

ExTra! – Exchange Traditions. A European project

by Rebekka Leibbrand

“Cultivating traditions does not mean tending the ashes, but keeping the embers glowing,” as the 19th century French politician Jean Jaurès put it. Unfortunately the term tradition is often associated with outdated rites and customs. In reality however, traditions mean more than just the preservation of old rules and conventions. Traditions are flexible. They develop and change as they are being influenced by contemporary developments. They reinvent and redefine themselves interplaying with traditions of former and present cultures. Old forms constitute the matrix for new ones – inspiring contrasts as well as continuity. Decisive is only that they create a spark to set off a new fire.

In July 2006 the EU funded project “ExTra! Exchange Traditions” was started, which is coordinated by the European Music Council (EMC). Its aim is to enkindle new fires and rekindle old ones. In the course of this three year intercultural exchange project many amateur and professional musicians, musicologists, music teachers and multimedia musicians have the opportunity to explore different music traditions. Activities range from concerts and workshops to conventions and publications as well as an internet platform offering downloadable music. This year the project fits in especially well with the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID) 2008.

Various local and regional activities of the ExTra! partners guarantee that the project strongly involves European citizens rather than solely acting on an international stage. The wide range of events in many different places illustrates this principle nicely:

- The programme of the European Summer Academy 2007, which was organised by the Cité de la Musique in Paris, featured a combination of music from Senegal, Morocco and Transylvania as well as classical Ottoman and Andalusian music. In student workshops the typical teaching methods of these regions, which are quite unfamiliar to European music academies, were presented and explored.
- In Rome, Fondazione Adkins Chiti: Donne in Musica organised joint concerts of Italians and musicians from migrant families. In 2006, for instance, different tambour techniques from Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Italy were presented while in November 2007 plucked instruments from Iran, Lebanon and Italy formed the centre of attention.
- Organised by the Association Nationale Culture et Traditions, a lively musical exchange between students and traditional musicians took place in the Auvergne: The small town Gannat with its 5000 residents hosted the re-gional dance and music competition at Easter and the 2008 Festival of World Cultures in July.
- In July 2008 the International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation organised a workshop about ‘Green Music’ which explored the musical potential of nature. The workshop’s outcome was presented at the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival.
- The annual workshops of mica, the Austrian music information centre, focus on improving public awareness about intellectual property, including creative output which is available on the net. These workshops provide information about legal regulations concerning music marketing online. A topic which is becoming increasingly relevant to musicians. Apart from that, mica provides a download platform offering project related music in keeping with the principles of the Fair Music Initiative which tries to enhance fairness and justice in the music business.

In addition to these projects, ExTra! intends to promote the theoretical debate about the intercultural dialogue by a scientific publication. This interdisciplinary work is called "Music in Motion: Diversity and Dialogue in Europe". It comprises pertinent essays by experts in ethnology, sociology and music ethnology. Like the events which are part of the ExTra! project, the publication deals with the exchange of traditions in various artistic and scientific disciplines, such as musical education, equality of the sexes, the concept of identity and the media. The second part of the publication focuses on the presentation of various local projects which could inspire new initiatives.

The project will culminate in the closing event in Athens from 23 to 26 April 2009 which will be organised in association with the Greek project partner EnChordais and take place in conjunction with the annual EMC conference. Next to the publication, the result of multiple projects will be presented, possible improvements discussed and an extension of the activities considered.

ExTra! offers a platform for the musical exchange between different cultures, peoples and nations, concentrating not only on the cooperation between single European countries but also on the integration of the so-called minority cultures within the countries themselves. As a matter of fact, "culture is man-made and shaped, adjusted and reclaimed in reference to varying contexts. The supposedly inherent always includes the foreign" (Arbeitsgruppe Musikpädagogik und Musikethnologie (AMMe), Musikforum 2, p. 50). By enhancing the musical dialogue, ExTra! intends to further the respectful and peaceful understanding of the citizens of Europe And, while protecting cultural diversity, its aim is also the creation of a common European identity.

For further information about "ExTra! Exchange Traditions" please go to:

- www.extra-project.eu (homepage of the project)
- www.manymusics.org/extra (download platform)
- www.emc-imc.org (European Music Council)

European Music Council, Haus der Kultur, Weberstr. 59 a, 53113 Bonn,
Germany

Tel.: +49-228-96699664, fax: +49-228-96699665,

Email: info@emc-imc.org, web: www.emc-imc.org

Translation by Andrea Hofmann

This article on the EU funded EMC cooperation project was released in German in the quarterly published magazine of the German Music Council „Musikforum" issue 4/08 in October 2008, Schott Music, Mainz.