

Music Study, Mobility, and Accountability Project

Music as a Major Vehicle for Cultural Understanding Between the European Union and the United States and Project Recommendations

Cultural Understanding

Music is a form of communication that is internationally understood, a heritage shared by all people. Although music and words are often used together, music itself is not language dependent. Because of this universality, professional music education and training institutions in the European Union and the United States share a large body of interests and work. Western art music, jazz, and various popular and folk musics are both common heritages and the subjects of current performance and study. While the impacts of these musics are felt throughout the world, historically, it is in Europe and in European-influenced musical life in the Americas that these forms - especially art music and jazz—have received the greatest emphasis in professional music study.

This large common body of work and continuing action provide a strong reference point for comprehending, understanding, and enjoying differences. There is a common heritage but great diversity. Most musicians come to understand what is different by referencing a set of repertoires that is shared and respected. This is fortunate because the world's musical heritage includes contributions from all nations. Therefore, professional music students must study and perform works heavily influenced by nationality and local culture. The aggregate nature of the repertory is thus a powerful incentive for musicians to develop cultural scope.

At base, artistic action rises from individual talent, expertise, and commitment. The Music Study, Mobility, and Accountability Project recognises that the basic element of general cultural understanding is specific individual understanding and capacity. This fundamental reinforces a major tenet of the project as a whole: facilitating the development of individuals through institutional means over a long period of time is the best way to achieve the various goals the project is addressing.

Individual students and faculty learning about other societies by actually working in them are able to go beyond superficial characterizations and stereotypes. They have access to the sources of cultural attributes and ways of working in depth. Such individual development influences artistic, intellectual, and career decisions. For example, performing artists make many choices throughout their lives about the music they will present.

Cultural understanding is increased when artists present a breadth of music within their genre. Since choices regarding the presentation and study of music are based to some extent on what is known to exist, the development of cultural understanding through music rests to a significant degree on the scope of knowledge held by each musician. Broad cultural understanding can be promoted and developed in numerous ways using technologies, festivals, tours, marketing, and so forth, but effectiveness is dependent on the knowledge and vision of artists and other arts professionals who make content decisions.

We now have a clear connection between the goals of this project regarding exchange and the development of cultural understanding. Simply put, the connection is dependent on informed musical leaders. Schools of music are responsible for nurturing such leaders and thus have a major role in preparing them to promote cultural understanding.

We recommend that attention to the promotion of cultural understanding within European and US institutions develop their programmes so that through study and experience, individuals gain one or more of the following:

1. Perspectives on the existence of various cultural approaches.
2. Knowledge and skills necessary to work with a breadth of new repertory; for example, analytical techniques, historical investigations, cultural references, rehearsal methods, and so forth.
3. An understanding of influences on musical content and style, such as historical period, cultural environment, philosophical climate, and so forth.
4. Experience in working with a variety of approaches to common goals.
5. An understanding that different methods can produce excellent results.
6. The ability to see information, analysis, procedure, music making, and value determinations through the lenses of a different culture, even if the differences are small.
7. Skills toward fluency in at least one and preferably more foreign languages.
8. An appreciation that different intellectual and policy climates surround current music making in different nations and cultures.
9. The inclination to build cultural understanding by showing interest in and commitment to music and things musical from another country or region.
10. An interest in creating individual relationships and in pursuing new musical interests.
11. Experiences, information, and insights regarding other cultures, the results of which can be put back into the work of one's home country or region.

Music schools are well equipped to address these goals. Obviously, the more experience individuals can have studying or working in other cultures, the more depth they will be able to achieve. However, even short, targeted programmes can address many of these elements.

Recommendations

Our primary recommendation is that those developing programmes of interaction between students, faculty, and schools of music in the European Union and the United States build at least some of these goals into structures of the programmes they develop. By doing this, they greatly enhance the prospects for a strong relationship between experience and study on the one hand and cultural understanding on the other.

We also recommend that further study be undertaken to explore the development of cultural understanding through better relationships among the libraries of schools of music. A number of these in Europe and in the United States are world treasures of information, repertory, and professional

support. Many others also have extensive holdings and significant expertise. As information technology makes sharing more feasible, further studies of the possibilities are warranted.

We further recommend a role for research and scholarship in promoting cultural understanding among faculty and students in schools of music. Many important topics are held in common: medical issues for musicians; the relationship of academic studies in music to the creation of new works and the preparation of programmes; teaching roles of the professional musician and how best to prepare for them; the evolution of cultural and musical priorities in individuals, organizations, and nations, to name but a few.

Clearly, with regard to the promotion of cultural understanding, schools of music and conservatoires are sources of action and also incubators of ideas, will, and analysis and developers of knowledge and skills. We hope these facts will energize local action and school-to-school exchange. The aggregated efforts of individual schools are the key to continuing success. In matters of cultural understanding, both parallel and co-operative efforts can be effective. As each institution makes its decisions about what it will do alone and what it will do with others, we encourage continuing attention to building cultural understanding among future generations of music professionals.