

NOTES FROM ACT CLASSICAL MUSIC FOCUS GROUP

Held at National Library of Australia, May 26, 2010.

Chair, Robyn Holmes

Some definitions

- Definitions of 'Classical' need to ensure inclusivity of new music, computer music, alternative genres/styles as well as 'classical music' mostly represented by the practice of the major performing arts organisations. We need to be clear what we are talking about: the whole domain. A new terminology might help (perhaps 'art music' is better?)
- Is classical music considered as simply "elite", with negative connotations? What barriers have we put in place? And what assumptions do we make around this construct?

New thinking, new modes of experience

- The 'festival model' is the new successful audience paradigm. Why? Examine the Festival model and compare with older subscription model. Time to change? How to take the excitement, innovation and audience engagement from the festival sphere into more 'normal' – or 'traditional' – pattern of concerts and music-making? Engenders audience interest, excitement and accessibility for kinds of music that are not always considered as 'accessible' beyond a specifically interested or target audience. – SO - why, and what is it about the festival context that makes this so?
- 'Community engagement' is the new paradigm shift: examine ways of developing and maintaining a whole new approach to relationship between music-making, participation and audience. When people feel engaged they are more likely to attend classical music and more likely to value it. People power is the best means of advocacy.
- In tertiary sector, new thinking about 'music as research' opens some possibilities for wider collaborations, different funding options, support for innovation, infrastructure support

...and use new technology

- Technology – use technology to engage in new teaching methods...Open up the debate about music teaching
- Technology – use technology to engage in new means of building 'fan', loyal audience and community engagement (compare the success/approaches of contemporary bands building excitement around their live acts)
- Role of broadcasting – needs to change with the times and technology. Facilitate live streaming. Nurture and develop young people's 'native' technological capacities to deliver new product/experience in new ways.

Need for leadership and mentoring

- Crying need for “professional leadership” for the independent professional sector: a vacuum in leadership and mentoring. Especially for the young professional artists trying to establish their niche/recognition/support structure.
- “Inspire, create, lead, direct!” Nurture these gifts among those outstanding individuals, and support those who do and can. i.e. Train musical leaders.

Education and teaching

- The paradigm of teaching music one-to-one as the ‘model of excellence’ has been the same for a long time – but kids are different now and their experience in the world is different. Let’s throw open the paradigm for real consideration and examine if/ how the old models match the new experience of youth – and if they don’t, then come up with some new concepts and strategies
- The ‘young’ ARE different today – ask the music teachers! –Their sense of identity through music and their motivations have changed. There is a spectrum, and a divide, between using music for their own self-expression/well-being and for their social discourse. Kids are learning and using music NOT to reach out to audiences but for themselves. There are lots of implications stemming from this, not the least is that our classical music construct is built on performance paradigm and audience communication etc. which is entirely at odds with both of these constructs. [This seemed to the group to be a matter of key importance – follow up with Matt Irving, ACT Music Educators Network]
- Educators are facilitators not just providers of music education – what does this mean for our educational models, especially possible partnership models
- Put MUSIC into education and better trained teachers into music... [this was just taken as a ‘given’ by this group!]
- Ignore the ‘grass roots’ at our peril. The research is showing that participation is the best way to galvanise and ensure audiences later in life. Also, participation can build an individual’s relationship to more ‘elite’ activities.
- What are the barriers to music literacy in the community, and how can we address these? To what extent do we reinforce these barriers by our social behaviours around classical music and make people feel that classical music is “not for them”?

Marketing and communication

- There is a problem with one-off success with a clever marketing idea (eg Bugs Bunny and SSO)– does it translate from one venue/event to another? How do we get ‘buy in’ and ‘stickability’? And if we cannot, then what are the implications for our concert structure?
- Change the marketing strategy around the concept of elite – treat this as a success, like sport.
- Also get Arts into the NEWS, like sport! Requires a serious and well designed campaign, both behind the scenes and up-front. Needs a new generation and commitment to quality music criticism as well. Train some critics and develop new means to engage them in a variety of media.
- Musicians just might be the least effective communicators of our discipline – the least likely to cut through the media/information barrier about communicating the value of the art form. We need ambassadors and spokespersons outside of our immediate people.
- There is a rich history of classical music-making in this country but people in general do not know about this Australian heritage. Use the national institutions; support and take responsibility for building a sense of ownership about tradition; and creates values, rich with understanding that we have been a deeply ‘cultural’ society over history

Infrastructure

- There is a world of hidden engagement and hidden costs in the classical music enterprise: venues, equipment, provision of and access to music, contextual information, wider resources, volunteers etc.
- We should map the whole “architecture” of classical music to understand the interdependencies. Also to calculate the REAL level of funding and the REAL costs of creating, making and experiencing music. Don’t forget the role that cultural institutions and universities play in supporting the classical music enterprise – we MUST factor these in when mapping, so government understands the WHOLE sector, and not just the direct costs of the ‘subsidised music sector’.

Consumers: audience, participants and environment

- The demography studies are interesting. Do not forget that an aging audience is also OK – reflects state of this society. Cater properly for them, not just the young.
- What attracts the young? – partly inter-generational care (grandparents and kids, safe environment for kids to attend, etc.) Compare the success of dance in attracting young people.
- Music has really become a language of social discourse for the young, if not for older generations. Build on the social experience, value it and use it to improve audience and participation.

- The idea of “social capital” (examine Eva Cox)... networks, families, online communities
- Examine the success of sport and remodel our enterprise. An example is the investment in junior sport for a small return at the elite level – but it still happens. Why? What value? How can we replicate? Parental and community support is built through it – how?
- People are not trained in the art of listening, nor in the construct of being a classical music consumer. How can we improve this? How can we remodel what we do to create a better fit with a contemporary kind of audience.

Experiencing classical music

- The concept of a “safe environment” in which to experience music – without sense of judgement or artistic snobbery – is critical. Also a safe physical environment, in which people feel comfortable and cared for by the experience.
- Find the right concert for the music. Also the right context of PLACE
- “Connectedness” should be our key word! “Rapport. Belonging. Inclusion. Trust. Ownership.” Build these qualities – through inspirational leaders and teachers, community based activity, family, audience loyalty, festivals and community events, volunteers, bartering.
- Celebrate and honour more the human dimensions of experiencing a concert. And celebrate OUR music!
- Two strands of music-making: use of music by a community to build a community AND the super-performer model. Though these are different, they are interdependent and belong together. The super-performer model does not imply simply a passive music experience, and nor should it simply create a professional/amateur divide. This is really unhelpful to our cause – use one to generate the other.
- Create much more meaning around our activity, while not ‘dumbing it down’. i.e. Contextualise, transform, make music a more dynamic experience.
- How well people experience music depends on how well we perform it – we should always aim to be a transformative experience.

Canberra – some distinctive qualities.

- Small, literate, discerning community, highly participatory, hits above the mark, very high engagement factor.
- Canberra requires a unique model to create a centre-piece for music-making here – eg why not support a flexible chamber orchestra rather than trying to replicate the orchestras of the bigger cities?

- Musicians do not want to collaborate so often – competing for same pot of money, market and activity. But others, i.e. outside of music, do want to collaborate with musicians. Therefore Collaboration within a local community, like Canberra, is more interesting. And there is much greater will to do so. Could be another wider model for whole of Australia.
- Canberra rich with national cultural institutions – to be valued, used, integrated into the discourse.
- Possible Creative Fellowships at national institutions – could feed back and enrich national discourse, within and beyond music. Music has something to say to our wider culture and the institutions are uniquely placed.

Recommendations: noting that the subtlety of the notes/conversation should inform these, and not be lost in the reduction.

1. Redefine the terminology 'classical music' to include the wider domain of 'art music' as a whole.
2. Analyse selected case studies of successful audience paradigms and positive audience experiences and draw out 'lessons learned' and 'best practice'. (Include a range of contexts, including Festivals, subscription concerts, alternative places and spaces, one-off marketed events etc).
3. Build on the Community Music research, to investigate the relationship between patterns of music education, participation in music-making, and audience for classical music. (Should include linkages with large and small music organisations. The research may need breaking down into component parts and specific research questions, and may need quantitative (ABS?) as well as qualitative research.)
4. Develop a mentorship scheme and an 'outstanding leaders' program, in linkage with the industry professionals.
5. Develop an 'Ambassadors' program for advocacy and communication/marketing.
6. Propose to the Youth Music Council and the various Music Educators networks that they survey/research/analyse the motivations for young people's participation in and their experience of classical music. (Note this is based on a key idea that the young are different today and that their sense of identity through music and their motivations are changing).
7. Collaborate with the Sports community (AIS, Academies?) to analyse the investment in and models for success in junior sport.

8. Map for the Summit the “architecture”/landscape of classical music in Australia as a whole: demonstrating the interdependencies and nature of the organisations, activities and people involved. Include the hidden components, including infrastructure, venues, musical resources, equipment, volunteers, support institutions.

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