of the further aims is to create a meeting place where professionals in the field can share knowledge, exchange ideas and learn through interaction with experts in music from the academic and arts world. Thus insight is gained into the work and experience of participants from a variety of backgrounds, enabling the centre to anticipate future requirements. The principle of lifelong learning thus underpins all the activities of the centre.¹⁰

⁸ <http://connect.gsmd.ac.uk>

⁹ www.rochester.edu/Eastman

¹⁰ www.siba.fi

A change of mind-set

The results of the research being carried out by the lectureship, the study of the examples of good practice and the realisation of the pilot projects, will hopefully be the increasing employability and responsiveness of the graduate. It should lead to musicians gaining more varied skills, e.g. in the fields of artistic leadership, the relation with other arts disciplines and of art-as-research (interaction between creative and research processes). In 2015 the graduates should of course be well trained as musicians, able to reflect on their own abilities and thus know their strengths and weaknesses. Having both a reflective and pro-active attitude, they will then have the skills and the flexibility to explore new roads and find new possibilities. Their learning environment should enable them to make this possible. They should learn to use their acquired skills and renew them by profiting from the implementation of an effective system of professional development. In the future, they should be able to work in paid jobs, which are inaccessible at present because of a lack of the necessary skills. It is clear that lifelong learning challenges the nature of the conservatoire. It is a dynamic concept that is responsive to change and the needs that come with it. This asks for a change of mind-set, where values are important and in which new skills need to be implemented in the right spirit.

References and website addresses

Association Européenne des Conservatoires (2001) *Promuse: professional integration of musicians and continuing education in music*. Utrecht: Association Européenne des Conservatoires.

Colardyn, D. (Ed.)(2002) *Lifelong learning: which way forward?* Utrecht.

Smilde, C.A.(2000) *Lifelong learning: final report of the AEC working group on continuing professional development for musicians in the framework of the Socrates thematic network's project(TNP) for music*. Paris: Association Européenne des Conservatoires.

Youth Music (2002) *Creating a land with music: the work, education and training of professional musicians in the 21st century*; research commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. London: Youth Music.

Website addresses

Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York - www.rochester.edu/Eastman

Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London - <http://connect.gsmd.ac.uk>

Sibelius Academy Continuing Education Centre, Helsinki - www.siba.fi