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Becoming Public: Artistic Citizenship and Community Music

Introduction

For more than 25 years I have been active in the practical field of music mediation, which is called *Musikvermittlung* in German – this profession is really difficult to translate: in English speaking countries you would define it as *ELP* (Education, Learning & Participation), when it's linked to orchestras or concert halls. In German speaking countries it covers an understanding of communicating music from programm notes, moderation, dramaturgy and concepts for concerts for children and grown ups to pre-concert-workshops and outreach projects in various communities.

I am currently dean at the Bruckner University in Linz and lead a postgraduate program *Communicating Music - Music in Context*, which celebrates its 10th birthday next year.

So – as a typical music mediator – I have worked in this field as a concert organizer, as a teacher, as a project developer, as a coach for orchestras and cultural institutions and – that's unfortunately not yet typical - as a researcher. In this session I will use the term „music mediation“ for this field to differentiate between the practical domains music mediation and community music.

Overview of Music Mediation

A very short overview what's going on in the field of music mediation in German speaking countries at the moment ¹:

Before and after the concert

Most of the time Music mediation takes place before the concert. The focus is placed on the listener before his or her encounter with a piece of music. It integrates approaches from music pedagogy, for example, when workshops are offered at a kindergarten or school. Some concert halls have established workshops for adults, which, in addition to the classical introductory lectures given by musicologists, integrate interactive elements into the presentation of the works.

¹ Tröndle 2018

Some venues have gone so far as to offer their audiences entire seminars in the form of an 'open university'. Over the course of several weeks, the seminars explore a genre such as jazz or everything worth knowing about Schubert's *Winterreise*.² (e.g. at Elbphilharmonie Hamburg)

In 2017, the Vienna Konzerthaus transformed its foyer into an instrument workshop. Luthiers were brought in to build the four instruments of a string quartet in front of the audience in real time during a chamber music event. The workshop provided insight into the art of instrument making and the search for the perfect sound of a string instrument.

A special case worth mentioning here is the *Hear it twice* format. It takes place in several cities in Germany and Austria with different experts in music mediation and takes a simple but effective approach. A musical work (usually a piece of Contemporary Music) is presented to the public, which is followed by a conversation with the interpreters of the piece, who introduce the structure of the work or special stylistic features. They also discuss details about the rehearsals and the musicians' personal associations to the work. Afterwards, a second performance of the same piece follows. This format enables the listener to enjoy both his or her first impression of the work as well as a contextualized rendition of the same piece of music within the space of one concert.

During the concert

Since its inception, the heart of music mediation has been the children's concert. In such performances, educational and artistic aspects are interwoven without attempting to turn the concert into a music lesson. Based on the early forms of community concerts from around 1900, as well as the *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* by Benjamin Britten and the *Young People's Concerts* by Leonard Bernstein, the moderated orchestra concert has established itself alongside musical works such as *Peter and the Wolf* by Sergei Prokofiev and *Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns.

Since the 1990s, the collaboration of chamber music ensembles and directors has led to staged concerts. Today, the boundaries between storytelling, theater, concert, dance, and performance are blurred in favor of an artistic synthesis where the educational aspect is pushed into the background. During rehearsals, musicians work in depth with directors, scenographers, and choreographers to create concerts that have found their own niche in the market and are presented in concert halls throughout Europe. Musical mediation, dramaturgy and production work hand in hand and generate audience development creatively.

² <https://www.elbphilharmonie.de/de/seminare> [16.11.2018]

Orchestras have also developed new approaches of bringing audiences of all ages closer to the action. Performances such as *Right in the middle* by the Konzerthaus Berlin or the Vienna Symphony Orchestra allow the audience to sit among the orchestra musicians, thereby enabling the audience to be immersed in a direct and uncustomary sound experience.

The longing of many hobby musicians is satisfied by the establishment of public orchestras or the creation of gigantic *Symphonic Mobs* with professional orchestras.

So far so good, one could say: the cultural scene takes care of its audience - audience development in the guise of creative cultural education and with new dramaturgically elaborated formats that respond to different target groups. Specially trained music mediators, innovative concert promoters and musicians take care of it, the rest of the ensembles can continue with their music making as before - what does this have to do with Artistic Citizenship? Or with the main topic of this AEC conference: *Strengthening Music in Society?*

Two weeks ago the six nominees of a German competition for music mediation - The *13th Young Ears Award* - were presented: Orchestras and concert halls in Austria, Germany and Switzerland have participated. What's striking is this: 4 out of 6 nominated projects are no longer (only) committed to the traditional concept of music mediation as mentioned above, no longer want to only introduce new audiences to classical music, facilitate access to the concert hall for a broad audience, but see the center of their work in a (for Germany, Austria and Switzerland) new focus - community work.

These are the 4 out of 6 nominees:

- The *Hamburg Symphony Orchestra* is installing a community orchestra called *Moving Orchestra*: people of different ages and backgrounds are to make music and invent music together with the orchestra.
- The *Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig* already started a district project last year and is entering its second season this year: It is the start of a partnership with a district of Leipzig that covers the entire season. The music mediation programme works closely with Leipzig institutions and local associations throughout the season. Thanks to this cooperation, the citizens of the city can experience the musicians of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in workshops on location.
- In Nuremberg, a *Community Opera* will be created around the legend of the Pied Piper of Hameln, in which a characteristic cross-section of the Nuremberg population between the ages of 12 and 83 will take part.
- The *Lucerne Symphony Orchestra* has placed its entire music education work under the banner of inclusion: an inclusive advisory board supports the musicians in experimenting with concerts for people with disabilities. In addition, there is a music car as a mobile venue

for the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra. Starting from the idea that the audience listens to the orchestra in the concert hall, the orchestra sets out to listen to the audience and to deepen their listening together.

How far have the orchestras and concert promoters come to reach this exemplary selection in 2018? It was certainly not placed in their cradle.

A short journey into history

Since the 19th century, the concert hall has served as a status symbol in society. A historical example from Great Britain demonstrates this quite well: back in 1821, the Royal Philharmonic Society denied a certain Mr. Hoffmann access to their concerts because they regarded him as a salesman in a clothing store. Only the letter of recommendation from a friend, who pointed out that this Mr. Hoffmann was the owner of the shop, made it possible. *"I strongly doubt that he was ever seen serving customers in the shop; he stands far above such things... and would not be a disgrace to the Philharmonic concerts."*³

In the 20th century, social issues were politically renegotiated within the context of the fine arts. In 1905, David Josef Bach established the workers' symphony concerts in Vienna. In the 1970's Hans Werner Henze's *Cantiere* in Montepulciano brought a whole town together for the musical production. Hilmar Hoffmann embodied the era of cultural-political renewal of the 1970's like no other in Germany. As head of cultural affairs in Frankfurt, he set pioneering cultural policy initiatives, which he headed with the catchphrase *Kultur für Alle* (culture for everyone).

Since the 1980s, Pierre Bourdieu's study of the mechanisms of inequality has decisively shaped cultural sociology:

*„Art is important and interesting only to those who have the necessary cultural competence, i.e., the appropriate code [...]. Whoever lacks the corresponding code will feel overwhelmed ... by this apparent chaos of notes, rhythms, colors and lines that are without verse or reason.“*⁴

At the beginning of the 21st century, the echo of Bourdieu and the 'culture for everyone' paradigm sounds like this: - I quote Berthold Seliger:

„In public cultural institutions, there must be cost-effective offerings for everyone: free admission to museums, affordable tickets for classical concerts and opera houses, and free live recordings of operas and concerts on the Internet. The public funding of culture isn't there

³ N.N. quoted after Müller 2014: 95f.

⁴ Bourdieu 1993:19

*to subsidize civil or economic development [...] instead, it must be geared towards low-income earners and all those who have not yet participated in culture.*⁵

The aim of so-called *outreach programs* is not to invite people into the concert hall, but instead to have the musicians of an orchestra or an ensemble visit city districts, community centers, hospitals, prisons, retirement homes and institutions for dementia patients. The participants become involved in local projects that, through joint musical activities, bring people together from different social milieus and different backgrounds, thereby enabling diverse segments of society to take part in cultural activities.

In the public space of socially committed musical practice, two approaches suddenly meet that had previously developed separately: Music mediation and community music. Both nourish their attitude and work ethic from the *Culture for All*- movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The music mediators derived from this the invitation to open concert halls to everyone, to conceive offers that could be attractive for newcomers to classical music and to ensure suitable preparation so that what takes place in the concert can also be experienced with pleasure.

Community musicians did not want to open high culture to people supposed to have low culture, they wanted to serve as musical facilitators in their community – ‚culture for all‘ was interpreted as ‚culture with and by all‘. The aim was to artistically activate people in their immediate surroundings and to show personal commitment in the confrontation with prevailing political systems.

Both approaches were seen by government policy as helpful tools for coping with social structural change: Community musicians' interventions in the fields of health, education and social affairs are just as welcome as workshops by orchestral musicians in children's hospices or facilities for dementia sufferers.

While music mediators come from music academies and bring classical music as tools of the trade, community musicians tend to come from the fields of pop, jazz and folk music.

Music mediation develops as a hybrid field of practice, in which artistic approaches as well as pedagogical or dramaturgical approaches are incorporated - always depending on the actual mediators and their competences. Community music, on the other hand, is more clearly assigned to the pedagogical field.

Here I would like to conclude the distinctions between the two areas and emphasize the common denominator that unites music mediators and community musicians and makes the new cooperations like the projects mentioned above, so conclusive:

⁵ Seliger 2017: 323

Lee Higgins defines 5 keywords⁶ for community music that are 1:1 applicable to music mediation:

- *People* who are actively involved in musical activities
- *Common places* that become the pivotal points of making music and of conversations
- *Participation*
- *Diversity*
- *Inclusion*

What do these developments in cultural life mean for our students at the music academies?

In addition a small anecdote from my activity as a coach. Every year at the Philharmonie Luxembourg an Academy of Music Mediation takes place, inviting young orchestra musicians and soloists to get involved in the topic described above and to be supported by professionals in the field. The Academy's director is Katherine Zeserson, a well known community musician who has led Sage Gateshead's ELP-Department in Newcastle for 10 years. She annually invites an exciting mix of music mediators, concert promoters such as Steven Walter from Podium Festival Esslingen, music pedagogues and community musicians to spend a week working intensively with the young musicians on their attitude towards social and educational projects in the concert business. Last year a very talented young musician, I happened to know before, appeared at this academy, who during his entire studies tried to acquire secondary subject certificates as uncommittedly as possible. During the Academy, on the other hand, he was one of the most alert and interested participants - when I asked him why he was so committed here and why he seemed so disinterested in not instrument-related subjects at the university, he replied that it was the Philharmonie Luxembourg, i. e. that is, the professional atmosphere and the selection procedure he had to pass for the Academy, that motivated him to actually open up to this topic of social engagement.

I've been thinking about that ever since. Our music academies stand for excellence, our students have experienced competition and selection since early childhood and work intensively on their artistic development during their studies to begin a career that can only be successful if they focus and concentrate one hundred percent on themselves and their instrument. All activities that "smell" in the broadest sense of pedagogy or new concert and performance formats or social engagement are experienced as disturbing, but in later professional life as orchestral musicians or even more as freelance musicians are now in great demand.

Separations between performance studies, music education, music mediation and community music make sense during the studies in order to acquire a thorough foundation in the respective subject - but at the same time the university must also ensure that there are much more spaces for

⁶ Higgins 2017: 46f

encounters and cooperation between these young European citizens at a critical point of their personal development in order to prepare them for what is now common practice in their profession and necessary for social cohesion in Europe in these turbulent times.

And it seems appropriate for the universities, on the one hand, to set up cooperations with renowned concert promoters, orchestras and opera houses and, on the other hand, to bring politically conscious actors of community organizing such as district centres, transcultural cultural promoters and social and political institutions on board in order to launch sustainable practical projects with combined efforts during study time. In this way, students experience themselves in their new role as artistic citizens who can change something in their immediate environment for the better and see the immediate relevance of their doing for their later employers. They empower themselves in their community of musicians in order to let others participate in cultural life or to actively influence it artistically. A positive form of the exercise of power so to speak or in the words of Hannah Arendt:

„Power corresponds to the human ability not only to act or do something, but to unite with others and to act in agreement with them. Power is never at the disposal of an individual; it is in the possession of a group and remains in existence only as long as the group holds together.“⁷

Igor Levit was asked the day before yesterday at a panel discussion in the Vienna Konzerthaus what strategy would lead to art being brought back to the centre of society - to which he replied very briefly: *„Education policy. Period.“* The *Educational Turn* of concert halls and orchestras points in this direction just as much as the joint efforts of musicians, music mediators, community musicians and music teachers in schools to anchor music in the middle of people's lives.

⁷ Hannah Arendt ct. by Schraml 2007: 114

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