10 Years Lifelong Learning in Music

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A warm welcome to all of you on this symposium today, where we celebrate 10 Years Lifelong Learning in Music and following this afternoon, we will have the inauguration of my colleague Evert Bisschop Boele, who was appointed professor of NA exactly 10 years after the research group LLM started its work on the first of January 2004, for a substantial period also as a joint research group of the PCC and RC.

Today we will look back on the work in the LLM group during the past 10 years, and we will look to the future as well. Lifelong Learning for musicians is a never-ending theme, as there is always much change to respond to. And this is something which may become very clear when listening to what all our speakers have to say.

For those present here who may be wondering what our work is about, let me briefly go into the question what LL actually is. I would simply like to say that, Lifelong Learning is the ability to respond with confidence and self-knowledge to change. It is all the learning that people do during their entire lifespan, in all kinds of shapes and forms, implicitly and explicitly, in and outside the school, through experiences in their lives, through others and with others, and through critical reflection. In particular for musicians, and in general for artists, it is incredibly important to be able to respond to change, even more, to understand change and come to know the opportunities and possibilities that can lie ahead of them.

What do we do? We:
• Conduct research into musicians’ practice;
• Explore new questions and developments in society which are relevant for the development of musicians and their practices and bring in the outside world through joint sustained research projects;
• Help to develop a research environment in the PCC, developing teachers into teacher/researchers; and working with students
Our point of departure is that we strive for research that can lead to deeper knowledge about and understanding of the world of professional musicians and their relation to the society they live in. This enables us to develop insights and ideas for improvement and renewal of musicians’ practice. We use methods which can be helpful for this, like f.i. biographical research and ethnographic research.

We have done a lot in the past 10 years. In the first period of four years, we did much theoretical research, and at some point also set up pilot projects, which we shaped and evaluated with partners from the professional field. The criteria which we formulated for the projects then are equally valid today: relevant to the current and changing cultural landscape; reflecting the changing profession; exploring different contexts; being intervention-oriented; leading to relevant learning experiences; illuminating attitudes and values and, first and foremost, being always artistically driven.

Let me pick out a few important projects which we have been doing in this period and show how our work emerged from there. First of all, there is the artistic reflective project for first year students, annually since 2004, it is a project in which students prepare collaboratively a composition for a particular social context, e.g. a primary school, a residential home or nursing home, a home for mentally challenged people or a prison for young offenders. The students reflect, verbally and non-verbally through music, on the context for which their collaborative piece is meant. Using their artistic imagination they are part of a participatory process and product. This project gets rid of boundaries through genres, it strengthens social awareness and, through the improvisation, increases artistic skills. It enables students to gain self knowledge and make informed choices.

A project that stands out in my memory is the project Opera in the Bus, in collaboration with Yo! Opera Festival which took place in the city of Utrecht in a weekend in October 2005. Here in a number of bus lines various small mini opera’s were created. On the invitation of Anthony H, by then artistic leader, we had ‘adopted’ bus line 5 where, we decided, during
this particular weekend singers would perform the role of *animateur*. We prepared this with vocal students from the RC in The Hague.

During the weekend the students acted as animateurs on the city bus rides where they tried to engage bus passengers into a participatory musical event. Critical was the reflexive approach of the animateurs: the bus was on the move, passengers got on and off and the animateurs had to keep the event going without stopping or explaining the process. This made the students reflect on the relationships and balance between the artistic quality and the quality of engaging with their audiences, which basically led to crises and reflections about their *identity* as musicians.

The project was very challenging and we were by then reasonably inexperienced and definitely made mistakes. But for me it was amazing how much we learnt from it as did the students! They reported on a number of qualities which this project had made them aware of, like grasping the challenges of leadership, acting in the moment, awareness of the need for quality and seeing the need to create new forms of music-making.

Pilots like these and other research underpinned the development of the JM programme New Audiences and IP. Between 2006 and 2009, enabled by a European subsidy, we developed together with a number of international partners this two-year master programme.

The programme is based on four LL pillars. *Partnership with the professional world* is the first. Second, *research into practice*. Connected to this a *mentoring scheme* is permeating the programme (where the previous Mentoring research done by Peter Renshaw in the research group, was very beneficial), and lastly the programme can be considered an *artistic laboratory*, the 4th pillar, where modules like f.i. ‘performance and communication’ and ‘leading and guiding’ are highly interconnected and lead in an organic way towards the students’ final professional integration project. The programme is up and running in 4 schools in 3 countries and recently a number of interested and interesting partners have joined forces.
The second period of LLM, starting in 2008, saw an extension of research lines, one of them was cross arts practices. We did the project Cross Arts Laboratory, where students of PCC, the RC and Academy Minerva worked under the guidance of two visual artists on the question ‘how the cross arts laboratory emerges’. After a preparation period, students, artists and researchers spent four days in the nature of the island of Schiermonnikoog, where they let themselves be inspired by ‘the place’. Music and visual arts started to blend at some point, and very moving performances emerged, for example in a bunker that was built by the Germans during the second world war, which was “transformed from a place of evil into a place of harmony”. And on a graveyard, where young soldiers from the two world wars are buried who have washed ashore. Many of them are unknown and they were identified through music, improvised on drawings that were made based on bird song registered on this graveyard in the early morning. The project aimed at gaining insight into the collaborative learning of musicians and visual artists. Together, guided by the two artists, and observed by the two researchers, the students conducted their artistic research, where it could be seen that their disciplines cut through each other more and more.

Also new in this period was the work with we started in the research strand Healthy Ageing through Music & the Arts. In particular two projects have stood out, which were ‘Learning to Play an Instrument at an Elderly Age’ and ‘Music and Dementia’. The latter has finished only this month. With these projects we connect musicians with a very important group: those of the elderly, and sometimes vulnerable elderly people.

The project ‘Learning to play an instrument at an elderly Age’ was a very inclusive project: elderly people playing an instrument, or starting to play an instrument, experienced teachers, recent graduates and instrumental teaching trainers of the PCC worked together in a Community of Practice and teachers were learning to question and research their practice.

I gave you just a few examples of the heart of our work, there would be much more to share. What drives us, to say it simply and unscientific, is that we are convinced that, perhaps in a very modest way, music can make a difference and contribute to a better world.
Let me, connected to this share with you a few very personal experiences from these rich past 10 years:

- I was moved to hear and see a wonderful choir of bus drivers in the city of Utrecht during our project and even more when after a number of years I was told that this choir still exists.

- I literally shed tears when I saw and heard our students, through musical improvisation, give an identity to young unidentified soldiers.

- I vowed never to enter a juvenile institution for young offenders again until the moment that we could promise to return every week without skipping even one time.

- I was excited when at some point during one of my travels Evert told me on the phone that he had had a call from a 77 year old man, who absolutely wanted to start playing the bass guitar.

- Yearly in Sarajewo, I am happy and humble, when we work with the masterstudents on LLL and entrepreneurship, and see how they are full of determination to create social change in Bosnia, through music.

- And lastly, I will never forget the special moment when a woman with very advanced dementia responded to the music that was made with her, saying that this music was about her wedding day.

This, dear all, is all about research! I am grateful for the many wonderful projects we have been able to do and the inspiring people we met through that during the past 10 years. A few of them you will be meeting during this symposium as our speakers. They are: Peter Renshaw (our long term living conscience and source of inspiration), Christine Stoeger (who helped us with her vision and integrity), Darla Crispin (whose professionalism I love, shown for instance in the way she did the monitoring and evaluation of our JM programme), Peter Alheit (our inspiring scientific advisor, who shows us the relevance of research all the time, and indeed, that research can create change). And lastly, Anthony Heidweiller, the living example of lifelong learning, and my blood brother.
I will finish here. We aim to remain innovative and pro-active and in the forefront of developments. We wish, through research, to contribute to musicians’ development, and widening their professional possibilities. For us, the key question in our choices remains one and the same: what’s in it for (future) musicians? We will continue to strive to connect them in every thinkable way to society.

I wish you a wonderful symposium! Thank you.