

**Report**  
**'Polifonia' Seminars for Senior Conservatoire  
Management Staff**  
**9-11 October 2009, Antwerp**  
**DRAFT**

### **Opening Event**

Pascale de Groote welcomes the participants to the first 'Polifonia' Seminar for Senior Conservatoire Management and to her hometown Antwerp. She introduces the 'Polifonia' Continuing Professional Development Working Group members who have organized the seminar, and thanks them for being there. The 'Polifonia' Continuing Professional Development working group came up with the notion of having seminars for conservatoire directors at the beginning of the second cycle of ERASMUS Network for Music 'Polifonia' and drafted a questionnaire which aimed to see whether there was interest from the AEC membership to participate in such seminars. The questionnaire also explored which topics interest the membership as well as practical preferences such as size, type of sessions and language. The questionnaire was given to the AEC membership during the AEC Congress 2008 in Aarhus, Denmark and the questionnaire analysis was prepared. Taking this analysis into account, a series of two seminars was designed and the result is this first meeting in Elzenveld, Antwerp. Pascale points out the diversity within the group in terms of country, type of institution (stand-alone or part of university) as well as positions of the participants in the institution and asks participants to quickly introduce themselves to the group before the start of the plenary session.

### **Plenary Session I**

Pascale introduces the speakers for the first plenary session. The first speaker is Gabriël Oostvogel, the director of the concert hall De Doelen in Rotterdam. A former musician himself, Mr. Oostvogel will address the challenges of the conservatoires from the perspective of the cultural organisation. The second speaker is Dame Janet Ritterman, former principal of the Royal College of Music London; she also acts as an international adviser on the arts and higher education.

Gabriël Oostvogel starts his speech with the statement that there are no clear trends in the musical sector, there is not one line of direction. He would like to base his speech on his ideas and his choice of direction for the musical sector and for conservatoires. Oostvogel believes that classical music is in a tight spot. He points out that the idea that classical music is the summit of what centuries of cultural sophistication is no longer valid. Conservatoires, in this sense, are turning into a minority as the cultural values change. Oostvogel suggests that there are three ways to react to this change: (1) shrug your shoulders; (2) keep things the way they are, and (3) try and let classical music play a greater role.

Oostvogel continues his speech with the statement that "the audience" for any genre doesn't exist anymore. This may be agonizing for the organizations in the music sector, but it should be seen as an opportunity for different value-systems to classical music. This means that classical music is not any more burdened by the generation gap. But it also means that the new generation looks at classical music – or any music genre - as a story; they are interested in why the performer chose this particular piece, and what the emotional impact of this music is on them. This requires a change from the musicians' perspective: they need to work on their presentation, on their programming and motivation,

and on the articulation of their choices to the audience. The new task for the conservatoires is thus educating the students to be a personality.

Oostvogel connects the change in the expectations from the musicians to the changes that need to happen in conservatoires; conservatoires need to keep “new music” flourishing as what is new now will be canonized later and all music that is considered classical was new in the past. Oostvogel believes that conservatoires need to see these new developments as opportunities. He finds that conservatoires solely focus on excellence in performance of exclusively old pieces, thus also hindering the potential creativity in their students.

Participants have some questions for Gabriel Oostvogel. His speech mentions putting music into shape, but the participants feel that young audiences do not fit into any shape. Gabriel Oostvogel believes that the existing audience is the biggest put off for new audiences. He invites the conservatoires to try different spaces for performances, to “be of today”. Participants also want to know how De Doelen collaborates with the conservatoires of Rotterdam and the philharmonic orchestra which are around the corner from De Doelen. Oostvogel replies that they collaborate with the conservatoire in special series such as the “Boulez Series”. Two weeks ago this series opened in the renovated hall of De Doelen with the CODARTS Symphonic orchestra. He mentions that they don’t collaborate much with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra as what the Orchestra does, does not fit De Doelen, which focuses on more contemporary and new music.

A participant asks whether conservatoires should choose a communication “genre”. Oostvogel believes that music *is* the communication and storytelling itself. Too many new graduates are too concentrated on “the skill”. Thus, when they are asked about programme ideas, they provide disappointing ideas; there is intellectual poverty in the context of music. The participants have a discussion regarding this intellectual poverty and agree that the mindset needs to change as well as the way the conservatoires assess to adapt to the new context.

The discussion is followed by the second speaker of the evening, Dame Janet Ritterman. She starts her presentation with a comparison between Gabriël Oostvogel and herself; Gabriël Oostvogel is an architect and an experienced manager, where as Dame Ritterman describes herself as a musician talking about management. She explains the path her career took over the years and summarizes what she has learnt:

- Management without leadership cannot deliver the goals
- Leadership requires; conceptual skills, technical skills, and interpersonal skills
- Good teamwork is vital
- A culture that does not automatically fear change is needed (“change is in prospect”)

Dame Ritterman explains that one should not worry that change is “difficult”; instead, embrace it, as being shocked and pressured teaches the most. Her experience has been that diversity and adversity beat repetition every time, thus change should not be feared. She focuses on questions such as what a leader must do and what a leader must avoid doing. Dame Ritterman identifies some of the most common challenges for conservatoires: size and complexity, institutional culture, staff profile students expectation, and needs and teaching staff attitude. She believes that the trick lies in accentuating the positive; the complexity of conservatoire is the clue to the survival. She thinks that there are several points that complicate conservatoire management: structure, thin management, lack of training and support, lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities of managers, and the inadequacy of conventional communication methods.

Dame Ritterman concludes her presentation by proposing some points for dealing with the challenges and the complexity of conservatoires:

- Devising and building management structures
- Establishing a culture of “learning on the job”
- Exploring secondments (exchange of staff of the same job function)
- Being creative about communication
- Establishing priorities
- High-performance leadership

The presentations are followed by two discussion sessions, the first chaired by Dame Ritterman, the second by Chris Fictoor (Prins Claus Conservatoire, Groningen). The discussion starts with the idea of training; most of the participants do not have a formal training and have different views of training within conservatoires. The participants also agree that management, manager and leadership are quite different concepts. Several examples are discussed regarding the importance of leadership, and the incorrect idea of leadership just being “the head of the organisation”. Below are some of the highlights of the discussion:

- Leadership is much more crucial than the leader itself.
- Not pressuring the musicians intellectually creates a leader with no conceptual tools.
- You, as a director, have to fight (which can not be delegated) and take all the blame and commentary as well as be the public face.
- Strong internal sharing of ideas is important, but it has to be **organic**.
- Start from the “unsuccess” and aim for the impossible.

## **Plenary Session II**

The second plenary session starts with the presentation by Dr. Rineke Smilde from the Prins Claus Conservatoire and the Koninklijk Conservatorium Den Haag. Dr. Smilde’s presentation focuses on the necessity of lifelong learning and her research on lifelong learning of musicians.

Dr. Smilde starts her presentation with a definition of lifelong learning: *a concept of learning that enables us to deal in a confident way with change*. This is a crucial concept for musicians who are in the cultural environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which changes with an ever-increasing pace and requires its components to be flexible. Lifelong learning, thus, isn’t just continuing education, but it is a conceptual tool for the improvement of musicians’ *employability* and adaptability. Dr. Smilde defines the characteristics of lifelong learning as follows:

- The distinction between formal and informal learning;
- The emphasis on ‘learning’ as opposed to ‘training’;
- Different approaches to learning, including learning in settings outside the school;
- The interconnection between professional and personal development;
- The role of critical reflection and reflexivity – or reflecting *on* your action, bringing about change, and reflecting *in* your action. (This happens e.g. during improvising with other musicians).

Dr. Smilde explores the definitions of formal, non-formal, and informal learning, as the concepts are an important part of her research findings and an important part of lifelong learning.

After explaining her research on lifelong learning, for which she has used biographical research, to examine the developments in the professional lives of 32 musicians, Dr. Smilde continues with the underlying research questions:

- What knowledge, skills and values are considered necessary to function effectively and creatively as a (contemporary) musician?
- How do musicians learn and in what domains?
- What does the necessary conceptual framework of lifelong learning for musicians entail and what are its implications for education and learning environments?

They were underpinned by three subsidiary questions:

- What are the main changes for the European music profession?
- What are the likely implications for the professional training of musicians?
- In what ways do conservatoires respond to these developments?

Dr. Smilde continues with the findings of the three subsidiary questions; the emergence of the portfolio career as the main change for the European music profession and the consequence of this on the conservatoires. Her research results show the difference in importance for skills between conservatoires and alumni:

**Conservatoires**

Information Exchange  
Performance skills  
Pedagogical skills  
Life skills

**Former students**

Life skills  
Performance skills  
Pedagogical skills  
Information exchange

The presentation continues with the research findings on the topics of learning environment and types of leadership. Dr. Smilde concludes her presentation with some recommendations:

- To give improvisation a fundamental role in music education and moreover use it as a strategy for preventing and overcoming performance anxiety;
- To create space for students' own interventions and leadership during higher music education in relation to building their future career (half of the interviewees started their career during studies at the conservatoire);
- To listen and respond to former students, in order to learn for curriculum development.

The second plenary session continues with Harald Jørgensen, who is speaking from the perspective of a professor of education. He explains that he has been a rector in the 1980s and again in 2002-2006 and had a chance to compare the two periods; Jørgensen concludes that there is much more of everything today than in the 1980s; more students, teachers, problems as well as rewards.

In his years in music education, Jørgensen has found that a visible leader is very important for the institution. He also believes that leadership is an important learning process for the leader himself, both to learn about himself and learn about others. He also introduces his book *Research Into Higher Music Education*. This study addresses basic characteristics of the higher music education institutions, their resources and internal processes, as well as their relation to external sectors and deals with questions such as "What does research tell us about academies, conservatoires and schools of music?", "How can research be utilized in the institutions' quality improvement process?". In his research, Harald Jørgensen has found that the influence of tradition plays a big role in higher music education. He emphasizes that tradition and institutional culture play an invisible role in the educational processes.

The presentation by the two speakers on supporting educational processes is followed by a discussion chaired by Dr. Rineke Smilde and Harald Jørgensen. The discussion continues with the hierarchy of values; Dr. Smilde's research also had examples of teachers in the conservatoires perceiving themselves as teachers and not as musicians, which comes from a hidden hierarchy in the conservatoires. Several participants have similar examples in their conservatoires and disagree with the notion of teachers as failed performers. Below are some of the highlights of the discussion:

- Career choices are often ignored by conservatoires, though the students nowadays consider portfolio careers already from their 1<sup>st</sup> year at the conservatoire.
- Assessment styles as well as curriculum have to change to address hidden values.
- People are key in the institution.
- It is important to set-up alumni systems, to be in touch with alumni as well as the music profession.
- Research is an endless discussion point; but more focus is needed: What kind of research and issues should teachers focus on?

### **Closing Session**

The closing session starts with some comments from Frans de Ruiter, who is in the 'Polifonia' Continuing Professional Development Working Group. Frans de Ruiter comments that it is important to organise the institution so that the spontaneity of the student is not lost. It is also important to note that while the leader should be visible, s/he can't be present everywhere. In contrast, the middle management is present all the time, and is seen by professors and students.

Pascale concludes the meeting with a small evaluation with participants and a summary of important topics: definition of values, attitude of teaching staff, alumni, lifelong learning and impact of research are some of the topics that could be the focus of the following seminar. The participants agree that it would be great to focus on more precise topics in the next seminar. It is agreed that each participants sends their comments on the first seminar to the AEC Team and that the 'Polifonia' Continuing Professional Group meets for the evaluation of the first seminar and the planning of the second seminar.

*Report made by Şirin Tuğbay*

## Programme

Friday 09 October 2009		
12:00-15:00	Participants arrive	
16:00 – 16:30	Introduction of participants and the 'Polifonia' Continuing Professional Development Working Group	
16:30 – 18:30	<p>Plenary session with all participants on theme 1:</p> <p><b><i>The long-term strategic management of a Higher Music Education institution</i></b></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Gabriel Oostvogel, director concert hall 'De Doelen' Rotterdam</li> <li>• Dame Janet Ritterman, former director Royal College of Music London</li> </ul>	
19:00	Dinner	

Saturday 10 October 2009		
9:30 – 11:00	Session 1 on theme 1 in small groups	
11:00 - 11:30	Coffee break	
11:30 – 13:00	Session 1 continued in small groups	
13:00 – 15:00	Lunch break	
15:00 – 17:00	<p>Plenary session with all participants on theme 2:</p> <p><b><i>Supporting the educational process in a Higher Music Education institution</i></b></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Rineke Smilde, associate professor in Lifelong Learning in Music and former director Prince Claus Conservatoire Groningen</li> <li>• Prof Harald Jørgensen, researcher in music education and former rector Norwegian Academy of Music Oslo</li> </ul>	
17:00 – 17:30	Coffee break	
17:30 – 19:00	Session 2 on theme 2 in small groups	
19:30	Dinner	

<b>Sunday 11 October 2009</b>		
09:30 – 11:00	Session 2 continued in small groups	
11:00 – 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>	
11:30 – 12:30	Plenary reflection and evaluation session, planning of next meeting	
<i>12:30</i>	<i>Lunch and departures</i>	