

Transatlantic Cooperation in Professional Music Training: Introduction and Status Report

The purpose of this paper is to explore issues regarding transatlantic mobility in the field of professional music training. Music training is used as shorthand for the artistic, intellectual, and physical development of music professionals. One might expect that a highly international subject area such as music would see significant international cooperation among training institutions. Nevertheless, the findings of this project seem to show a rather unstructured and underdeveloped situation. A primary goal of the Music Study, Mobility, and Accountability Project, organized under the auspices of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) in the United States and the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) in Europe is to provide professional music training institutions with information on the types and benefits of international exchanges and strategies for establishing and maintaining international cooperation in a structured manner. The next section of this paper provides an overview of the current state of international cooperation in the professional music-training sector.

Status Report: International Cooperation in the Professional Music Training Sector

In order to give an overview of current practice in international cooperation, it is necessary to distinguish between transatlantic cooperation between European and US professional music training institutions and cooperation among such institutions in Europe. Each type of cooperation has its own characteristics and dynamics. This report concentrates on cooperation between US and European institutions. The document '*A Short History of Exchange Developments in Professional Music Training in Europe*' may be found in the [Transatlantic Cooperation](#) section of the MSMA Project website: <http://msma.arts-accredit.org>.

In preparing this project, both AEC and NASM asked member institutions to give information about their current transatlantic exchange activities. A considerable amount of information was gathered by this means.

On the US side, NASM organized an Open Hearing and Working Session during the 2002 NASM annual meeting in New Orleans. Forty-eight representatives from US schools of music attended the hearing. In preparation for this hearing, NASM circulated a questionnaire about cooperation with European institutions, asking its member institutions to name European institutions with which their music unit has a relationship and to describe the nature of this relationship. An interesting picture emerged from the responses: forty-six institutions reported contacts with eighty-one European institutions. These contacts involve student exchanges (90%, of which 36% indicate involvement in student exchange only); faculty exchanges (54%); intensive programmes (13%); master classes (15%); research projects (13%); and/or other activities (10%). Because replies were received from both specialized institutions and university departments/faculties, the scope of subject areas is not always clear. Exchanges may engage instrumentalists, singers, composers, or conductors; they might also involve students in theoretical music subjects, music pedagogy, musicology, or music technology.

The purpose of the hearing at the NASM Annual Meeting was to collect issues concerning transatlantic cooperation and exchange information on existing examples of good practice. The following issues emerged during the discussion:

- *Credit transfer*: problems with credit transfer, lack of understanding about various credit-related terminologies, and the related issues of how assessments of exchange students should work. More information about this issue can be found in the document '[Guide to Finances, Recognition Issues, and Other Practical Matters](#)' within this website.
- *Communication*: it is difficult when professional music training institutions do not have an international office or officer.
- *One-to-one exchanges*: it is difficult to reach a balance between incoming and outgoing students/teachers.
- *Tuition fees*: some European students pay much lower tuition fees than do American students. This can create difficult situations.
- *Languages*: misunderstandings can occur because of the use of different languages.
- *Practicalities*: housing, insurance, instruments, health care, differences in academic calendars, student selection.
- *Cultural issues*: dealing with cultural diversity and different teaching styles.

On the European side, the AEC included questions regarding transatlantic cooperation into a large-scale questionnaire on international cooperation activities, which was sent out to all AEC members during the spring of 2002. Although most of the questions were aimed at cooperation on the European level, some specific questions were also asked regarding connections to US institutions. Answers were given on the type of cooperation activities, the number and names of cooperation partners and whether the cooperation was formalised through a bilateral contract. This questionnaire obtained the following results: from the 160 European institutions who were members of the AEC at that time, 105 institutions returned the questionnaire, a response rate of 65%. Forty-three schools informed the AEC that they have contacts with ninety-five US institutions in total. These contacts involve exchanges of students (65%, of which 30% indicate they are involved in student exchange only); exchanges of staff (56%); joint curriculum development (12%); joint intensive programmes (12%); and/or other activities (23%). Of these activities, 41% have been formalized in bilateral contracts.

Logically, this survey should have produced a virtually identical list of cooperating institutions as the NASM questionnaire mentioned above, at least where it concerned contacts between AEC and NASM members. This was, however, not the case: the lists contained significant differences. The results suggest the mixture of formality and informality that characterises transatlantic exchanges. This suggests that this is an appropriate time to look into issues regarding transatlantic cooperation, especially given developments in Europe regarding the establishment of a new EU programme for cooperation with countries outside Europe. This new programme, called ERASMUS MUNDUS (acronym for European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students), will not only give financial support to students and teachers for their learning and teaching activities in Europe, it will also fund partnerships of institutions to establish the so-called Joint European Master Programmes, giving non-European institutions the ability to co-operate within these partnerships for exchanges and curriculum development. More information about ERASMUS

MUNDUS can be found in the document ['Guide to Finances, Recognition Issues, and Other Practical Matters'](#) within this website.

To give an idea about currently existing types of collaborative initiatives that involve European and US institutions for professional music training, the Music Study, Mobility and Accountability Project has collected several examples of good practice. A selection of these examples follows. (In order to avoid a promotional character in these examples, the names of the institutions have been left out, only countries and states are mentioned.)

A Transatlantic Cooperation Project of a Music Academy in Sweden and an Institution in New York State

The cooperation between the Swedish music academy and the American institution in New York State started from an initiative by a professor in organ at both institutions. He is a specialist in baroque music and the founder of a research and development centre for the organ that includes the study of instruments as well as music. The underlying objective at this centre is to cover the entire range, from sources, music, and instruments to history, ideology, and artistry. In order to realise this objective, the centre endeavoured to bring research and education, craftsmanship, and production methods together with artistic experience and application, in the belief that the interaction of all of these levels will provide the best possible prerequisites for interdisciplinary research and guarantee the future quality of the art of the organ.

The cooperation between these institutions includes the following activities:

- Student exchange
- Teacher and research exchange
- Exchange of information
- A joint clavichord project
- The preparation of a large organ research and building project with a 1776 Casparini organ built in Lithuania, which will be carried out in the research and development centre.

In early 2003, a bilateral agreement including a student exchange programme was established between both institutions. The purpose of this agreement is to make possible and to institute the exchange of undergraduate and/or postgraduate students between the two music schools at mutually convenient times. These exchanges will mostly last for periods of one academic year or one semester. It is planned that this agreement shall remain in force for a period of three years, provided that reciprocal arrangements may always be made. Either party may terminate the agreement in writing no later than the end of March in any year. The agreement may be extended by mutual consent of the two parties.

In January 2003, thirty-two American organ students and faculty members made a two-week study trip to Sweden. The study tour schedule included seminars, master classes, group and individual lessons, and eight student recitals at five different venues and faculty concerts. The visit to Sweden gave the students an exceptional possibility to study the interpretation of music from a different century on historical instruments that are globally unique.

A Transatlantic Cooperation Project of a Music Academy in Poland and an Institution in New York City

The partners in this transatlantic cooperation project, which will last until 2007, are a music academy in Poland and an ensemble in residence at a music department of a university in New York City. The formal contract was signed at the beginning of 2004. The exchange will involve 7 students and staff per year in the subject areas of chamber music, modern music, music theory, ethnomusicology, aesthetics, composition, and computer music.

Concert exchange will also be a component in this project. The Polish academy will invite chamber musicians from the American university to present one concert per year in Poland. Each concert will have a strong emphasis on American music and the musicians will bring CDs and scores of the music they play, which will be given to the Polish academy to help in building the collection of American music in the academy's library. The American university will invite chamber musicians from the Polish academy to play one concert per year with a strong emphasis on Polish music. Both partners will provide housing for up to five people for five days. Every concert will be accompanied by a lecture.

In relation to faculty exchange, the American university will invite one Polish academy faculty member per year to be a visiting scholar with sufficient advance planning. This person will be welcome to visit seminars, participate in musical activities, present a talk of his/her own work, use the library, and also use the facilities in the computer music centre. The Polish academy will invite one faculty member from the American university on the same conditions. The host institutions do not offer a stipend for visiting scholars. The host institutions will provide housing for one week. If the stay is prolonged, the faculty member will be assisted in finding suitable housing.

In relation to student exchanges, it is planned to exchange composition students for maximum periods of 4 weeks. Students will be welcome to attend classes, visit seminars, concerts, and other school activities. Housing can be provided for students up to 2 weeks. For longer visits, assistance will be given to find accommodation for which the student would have to pay.

A Transatlantic Cooperation Project of a Conservatoire in The Netherlands and an Institution in New York State

This particular Dutch conservatoire has a strong focus on the United States: since September 2001, 10 jazz teachers from New York have been part of its staff. Two of these teachers have moved to The Netherlands and the other 8 musicians each come to the conservatoire 4 times a year for one week in a rotation system. All jazz students have lessons from both the American and the local jazz teachers. In March 2003, a transatlantic project took place, called the Symphonic Jazz Orchestra, which involved jazz as well as classical students from The Netherlands, students from France, and students from New York. As a follow-up to this project, an agreement has been drawn up between the Dutch institution and the institution in New York for organising student exchanges between the jazz departments, starting in the academic year 2003/2004. This exchange programme works on a "one in one out" basis, independent of the student's main instrument. If, for example, two students from The Netherlands want to study in New York for a semester, two students from New York have to take their places in The Netherlands. Students involved will not be faced with many extra costs, since they will not have to pay any extra tuition fees and, where possible, housing will also be exchanged. In addition, students from The Netherlands will receive financial support from the local student foundation, to contribute in travel and living costs. The Netherlands institution's Student Foundation was founded to support the institution's students wishing to participate in ex-

tracurricular activities, for which there are no funding programmes (such as the European exchange programmes), available. The exchange programme between the Netherlands and US institutions gives students from both institutions the chance to benefit from studying with the best teachers, but at a different school, in a different country, and in a different jazz culture.

Experiences of a French Conservatoire with Exchanges with American Institutions

Over the last 5 or 6 years, this particular conservatoire in France has engaged in a limited number of student exchanges with institutions in Connecticut and New York State. The experience, while it has inevitably proved extremely positive for the students involved, has nevertheless revealed significant differences relative to expectations, needs, and organisational structure in our institutions that need to be taken into account if these exchanges are to be successful. Based on these experiences, we would like to make the following recommendations for schools interested in setting up activities with US institutions:

- Start planning early, take the time to get to know each other, and confirm exchanges in the early Spring—juggling differences in school calendars and agreeing on appropriate validation tools take time. Also, in many instances, students coming from the US do not know French and can benefit from even short-term basic language preparation prior to departure. Finally, the complexity of US visa requirements and the time required to fulfil them has often proved difficult for French students going to the United States. This is in marked contrast to European exchanges, which are often confirmed in June or July for the following autumn.
- Try to find professors who know each other, and provide professors and heads of departments with a maximum amount of information concerning the partner school—often professors and department heads lack knowledge about the exchanging institutions: our most successful exchanges came about through teachers who knew each other, for there was complete confidence relative to the choice of student as well as the organisation of the student's programme. This is particularly important given the individual nature of music teaching.
- Base exchanges on the premise that the student remains enrolled in his/her home institution throughout the duration of the exchange period, as is the case in the European Union ERASMUS programme.
- Make private grants available to assist exchange students in covering travel and living costs—living costs for French students going to the United States are significantly higher than in France, and such support has proved indispensable to the success of our exchanges.
- It's all worth it! In spite of the significant amounts of time involved, there is no doubt that such exchanges, even on a small scale, have proved highly beneficial both for the individual students involved and our institutions!