

□ Educators Focus Group Meeting Melbourne Tuesday 18 May

In attendance:

Nicole Canham - facilitator

Bev McAlister – Dandenong Ranges Music Council, Community Music Coordinator

Jeannie Marsh – Distance Education

Robin Stevens- Editor, Music in Action

Professor Gary McPherson – Head, Victorian College of the Arts

Anne Lierse – Director of Music Melbourne High, Council Member Music Teachers of Vic assoc

Lisa Clarke – State Manager VIC, Musica Viva in Schools

Mandy Stefanakis – Head of Music at Christchurch Grammar

Deborah Nicolson – Director of programs, The Songroom

Joshua Cowie – Music Education, The Arts Centre

Ian Harvey – The Australian Music Association

3pm – 3.20pm Welcome and Introductions

3.20 – 4.45pm Discussion

4.45pm Break

5pm Recommendations

Discussion centred around the question of how effective is the classical music offering now?

Some of the challenges identified were:

- A lack of composition programs being run in schools (even though this is a great way to get students participating in music)
- Many schools have no senior music program, due to lack of numbers, sometimes due to geographical isolation
- Issues to do with the level of training in music of generalist teachers, and with regard to composition, the lack of training for classroom music teachers in composition and difficulties associated with how to assess student compositions
- The difference in ability levels and standards of students entering high school music programs and the way in which this is balanced
- At places like the Arts Centre, experiences are brief, one-off encounters – this doesn't necessarily help with things like helping or ensuring students learn how to read music

- How much do we value classical music? The visibility of music in the general community and its perceived value
- Grass roots support of the arts vs government funding for the arts – how to grow support and investment from both?
- How to encourage interest in participation in classical music among parents and school principals – children are captivated and interested in many styles of quality music and open to these experiences
- Impact and awareness of generational influences on what is taught and played – look at sales figures for musical instruments, 30K annually for classical string, brass and woodwind instruments, 300K annually for guitars, of which about one third are electric guitars
- Harnessing media and technology to raise the visibility of classical music
- Structures that make classical music appear to be elite – a ‘user pays’ system from the outset, school scholarships in music lessons that provide the opportunity but do not necessarily enable parents or students to appreciate the value of what they are receiving
- Currently too much room to be able to avoid subjects such as composition, and the inclusion of a broad spectrum of music from many genres that children would not otherwise be exposed to
- Not enough music appreciation experiences on offer, let alone participation
- How to deliver a program that would include all students when the current infrastructure and budget might only account for something like 10% of students (if we look at the highly successful instrumental program run in QLD)
- Most planning is short term – three or four years, and we need to be looking ahead 10 or 20 years.

Recommendations

The group made recommendations under four key headings: Pedagogy, Visibility, Infrastructure and Ideas.

- **Pedagogy**

Connection – It's all music: listen, learn, appreciate, participate, play, perform, compose across genres according to themes

Entitlement and equity – People have a right to be exposed to a breadth of musical styles which includes the classical canon

All Australians are entitled to and should have access to Australian music across genres

All Primary teachers have an ability to teach music and/or facilitate learning given appropriate and sufficient training and resources, including mentoring as well as professional development courses – both face to face and harnessing/utilising software

Provide access to quality professional development training for instrumental teachers, and connection to a larger network

Part of the role of musician is that of teacher. There needs to be some Australia-wide induction program to enable musicians to work effectively as teachers

- **Visibility**

Move music in schools 'out of the music cupboard'

Plenty of music on open day to sell schools/seen as enhancing one's intellect: perceived need is also critical in this equation so that it will receive the right level of support within the school and from parents

We need to go to conferences of Principals with solutions to problems, and to educate them about what a good classroom/school music program entails

School scholarships – lots of kids only learn because they have a scholarship. We need to change the perception of the offer of 'free' music lessons

Networks of connection/PD: classroom teachers have this, instrumental teachers not so much, issues of time and affordability

What do we have available about our work? We need a presence eg online pre-concert experience

Strategy for schools – every item you have about sport, sports captains etc, also have music reports, music captains

The 30 second TV commercial on the value of music: what could be our equivalent of this?

Community partnerships with SBS is one possibility and also the ABC

Music partnerships between schools, communities and professional musicians (who work with the teachers) really raise the profile of music and bring many people together – the whole community is enriched

That state symphony orchestras, national and state opera companies, chamber music organisations (such as Musica Viva) and other appropriate classical music performance providers form an educational television consortium / alliance and approach ABC 3 Television with a view to establishing co-production partnership arrangements to develop and produce educational television programs that will promote an understanding and appreciation of classical music among young people.

- **Infrastructure**

Musical pathways made clearer through mentoring and skills development

Understand the value of the MYO experience of being able to be with students of like minds – and recognise this through adequate funding

Life long learning – you need infrastructures to facilitate this. We need structures for people of all ages so that they can continue their involvement in music

Bridging programs between primary and secondary schools

Using a partnership model to create new alternatives for funding and infrastructure where they don't currently exist: State schools that don't have money to create music programs can explore partnerships with community organisations for example.

- **Ideas**

Bring back Music Branch!

There is something to be understood from other art forms and their consumption – look at success of blockbuster art exhibitions: look outside for answers

More commissioned new work for schools: this is important for our own cultural identity in the world of music. Taking this new music out of an academic setting and putting it more into a community setting.

MCA has a role in creating opportunities for people in the music industry to come together
It is important for people often working in isolation in the music industry to be able to come together with their colleagues

As this focus group represented people working across the sector in diverse roles, I invited everyone to submit an additional paragraph of thoughts if they wished to elaborate on any particular aspect of the discussion.

There were the responses I received:

Mandy Stefanakis

“Just a little more on the 'connection' thing.

Profile is such an important aspect of being known and successful because there are so many musicians out there, and other arts organisations competing for audiences. So in terms of both schools and the wider audience, it is imperative that music orgs, large and small, have a 'whole package' mentality where they are a pervasive presence in the community in every sense of the word. They need to develop an 'image' that connects with the audience they seek. They need to back it up with huge internet presence which can include not only performances of works, but preparation for performances, profiles of musicians, profiles of music and its composers. Need to get into schools rather than expecting schools to come to them. Need to develop follow up concerts for families which explore works heard in schools. So kids are familiar with the works before they hear a whole group or orchestra play. Need to make education packages freely available on the web. Classical musicians need to perform in a range of contexts with musicians from other genres in different contexts including street festivals, music festivals and so on. Again, not always the whole orchestra, but to get the message across that classical musicians are very fine musicians whose interest is in a whole range of music.

I think of how successful the writers festival is in Melbourne and how much it is growing, because it embraces so many aspects of writing and can't help but meet the needs of a vast range of people. I think classical musicians and music need to think and act in this holistic way too. Mix it up. Exclusivity in any way, shape or form is death to the genre. And promote Australian composers. We have some spectacular composers.”