

POLIFONIA WORKING GROUP 4
LLL & EDUCATING FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SITE VISIT REPORT
COLLEGIUM 1704, PRAGUE
26-27 FEBRUARY 2013

PARTICIPANTS:

- Renate Böck (EFNYO – European Federation of National Youth Orchestras)
- Ángela Domínguez (AEC – European Association of Conservatoires)

INTERVIEWEES:

- Václav Luks – Artistic Director/ Conductor
- Veronika Hyksová – General Manager
- Michal Sieczkowski – Strategic partnership & Management
- Kateřina Koutná – Orchestra Manager

1. The “Story”

During former Communist times, performances of sacred and early music in the Czech Republic were scarce : “Collegium 1704” was founded in 2005 by the Czech conductor Václav Luks to revive this important national tradition.

Václav got his degree from the Pilsen Conservatory (CZ) as a horn player. In the early nineties, few Czech musicians could develop a career in early music. Václav was inspired by TV series called “Ways to Bach” presented by Milan Munchinger, as well as a Musica Antiqua Köln Prague performance, under the baton of Reinhard Göbel. As no Czech music schools offered early music training, the only solution was to study abroad. Like many, Václav chose the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (1992-97), where he met leading early music performers from around the globe, had access to superb historic instruments and an outstanding music library. One of his most important teachers was Jesper Christensen, the “pope” of early music, who taught harpsichord and basso continuo in Basel. Playing the French horn in ensembles such as the Akademie für Alte Musik in Berlin, Václav met leading artists such as René Jacobs and William Christie. After listening to Italian ensembles, and in particular the Giardino Armonico (cantare e suonare), he developed his passion for the Italian early music playing style. Travelling throughout Europe, he gained experience, and created his own professional network. Nevertheless, he continued to dream of creating a baroque orchestra in CZ.

In 1997, Václav returned to CZ and started looking for like-minded musicians. He founded a chamber music group, and, in 2005, a chamber orchestra, under the name “Collegium 1704;” with his singer friends, he created the “Collegium Vocale 1704,” in reference to Jan Dismas Zelenka, one of the country’s most important early composers, whose first work dates back to 1704, which was also considered the start of the golden era of Czech baroque music.

Critical to the founding of “Collegium 1704” were Václav’s idea to bring Czech musicians specialised in baroque music back to their country by offering new work opportunities, and, through his networking, leadership and communication skills, to collaborate with musicians/soloists, partners (venues, festivals), funders, media, and audiences throughout the Czech Republic and beyond.

The ensemble began performing at the Prague Spring International Music Festival and the Saint Wenceslas Music Festival. Strong public response helped consolidate the ensemble, considered the first independent baroque orchestra in the CZ.

Veronika Hyksovà, a professional flute player who had worked for the Prague Spring International Music Festival, suggested they create an association and joined “Collegium 1704” as its general manager in 2007.

Today, both “Collegium 1704” and “Collegium Vocale 1704” appear in their own concert cycles in Prague and in Dresden (Music Bridge Prague – Dresden) with a special focus on the work of Jan Zelenka, his Czech predecessors and contemporaries.

Link to COLLEGIUM 1704 website >> <http://www.collegium1704.com>

2. Vision and Values

- Revitalising the importance and practice of early/baroque music in CZ ;
- Making Prague a top destination for baroque music lovers within CZ and beyond, thereby contributing to Czech cultural development ;
- Creating new musical opportunities for Czech musicians, encouraging well-trained Czech musicians living abroad to return home ;
- Creating a self-governing ensemble with a strong “family” approach, integrating musicians fully into all aspects of decision-making. From the start, strong and ongoing communication with musicians were designed to meet musicians’ expectations relative both to remuneration and working conditions (Note : 80% of total income is allocated to musicians’ fees, travel, accommodation and subsistence);
- Ensuring musicians’ job satisfaction through a high quality working environment: audiences feel this chemistry both on stage and in the concert atmosphere.

3. The Future of Collegium 1704

The ensemble started as a small chamber music group promoting baroque music in the Czech Republic and is now acknowledged both for its high artistic quality and economic stability. Collegium 1704 embodies a team spirit founded on common values and interests.

Desired Future Evolutions

- To become a primarily publicly-funded, permanent independent baroque orchestra (in 2013, public funding = 20%) ;
- To establish a Czech Centre for Early Music, combining a concert venue with space for rehearsals, activities and courses. Presently, the Rudolfinum hosts some concerts under a cooperation agreement with the Czech Philharmonic;
- To develop a heterogeneous audience base, and to increase the participation of young people;
- To make Prague a leading cultural destination as a European capital of baroque music, offering summer opera productions, for example;
- To strengthen Collegium 1704's position as a key educational training partner for Czech music academies and conservatoires.

4. The Business Model

Initially, the ensemble operated in collaboration with the Prague Spring International Music Festival and the Triart Agency, which handled bookings and administrative issues. In 2007, the ensemble became independent, with Veronika Hyksová, formerly of Triart Management and the Prague Festival, acting as general manager. The *solid international networks* developed by Václav and Veronika proved vital to the ensemble's growth and success. Veronika's contacts in France, where she had studied musicology and music management at the Sorbonne, allowed the ensemble to develop France as their main "export" destination.

Ensemble growth in turn led to the *enlargement of the management team*. Michal Sieczkowski, was engaged develop public and private strategic partnerships with potential sponsors, the Ministry of Culture, City of Prague, and foreign embassies. Kateřina Koutná was engaged as orchestral manager, responsible for touring, logistics, and ticketing.

Rented office premises are host to the ensemble archive and library. Musicians are engaged and paid on a per project basis, though each one has an annual contract.

Breakdown of total budget (between EUR 500.000 – 600.000 p.a.)

Income

50% from concerts abroad (which secures extra money to invest in CZ productions)

20% public project funding

15% ticket sales in CZ

15% crowd-funding, CD sales, etc.

Expenditure

80% musicians' fees, travel, accommodation and subsistence

10% administration/personnel

10% PR, website, posters, programme books, advertising and promotion

5. Entrepreneurial Skills and Training

Staff national and international training and professional experience :

Veronika Hyksová – instrumental studies (flute); studies of music management at the Prague Music Academy (Master in Arts Administration), and 2 Erasmus semesters at the Paris Sorbonne in musicology and music management; positions with Triarts Management and Prague International Spring Festival, Collegium 1704 since 2007.

Michał Sieczkowski – studied cello, acting and film in his home country, Poland, then stage directing in Prague (CZ); gathered experience in arts administration working 3 years at the Polski Theatre launching innovative approaches in PR, ticketing, audience building; ran the Polish foundation “Arteria” (NGO for social arts projects) for 8 years, including projects in France with French artists.

Kateřina Koutná – studied piano, music theory, music management at the Prague Music Academy, and arts management at the University of Economics; Kennedy Center Fellow in Washington DC (USA); Erasmus semester in Amsterdam, work placement with the Holland Festival (NL); Collegium 1704 since 2011.

Staff deem the following skills and know-how essential :

- Language skills to develop international professional networks and markets;
- Communication skills appropriate for exchanges with artists, audiences, concert halls, festivals, agencies, partners, funders, sponsors, and politicians...
- Awareness of and sensitivity to different socio-economic and cultural contexts, to changing audiences, to societal evolutions and challenges;
- Collaborative and reflective skills, an ability to exploit opportunities, to engage in peer-to-peer learning;
- Knowledge of the business aspects of the performance industry, a capacity to analyze and strategize;
- Capacity to dream and invent, to take risks, to accept failures, and to learn from these.

Educational institutions need to :

- Integrate entrepreneurial thinking in curricula and help students and teachers alike to become “lifelong learners;”
- Foster cooperation between music academies and business schools.

By way of example, the Prague Music University offers a course in “music management” lacking in business training, and the city’s University of Economics offers “arts management” whilst lacking in artistic training. Both provide insufficient practice in music production.

Collegium 1704 members have participated in the arts management course at the University of Economics, so as to foster an entrepreneurial mindset.
