

Overview Report of 6 Music and Teachers' Training study programmes – *General Didactics of Music, Music Pedagogy, Performance Art* (Bachelor/Master), *Sound Design* (Bachelor/Master) February 2014.

Aims, Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Design

The six-member international team conducted onsite evaluations of the above areas of Music and found the outcomes pleasing, yet variable. All programmes are specialised and seek to address professional markets. Demand for programmes remains either high, or steady.

The *General Didactics of Music* and *Music Pedagogy* programmes (both of which carry a teaching qualification) were found to be broadly structured, though in *Didactics*, by common consent amongst some of the teaching colleagues, the programme, perhaps, had reached a point of saturation in its curricula. And while within its varied and well bolstered educational offering the programme carries some very positive advantages for able students, there was little room for innovation, addition and flexibility. Some competition for curricula space and prominence was also found among specialist teaching colleagues. Standards were found to be high and students were receiving a very positive rounded education which was in evidence in the quality of their work and preparation for future careers as teachers.

In *Music Pedagogy*, preparation for teaching was found to be equally thorough, though the Evaluation Team found the programme to be not solely dedicated and heavily weighted to teaching competences, with the programme team emphasising the almost equal importance of performance in the professional careers of its graduates. In both pedagogic programmes, teaching practice is well organised and appreciated by students.

Aims and Learning Outcomes are generally well situated for all programmes and are consistent with the type and level of studies (first cycle and second cycle), though this is not the case with the second-cycle *Sound Design* programme where 8 of the ILOs of the second-cycle study programme are identical to the corresponding ILOs of the first-cycle study programme with no differences of levels indicated. The same lack of distinction is found in the MA *Performance Art* when compared with the learning outcomes of the BA programme in *Performance Art*.

Continuous review and updating of intended learning outcomes is in evidence. However, processes and sources informing such changes were generally not in illustration. In the *Sound Design* (BA), the current aims, learning outcomes and curriculum raise questions about the profile being a “music technology profile”, a “music profile” or a “technology profile”. This needs resolution for the future development of the programme. Greater emphasis on practical work and activities was deemed to be necessary in this programme.

From both cycles of *Performance Art*, students participate in the Vytautas Magnus University Chamber Orchestra which regularly performs in public. The Evaluation Team had a chance to listen to the orchestra in live performance at the Kaunas Philharmonic Hall with a number of current and former students participating as soloists. The overall impression of the performance standard was good and some soloists demonstrated remarkable artistic abilities. Nevertheless, the artistic view could yet improve, be broadened and made even more comparable to international standards. For the curricula of all programmes, The Evaluation Team recommends a more international orientation, which would prevent limiting graduates to the Lithuanian labour market and qualify graduates more readily for international opportunities and careers.

As a postscript to this section, it should be recalled that following negotiations, which the Evaluation Team understood as being a relatively tense period, the former Kaunas Faculty of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, in expressing its wish to join with Vytautas Magnus University, was disaffiliated from the LMTA. This move involved the transfer of all of the Kaunas Faculty assets (buildings, equipment and training materials) and personnel into and under the governance of VMU. The situation is now stable towards the future for both teachers' training programmes. The *General Didactics of Music*, now relocated to Vilnius, is the continuance of the previous or 'old' programme but with new facilities, staff, students and 20% changed content. The new programme *Music Pedagogy* now progresses at the Music Academy of VMU.

Staff

In all programmes the staff meet the legal requirements, aided by Humanities doctorates in the case of *Music Pedagogy*, and were found to be active nationally, and not infrequently internationally, as performers, teachers and conference attendees. Teaching staff are generally enthusiastic and highly committed, including those from the two Sound programmes despite their continued disappointments regarding resource shortcomings. The Evaluation Team found there to be considerable strengths in voice and choir, traditional to the musical activity of Lithuania. National choirs have been acknowledged by UNESCO and there is a culture of necessity, palpable among the staff, to maintain and continue with Lithuanian traditions, among them strengthening of the "Dainų dainelė" competition. Concomitantly, there is a dedicated attitude to pass on the preservation and continuance of these values to future teachers and schools. However, the Evaluation Team considered that stronger links with programmes in other countries would be helpful in ensuring that programmes reflect more fully international standards and expectations.

Facilities and Learning Resources

In terms of infrastructure, all programmes, save for the Sound programmes at LMTA, are supported satisfactorily by adequate building resources. VMU had made alternative and satisfactory arrangements whilst their previous building is being renovated. However, during the visit, the Evaluation Team were unable to see and evaluate the newly vacated premises as the building was not in use at time, otherwise being prepared for the new reconstruction. The Self-evaluation Team explained that the financing and building plan had been prepared and reconstruction would start soon. The Evaluation Team were not convinced however that the refurbished premises would be completed by the expected deadline, September, 2014. Concerning the Sound programmes at LMTA the buildings available are of barely satisfactory standard. That some of these are historically-listed premises does not help the current situation.

Facilities for *Sound Design* programmes are sparse and insufficiently accessible; practical work thus is limited. As a result, students develop deficits in practical experience, know-how and skills. *Sound Design* students have collaboration opportunities with *Performance Art* students (recording their performances). This practice appears to be mostly facilitating other study programmes and disciplines instead of having a strong focus on intended learning outcomes. Currently LMTA is planning and partly implementing two infrastructural projects: the Academy will upgrade a part of the out-dated and worn-out studio equipment and install modern information technologies. LMTA is strongly recommended to realise these plans as soon as possible, as the current situation is putting the quality of the Sound programmes and the quality of their outcomes at severe risk.

Prospectively, the larger vision for LMTA concerning the plans for a complex of campuses (including newly-acquired land near to the castle) offers the Academy an excellent future profile in Vilnius. Various sources of funding (including EC Structural Funds) will be sought for this venture. In relation to teaching materials (textbooks, books, periodical publications and databases), resources seem adequate generally, across the programmes, though international journals on Sound programmes are not well represented. The Evaluation Team noted a significant omission in the GDM resourcing at LMTA, in there being no dedicated space or auditorium for didactics involving musical instruments and teaching aids that are used at all levels in schools. They were informed that such facilities are available in one particular school and that students could gain access to such resources in that way. The Evaluation Team formed the view that this particular situation concerning the immediate availability of essential resources was barely satisfactory. At VMU, open competition for the renewal of the instrument base began in September of 2013. It has suggested value of over LTL 900,000. Currently, nearly all of the classrooms have instruments. The VMU Music Academy currently owns sufficient instrumentation and the instruments are in a fair condition.

Study Processes and Assessment

There is general dislike (amongst the teaching staff) of the national system of recruitment for Bachelor programmes, which is claimed not to favour creative arts students, resulting in institutions not being free to select the most able. Students however were not equal in their critical views. Generally support for students institutionally is favourable; admissions criteria are clear and there is a range of structures for the benefit of student life, including psychological and careers services, scholarship availability and clear guidance on learning outcomes for assessment purposes. The taught subject modules, are in most cases, particularly well detailed in specifications and in assessment requirements. Student mobility tends to be more embryonic rather than fully flown, though there are justifiable reasons (*inter-alia*, financing, part-time employment restrictions and limited Erasmus funding) why so few can be mobile. Staff mobility is however more seasoned. All programmes have strong partnerships with social partners, the labour market and especially with local schools.

Programme Management

There are structures for management, though not all operate at the same level of scrutiny and pace. Senior committee progress has generally been slower at LMTA and ESG referencing is more prominent at VMU. LMTA is moving to a more updated and efficient mode of data gathering. At LMTA, the Evaluation Team expressed some concern at the apparent lack of concerted managerial efforts to improve more speedily the resource shortcomings for the Sound programmes. All programmes operate structures and methodologies for the collection, analysis, interpretation and action planning associated with data returns, and all programmes operate some form of evaluation, appraisal, or attestation for teaching staff. Equally, all programmes involve stakeholders as participants in the evaluation process. However, the management for all 6 programmes should variously focus much more on strategic planning across all areas: set concrete goals, develop a mission and workable vision plan supported with specific action plans.

The Evaluation Process

SKVC is a seasoned Agency which has a high level of evaluation experience over a protracted period. Hence, the work, which is fast-paced and demanding, requires time and a high-level of commitment from evaluators, whose judgements need to be achieved via copious reading, critical assimilation and care. Only the highest skilled and experienced

evaluators will best meet the demands of quality-assurance evaluation in Lithuania. The Coordinator for this exercise, which covered the above-stated music programmes, Barbora Drašutytė, was of temperate disposition, maturely skilled and supportive to the Evaluation Team. The student member, Monika Jankauskaitė, demonstrated remarkable maturity. The whole Team was very effective and thorough in the on-site reviews, but might have been a little more flexible in the evaluation debates.

Dr Terence Clifford-Amos Team Leader in Vilnius and Kaunas, Lithuania, February 2014.