



OVERVIEW REPORT FOR *MUSIC* STUDY FIELD

Year of Evaluation
2015

INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the external quality evaluation of the following study programmes in the study fields of *music and pedagogy* in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions: at Vilnius College – *Popular Music*; at Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre – *Musical Folklore (BA)*, *Musical Folklore (MA)*, *Music Theory and Criticism (BA)*, *Music Theory and Criticism (MA)*.

The external evaluation (-s) was/were organised by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC).

The external evaluations were performed according to the evaluation areas and criteria: (1) Programme aims and learning outcomes, (2) Curriculum design, (3) Teaching staff, (4) Facilities and learning resources, (5) Study process and students' performance assessment, and (6) Programme management.

Comprehensive external evaluation reports including strengths and weaknesses and concluding with some recommendations were prepared for each evaluated programme and included evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the *music* study field from a general point of view.

All programmes received *positive* evaluation.

OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS

Popular Music

For Popular Music – the Review Team found much to be commended. The comprehensiveness of the learning outcomes allow for improvisation with a musical instrument/voice in the manner of popular music style and genre. This means that a graduate will be prepared individually to facilitate the design and preparation of jazz and popular music programmes for different social and cultural contexts. Nonetheless, the Review Team felt that the programme could illustrate how learning outcome adjustments, which commendably are observed and made during the programme, are dynamically effective and productive both to students, the external world of employment and to further academic study.

In terms of the curriculum, the Review Team found the study subjects to be discerningly appropriate for the achievement of learning outcomes. Concerning advice sought by the programme team about the proposed changes designed to take place during 2015-16, the Review Team deliberated on these matters. In relation to *Computer Technologies of Music, Basics of Composition and Arrangement* being moved into the compulsory category, and the new subject and Studio Practice being introduced, the Review Team were in broad agreement with all proposals. They, however, expressed some reservations towards Speciality Language and General and Social Psychology being moved into the group of *Optional Subjects*, and the movement of Copyright and Neighbouring Rights, Management of Culture, and World Music into *General Subjects of College Studies*.

Many of the staff, whose average age is 46, are substantially time-served at Vilnius College; 59% of staff are over the age of 40 and 14% over 60 years. While there is reasonable age balance, the future might hopefully allow for appointments in the lower age range to re-balance career structures on the programme. Creative and performing activities are well illustrated, together with prestigious national and international awards and prizes achieved by the teaching staff. Although publications are mostly of pedagogic, textbook and arrangements orientation, rather than monograph, and are less strong in terms of number, the quality, however, is high. Teachers as national and sometimes international artists, are warmly appreciated by students who are drawn to Vilnius College and the programme by the prospect of being taught by them. Thus, the teaching staff are an asset to the programme in terms of artistic contribution, where their gifts as teachers result in high pedagogic achievements on the programme.

The Review Team found that the arrangements for students' practice are good, though more practice rooms would be welcomed. The classrooms, which are assigned to implement practical classes, are supplied with musical instruments and sound amplifier equipment. 22 classrooms are supplied with pianos. Students praised the ability to access the learning equipment and practice around the clock. The current facilities ensure the basic needs of the study programme are at a good level; but however, due to financial constraints, not all the classrooms are provided with computing equipment. Other computing equipment is depreciating. Teaching materials are good and accessible. Sufficient funds have been allocated towards expansion of the Library to meet the demands of the *Popular Music* study programme.

The organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes. The Review Team found that the staff encouraged students to participate in research, artistic and applied research activities by helping the students with their individual projects. Students praised staff involvement in their individual research, artistic and applied research pursuits; however, the Review Team found that this process, while commendable, could be more strongly documented and systematically presented. Concerning mobility, the Review Team found the students had the basic opportunities to participate in student mobility programmes, though the implementation of mobility could be stronger. The popularity of the programme causes students not to seek mobility, however. The assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate and publicly available; and activities within the professional fields of graduates from the *Popular Music* study programme coheres with the expectations of its executors.

While the programme management includes at its administrative helm, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* - and although an admirable facet of quality management and a governing authority for quality assurance - the Review Team nevertheless found it less clear to discern precisely how the ESG operate as an umbrella mechanism for *overall* programme management. The

Programme Committee arranges the meetings to oversee the implementation of the study programme and meets not less than twice per academic year. There are informal processes for the involvement of Social Partners and community members in the quality assurance process. Social partners are members of the Committee of the Study Programme. Towards developing wider international contacts, particularly in terms of the excellent artist-teachers involved in the programme, a robust marketing strategy is recommended by the Review Team. It was found that the management of the programme, mostly through the application of quality assurance measures, is working well.

Music Theory and Criticism (BA)

The learning outcomes were written by a number of people, led by the Head of Quality Management Division and also included students and social partners. Despite this background, the meetings with different groups showed that general consciousness about intended learning outcomes and their role in the study process could be raised among the staff and students in the future. Stakeholders affirmed that they were satisfied with the competences of the graduates and believed the learning outcomes of the programme were generally well composed and also mostly achieved. The graduates were receiving a high-quality academic background and are equipped with multi-tasking practical skills.

The content and methods of the subjects, as well as the scope of the programme, are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The Review Team noticed that the scope of research topics chosen by the students (or suggested to them by teachers) was very broad; they covered different types and styles of music as well as different musical contexts. This openness of possible research topics is therefore in a slight contradiction to the rather conservative core curriculum. Despite the fact that some minor concerns were raised by The Review Team, the curriculum design is considered to be excellent in many aspects and fulfilling the programme through various means.

The Review Team noticed evidence of a good professional community amongst the teaching staff. There is little doubt that the staff of the programme have been selected from the best experts in the Lithuanian field. A number of teachers also act as stakeholders and thus are able to build a direct bridge between the academic and professional worlds. It is recommended to create more opportunities for full-time staff members to work abroad for longer periods (sabbatical semester or a year), which would have a stronger impact on their professional development and would strengthen the contacts between LMTA and similar institutions abroad. Students praised their teachers for being very collegial and supportive to them. Because there is a small number of students, each of them receives considerable personal attention. All teachers are publishing regularly, mostly in Lithuania and neighbouring countries. Different age groups are represented among the teaching staff. Thus, there is little reason to doubt that LMTA is able to ensure adequate provision of the programme also in the future.

Equipment available for the delivery of the Programme is sufficient, and updated every year. Teachers can use two well-equipped rooms with Wi-Fi, video and audio equipment. The LMTA Music Innovation Studies Centre with its infrastructure is also possible to use and musical instruments of the LMTA have been updated substantially in recent years. The available infrastructure complies with the requirements of quality in higher education and has created conditions for the comprehensive training of students.

The number of students intending to study in the Programme is low, but relatively stable (6-14 in 2009-2014) and they are well qualified on entry. However, the national admission procedure is less favourable with Academy staff in not helping 'to achieve the greatest impartiality in selecting the best entrants to study programmes and allocating state funding to their studies'.

The Academy aims at ensuring that the organisation of academic and social support to students is appropriate, and dissemination of all information is consistent and timely. However, students seemed not always to be fully aware of precisely who is responsible. This may be caused by the fact that the programme is coordinated by two departments together (Department of Music History and Department of Music Theory).

The number of students participating in international exchange studies is still rather low. According to Table 19 in SER (p. 34) in academic years 2010-2014 only three students went out for exchange. Respectively there were only two incoming students. During interview, students showed substantial interest in exchange and other international activities, and in general, their skills in English are remarkable. Although the staff consider international activities very important as well, more could be achieved in order to make internationalisation a natural part of every student's academic experience.

The Academy collects, analyses and uses information that helps to manage study programmes and other activities efficiently. Results of surveys are discussed by the programme committee and published on the website of the Academy. A new Quality Manual has only recently been approved. The Review Team hopes that the quality processes, so capably described in the manual, will be implemented and will become a natural part of the quality culture of the LMTA.

Music Theory and Criticism (MA)

The Review Team considered the learning outcomes to be adequate, well defined and clearly presented. They correspond well to Level 7 of the Lithuanian and European Qualification Frameworks. The aims and learning outcomes of the MA programme allow considerable emphasis on scientific research. In this way they differ considerably from the aims and learning outcomes of the BA programme

While on the one hand the broad aims of the programme well reflect the variety of research topics and professional careers that the graduates can choose, on the other, it is hardly possible that the graduates can be equally talented and skilled in all the activity fields listed. Therefore, a more focused definition of the programme aims is recommended that would refer to the possibility of the students to choose between more academic and more applied profiles. The stakeholders affirmed that they are satisfied with the competences of the graduates and they believed that the learning outcomes of the programme are generally well composed and also mostly achieved. The graduates were receiving a high-quality academic background and are equipped with multi-tasking practical skills.

Generally, the curriculum is well designed and takes into account the needs of different students and professional requirements of the discipline. The

content and methods of the subjects as well as the scope of the programme are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the content of the subjects is consistent with the second-cycle studies. The students benefit from a very broad overview of different theories and methods of musicological research – those used in the past and those that are applied nowadays. It was, however, less obvious to the Review Team as to how the students actually learn to apply these methods in practice.

The Review Team thought that the content of the subjects “Epistemology of Music Theory”, “Theoretical Systems of Music” and “Modern Theories of Musicology” is overloaded and the bibliographical lists of their subject descriptions extremely long and diverse. The graduates agreed that these subjects were actually very demanding and the amount of information they had to learn was very large; but at the same time, however, they were very satisfied with the high academic level of instruction, namely in these subjects, and they were convinced that these core subjects of the curriculum helped them to become good professionals.

Both the qualifications and number of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. Different age groups are represented among the teaching staff. Thus, there is little reason to doubt that the LMTA is able to ensure adequate provision of the programme also in the future. Most of the teaching staff operate across the Music Theory and Criticism BA and MA programmes.

What is said about staffing for the BA in the same subject also applies here; but further to such detail, during the meeting with the Review Team the staff members stated that they are rather successful project writers. Since the financial support to their research projects from the side of the LMTA is limited, they seek for funds elsewhere, e.g. from the Composers Union, with whom the Lithuanian musicologists traditionally have good collaboration. The staff members appreciated the freedom and independence that they have in their research activities, for example, in choosing research topics and finding research partners. It can be readily said that the staff are highly qualified and more than sufficient for the master’s programme.

Concerning resources, what is mentioned for the BA also applies here; however, it should also be mentioned that LMTA Music Innovation Studies Centre, with its modern infrastructure, is also possible to use. The Centre offers completely new resources for the programme which could make possible the development of the programme’s profile in new directions for the future.

In addition to what has been said in respect of the BA programme’s study programme, the following commentary is particularly pertinent to the MA. Since the background of the admitted students varies, and only some of them have BA in Music Theory, some core courses, especially Epistemology of Music Theory discussed earlier in this report, turn out to be rather challenging for some of the students. However, the percentage of the graduates is still quite high – 78, 57 % in the years from 2009 to 2014 (SER p. 27). According to the social partners, the labour market seems to be waiting for rather practically-oriented graduates with solid knowledge of music. The graduates’ future professional careers are versatile, and stakeholders consider their skills as transferable to various tasks. According to the MA students, the achievement of transferable skills is partly due to the flexibility of their teachers, strong academic support by the teaching staff, and freedom to choose sometimes quite remote subjects for the final research work. Academic standards of the Master theses are high and the scope of research topics is wide.

Further what has been said in BA, *Programme* management is organised in accordance with the recent *Quality Manual of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre* (approved 24.3.2015), which is a clear and thorough description and guide for the internal quality assurance system of the LMTA. The core, governance and assurance processes have been identified, process administrators have been appointed and the map of processes has been drawn at LMTA according to the QM.

Musical Folklore (BA)

The consistency of the Programme aims and learning outcomes is in accordance with the type and level of studies qualification. However, there are quite different skills, for example, for the performers, teachers, organizers, managers, editors and researchers; and therefore it might be problematic to reach all of them at the same level in one programme. The name of the programme is still not clear, because in the SER its name is 'Folk music' but in the other documents it appears as "Musical folklore". The name "Folk music" has been used for similar (but more to the performance and not for the research-oriented) programmes in the Nordic countries (NORDTRAD network, for example). There is also the study subject, "Ear training for ethnomusicologists" in the study plan, which raises the question why the name of this subject includes the word 'ethnomusicologist' if the name of the study programme is 'musical folklore' and students obviously are not ethnomusicologists but folk musicians.

The content of the study subjects is consistent with the type and level of the studies. Theoretically, the content and methods are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes; however, the learning outcomes are intended for a very broad field, but the study subjects tend to concentrate on the research and performance of Lithuanian music in a traditional way. Since the content of the Programme is focused on the Lithuanian traditional music, from that point of view it is a unique programme, which serves for the safeguarding of the Lithuanian cultural heritage. In that way also, the content of the Programme reflects more the achievements in cultural policy at local and international level and is to be commended. Concerning the content of the programme, the Review Team recommends more practical opportunity, while maintaining the thematic emphasis, and also to consider how instrumental teaching can be stylistically practical in both professional and traditional ways. This latter point was a particularly keen observation made by a student during interview.

The qualifications of the teaching staff meet the legal requirements. From 25 teachers, 15 have a doctoral degree. The age diversity of the staff is 35 to 65. The teachers of the Programme are very much involved in research and art activities both in local and international level. The programme obviously benefits from strong professional expertise.

Equipment available for the delivery of the Programme is sufficient; equipment and musical instruments are updated every year. There are 9 rooms equipped with multiple audio and video equipment and the internet. The Music Innovation Studies Centre is a unique infrastructure for music technology studies. The wider available infrastructure complies with the requirements of quality in higher education and creates conditions for comprehensive training of future specialists in folk music. There is the library in the Academy, which has been updated regularly; at the same time the teachers provide the students with other literature.

Students are encouraged to participate in research and art activities through implementation of different projects, scientific research and events and participation in different creative contests. Activities of the NORDTRAD network, participation of the students in the folklore group, led by Head of the Department of Ethnomusicology in several concerts abroad and participation in the folklore festivals in Lithuania, are notable examples. The research activities include the preparation of the final theses/project, which actually is a part of the study plan.

Concerning mobility, the Review Team noted a decided difference between students' and teachers' standpoints concerning the mobility. During the site-visit, the teachers considered it unnecessary for the students to use these programmes because they have to concentrate only on Lithuanian traditions in Lithuania. But, quite to the contrary, students expressed their wish to use the mobility programmes more. Stakeholders mentioned the need for skills in management, people skills, direction/ production, organisation, communication, theatrical styling and didactic methods. Some of the stakeholders mentioned that they expect a more innovative approach to the traditional music performance, not solely the authentic way of traditional music-making.

While there is little information about the management of the programme in general terms, that is other than quality assurance mechanisms, the Review Team were most pleased to see that the quality assurance system is based on the EFQM (the excellence model of the European Foundation for Quality Management) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). These are two key European publications which deal with quality processes. The internal quality assurance measures are effective and efficient and will be further assisted in the future by the excellent new Quality Manual, now published.

Musical Folklore (MA)

While the programme aims and learning outcomes are clear and accessible, the Review Team found them to be much too all-encompassing to be useful in the design of the programme. The inclusion of academic-oriented ethnomusicology appeared to be an attempt to offer programme content in both musical folklore and ethnomusicology in one Master level programme. In the opinion of the Review Team, it is not possible to achieve good results in both of these areas through one programme. This approach also does not help clarify who the addressee of the programme is. If faced with the necessity of choosing between Musical folklore and Ethnomusicology, which study programme is needed more by students and society at large? If the Programme will continue the emphasis on musical folklore, is there a programme of study in ethnomusicology in Lithuania that would fill the gap? On a technical level, the aims of the Musical Folklore Bachelor and Master Programmes are remarkably similar; yet there are differences in the intended learning outcomes.

Some courses in the Master level curriculum appear similar to those offered at the Bachelor level. The difference between the courses on world music for the two cycles of study is unclear. There is also considerable similarity between the first-and second-cycle courses on ethnomusicology. Elsewhere in the programme, students are given limited opportunities for practical application or to develop performance skills related to Lithuanian folk music, which is one of the stated aims. There are many elements of the Programme that point to a local and Eurocentric viewpoint, as in the courses *Polyphony of European Nations* and *Traditional Music of European Nations*; however the latter makes no mention of European minority cultures, such

as those of the Roma, Sephardic or Ashkenazy Jews. The Programme also does not give very full attention to the music of Lithuanian minorities. A premier institution of music education in Lithuania needs to resonate more with the international science and practice of studying traditional music culture. The content is mostly focused on preservation and transmission rather than examination of music as a process and product of past, present and future culture.

The qualifications of the teaching staff meet the legal requirements and the Programme and include a number of very qualified experts in several fields of ethnomusicology. Many of them are not only scholars, but also well-known musicians. From that viewpoint, the qualifications of the teaching staff are suitable to ensure the learning outcomes that are presently stated. Teachers of the Programme are very much involved in research and art activities both at the local and international level. Staff members read papers at international conferences and publish research, reviews and popular articles; they participate as consultants in matters of cultural policy. No evidence was provided to illustrate that the Academy, Faculty or the Department has a systematic and clearly outlined strategy of professional development in place. Despite this, the faculty attend conferences and seminars, participate in international projects through self-financing and writing grant proposals.

The Review Team did not view the premises in which much of the instruction has been taking place until recently, and which purportedly are no longer considered acceptable. The facilities that were viewed by the Review Team were acceptable and in some cases excellent.

During the on-site visit the staff explained that databases are sufficient for the needs of the staff and students and the library does not purchase books that students might not read. However, the reviewers noted that monographs, handbooks, reference texts, and other books provide more in-depth and cumulative coverage in historical context. Faculty and students at LMTA have access to a very rich collection of folk music at the Ethnomusicology Division of the LMTA Research Centre. The archive is one of the largest in Europe, containing more than 100,000 pieces.

Students in both the Bachelor and Master level Musical Folklore programmes emphasized the sense of belonging – they felt like a family and acknowledged that their teachers care about their personal and academic needs. Students said that the small numbers and close ties assured that their needs were being met more readily than in a larger programme. Small numbers of students allowed for more individualised “Oxbridge” style learning and assessment, and also encouraged students to perform more responsibly. Students were encouraged to participate in research and artistic activities through implementation of different projects, scientific research, various events and participation in different creative contests.

Examination of thesis projects showed that there are some areas in need of improvement. The theses should include foreign-language summaries, expanded grounding of methods, more in-depth discussion sections regarding results, and a wider range of current research methodologies.

Concerning mobility, it has been said earlier that students do not wish to go abroad because they are satisfied with the home programme, and this would interfere with their thesis research. This is a highly problematic position, especially coming from a Master programme in the Department of Ethnomusicology. This also does not seem to reflect the opinion of students. They clearly expressed a desire to participate in mobility programmes, but also mentioned to the Review Team that there is not always sufficient or timely information about deadlines and opportunities. The Programme

should explore possibilities of more interdisciplinary partnerships with other universities and academies both in Lithuania and abroad, as well as opportunities to offer minor studies, double degrees and modules for international students to further the declared aim of disseminating and showcasing the music of Lithuania to the world.

While there is little information about the management of the programme in general terms, that is other than quality assurance mechanisms, the Review Team were most pleased to see that the quality assurance system is based on the EFQM (the excellence model of the European Foundation for Quality Management) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) [SER, 2.6.1, p.37]. These are two key European publications which deal with quality processes. The staff and management believed that informal evaluations are sufficient to gauge student opinion. Surveys of stakeholders (students, graduates, employees, employers and students who terminated studies) are proposed in the 2015 *Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre Quality Manual*. Future possibilities of including international students might require that more formal systems of procedures, assessment and data collection are put in place. However, if the provisions of the Quality Manual are to be implemented, there is much promise in terms of management progress at Master level.

MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMMES IN *MUSIC* STUDY FIELD

➤ Strategic recommendations at institutional level (for Higher Education Institutions):

- Make music as attractive to students as possible without diminishing the academic content;
- Market strongly, particularly overseas, by offering programmes through the English medium;
- Introduce double degrees (diplomas) at all 3 cycles with institutions overseas; be competitive at the highest levels, whilst maintaining the domestic market and develop robust marketing; create more stable and secure working and career development conditions for staff, especially for the younger teachers;
- The terms, ‘Musical folklore’ and ‘Folk music’ include different concepts and content and therefore need some attention; in the MA learning outcomes and curriculum content (geared towards ethnomusicology) do not match the declared general aims (geared towards musical folklore). The Programme Committee needs to decide on future directions.

➤ Strategic recommendations at national level (for the Ministry of Education and Science):

- Fund music as generously as possible;
- Promote music through the medium of English and fund training for this;
- Establish more competitions in music nationally and internationally – perhaps within the Baltic States;

- Fund modern equipment and resourcing in the universities;
- Encourage more doctoral students;
- Fund the means to safeguard Lithuanian traditional music and culture and showcase it to the academic and non-academic worlds.

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