

Report
**'Polifonia' Seminars for Senior Conservatoire
Management Staff**
12-14 March 2010, Vienna

Opening Event

Pascale de Groote welcomes the participants to the second 'Polifonia' Seminar for Senior Conservatoire Management which is hosted by Konservatorium Wien Privatuniversität. After a short round of introductions of the participants, Pascale introduces the two speakers of the plenary session: Robert Fitzpatrick is the former dean of The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and has been a musician and educator for the past twenty-eight years. A clarinettist himself, he has performed with the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia as well as The Curtis Symphony Orchestra. The second speaker, Peter Renshaw, is an independent research and consultant, coming from a background of history. He has been the head of research and development at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in the UK, has since been involved in research within lifelong learning. His new book, commissioned by Dr. Rineke Smilde, focuses on "connecting conversations".

Plenary Session

The plenary session starts with Robert Fitzpatrick. Robert's presentation focuses on institutional culture with a case study of the Curtis Institute of Music, where he had been dean between 1986 and 2009. The Curtis Institute was founded in 1924 by Mary Louise Curtis Bok, daughter of the magazine and newspaper magnate Cyrus Curtis and a philanthropist, and famous British-born American orchestral conductor Leopold Stokowski. Robert explains that when Mary Louise Curtis Bok first opened its doors in 1924, her mission was to train exceptionally gifted young musicians for careers as performing artists on the highest professional level. Today Curtis follows many of the same principles set forth by Mrs. Bok: the school provides full-tuition scholarships to all of its students, ensuring that admissions are based solely on artistic promise.

Robert points out that several different properties which influence the institutional culture of a conservatoire. First is the building, the physical residence of the organisation. Robert shows the parallel between the first main building of the conservatoire and the quiet climate the conservatoire has; agreeing to Churchill's sentiment that "we shape our buildings, and in return they shape us". The second is the original mission of the organisation. Founded by the conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra Leopold Stokowski to help musically talented people in the region as well as supply the Philadelphia Orchestra which musicians, the Institute still supplies 50% of the Philadelphia Orchestra musicians and has produced many important names in music such as John de Lancie, Leonard Bernstein and Roberto Diaz.

Robert Fitzpatrick's presentation and supporting documents such as the bibliography, a short history of the Curtis Institute of Music can be found on the website of the seminars at www.polifonia-tn.org/CPDseminars.

The session continues with Peter Renshaw, who is an independent researcher and consultant. He explains that he will focus on the concept of "connecting conversations" and how this concept can help

shift the culture of conservatoires. Peter starts with the changing context that musicians find themselves in: more and more musicians nowadays have a portfolio career, which requires finely tuned transferable skills and an entrepreneurial attitude towards work. This results in the musician performing different roles under the cultural and educational contexts.

Peter points out conservatoires have to ensure that staff and students do not become disconnected from the complexity of the real world by remaining in their “bubble”. In order to avoid this, conservatoires need to reorder their priorities and redefine its core business. Peter is aware that this paradigm shift can be threatening to any organisation. He gives two business examples outside of the cultural realm to address the issues of remaining blind to changes and adapting to them.

Peter observes that some conservatoires show stubborn resistance to change. He goes on to identify some key questions for any conservatoire facing change:

- What are the most effective ways of enabling a conservatoire to adapt to change?
- How can a conservatoire and its partners be helped to understand and manage change and uncertainty within a shared vision for the future?
- What form of leadership might best bring about this transformation?

Peter identifies the challenge as such: *how to choreograph appropriate ‘conversations’ within a conservatoire and between the conservatoire and its partner organisations?*

Peter concludes his talk with a few suggestions for creating such choreography:

- Cultural change in an organisation evolves partly through critically reflective dialogue.
- The psychological climate in which these conversations take place is crucial. It requires adopting a style of leadership that is genuinely open and facilitatory.
- Through collaborative dialogue, a conservatoire can begin the distribution of knowledge and control and to shift towards opportunities for shared leadership and responsibility.
- The personal and professional development of staff becomes critical in the process of facilitating change. Opportunities for mentorship, co-mentoring and mentoring development and collaborative forms of learning are important ways to achieve this.
- As processes and procedures become more transparent and accountable, all staff and students have a voice in shaping the future of their own and of the conservatoire.

Discussion sessions

Choreographing conversations

The discussion starts from the statements made by Peter Renshaw, around the topic of choreographing appropriate conversations. It is brought up that the director should partly be a buffer to external incoming forces as well as a buffer for internal conversations. Peter mentions that the conversations take time for people to open up, but once that happens, it is transferred to the students. The key is the dialogue, which opens up distribution of knowledge and power. The participants agree that this all depends on the psychological climate as well.

The discussion leads to how real collaboration can be set up. It is challenging, as it means confronting one’s self and finding one’s self before engaging with the community. The discussion continues towards ensuring education quality as well as teaching quality. Peter reminds the participants that the activist writings of 1968 have the same jargon of change as it exists today.

One of the questions that arise is how one recruits the people around them? The key is in networking; one has to know the field and the people in it to be able to “build” the family as it takes time to ensure the integrity and quality of the people around you. It is a long journey. The participants agree that there is the danger of it becoming incestuous and lose its critical edge if there are no outsiders in the process of change. There is a need for the critical eye, to be able to monitor the process.

The group discusses several institution specific examples. Below are some of the main statements:

- The job of the principal/director is very wide ranging in each institution.
- Being funding driven and not content driven is not a good solution. Engagement with community has its own integrity; it won't be the same as if driven by monetary results.
- The organisation has to be engaged in a way that is not concerned only with the end result; the engaged persons contribute to the “collective pearl”.

Institutional culture and leadership

The discussion session continues with a different focus; institutional culture vs. institutional profile. The seminar participants define institutional culture as the collection of the following: values, purpose, philosophy, ethos, mission of the organisation, whereas institutional profile is what translates the culture into action. The group agrees that a strategic plan is the tool for such a translation of the culture into the profile.

An important role falls to the leader; it is the leader who has the ability to bring out the potential inside each person in the institution. Every teacher in the conservatoire is an expert with a profile; the leader chooses which potential needs to be brought out. The concept of the leader is a discussion on its own. The question “Why should the leadership be organic?” is brought up; couldn't a dictatorial tyranny have a mind-set as well? The institution depends on a concept of authority. Hopefully it would lead to an organic authority rather than a dictatorial or charismatic one. The charismatic leader should not be seen as a gold standard.

The participants have different ideas on the topic of the leader vs the leadership. Some participants find that the leader is crucial, while others feel that leadership is bigger and more important than the leader alone. The group also differs on the idea of the leader; depending on the structure or the culture of the institution it can be a authoritative leader or leader as choreographer. These are all leadership possibilities. Shared leadership, another possibility, requires several people in leadership who have the skills to coordinate and choreograph.

- You can have two conservatoires with the same mission but completely different institutional cultures; the culture is connected to the people.
- The accreditation process can be taken as a catalyst for change. Aims and objectives are not something that the staff constantly thinks about. This discussion needs to be facilitated. It leads organically to dialogue and investment.
- Conservatoire education is not about employability, but it should provide “lifelong decision making”.
- Paradox of freedom: some form of structure is needed to release the freedom.

How to create the psychological climate

The discussion continues on creating the right climate in the conservatoires. Formal and informal communication as well as space development are some important tools that came up. For example, glass doors are connected not only to light but also to transparency. Cafeteria is also a common tool to

create the right climate - a place to socialize for everyone in the institution. Some participants explain that not having one is a set-back for their institution.

Climate comes through connections with the staff. However, in the extreme case of Italy, the director cannot choose the staff. In this case, it is the director's role to study the psychology and competences of teachers to convince them to develop these. Other participants find that open door policy is a great way to set an open and transparent climate, with informal communication supported by the director. This adds another responsibility to the director; to listen.

The institutional organigram

As a follow-up from the previous seminar, all participants have sent in the organizational charts of their institution. The group starts with one specific example, and discusses related issues. The statements from the discussion are below:

- The organigram is just a skeleton, it doesn't mean the organisation is or is not organic.
- Shared values should connect all parts of the organisation, even if they seem unconnected in the organigram.
- Authority should come from content.
- Appraisal should be a form of development, not of control.

Closing Session

Pascale explains the participants that the current 'Polifonia' cycle, under which these seminars are financed, will be ending in October 2010, and the seminars will not be part of the next 'Polifonia' cycle. Therefore, the group must express their opinion in whether to continue with the seminars or not, as well as how to continue: would the group like to stay in the same formation, or should there be a new recruitment process? What topics would the group focus on in the following seminars? The participants feel that the group should continue, but also recruit for newer participants; a good report of the seminar and an opportunity to recruit at the next AEC Annual Congress in November would be good ways to advertise the seminars within the membership.

The participants express their wish for the seminars to continue outside of the framework of 'Polifonia' and one of the suggestions is the continuation within the AEC as part of Lifelong Learning. One of the suggestions for the continuation of the seminar is related to the process; it would be an idea to have two parallel seminars running at the same time and coming together in several sessions. The parallel seminars could be grouped by topics or by positions ("middle-management" group or "starting directors" group etc.)

It is mentioned that in the case that the seminars continue, it should continue towards a goal, potentially function as a research group working towards a publication on "What is a director's role in the music conservatoire?" This group would then research the issues of the career of the director (how to prepare for it, which competences are necessary) as well as the issue of leadership, recruitment, personal development and mentoring.

Report made by Şirin Tuğbay

Programme

Friday, March 12 th			
19:45	Opening dinner in <i>Cantino</i> at Haus der Musik (<i>offered by the Konservatorium</i>)		
Saturday, March 13 th			
09:30 – 11:30	<p>Opening Remarks by Pascale de Groot (chair of the ‘Polifonia’ Continuing Professional Working Group)</p> <p>Plenary session on Institutional Cultures with keynote speeches by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Robert Fitzpatrick (Former Dean of the Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia) ▪ Peter Renshaw (Free-lance consultant) <p>Brief discussion with the speakers</p>		
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee Break		
12:00 – 13:30	<p>Discussion Session 1</p> <p><i>How to translate institutional culture into institutional profile? How to set up the organisational structure for a certain profile?</i></p>		
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch Break		
14:30 – 16:00	<p>Discussion Session 2</p> <p><i>How to find the right profile of staff and teachers/How to create the right internal climate?</i></p>		
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee Break		
16:30 – 18:00	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Group A</p> <p><i>Intervision method on examples of being in a dual position:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Part of a department/community of colleagues</i> 2. <i>Part of the management</i> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Group B</p> <p><i>Finding the right profile and persons – working with statements from directors</i></p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Group A</p> <p><i>Intervision method on examples of being in a dual position:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Part of a department/community of colleagues</i> 2. <i>Part of the management</i> 	<p>Group B</p> <p><i>Finding the right profile and persons – working with statements from directors</i></p>
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19:30	Performance of Arnold Schönberg’s “Moses and Aron” at the Wiener Staatsoper		
Sunday, March 14 th			
09:30 – 11:00	Discussion sessions A and B continued		
11:00 – 12:00	Closing session with reporting back from discussion sessions, evaluation of both seminars and discussion on future steps		