

Finland, Composers-in-Residence at Finnish music schools, 2002-2003

The Composers-in-Residence project centres on co-operation between Finnish composers and music schools. During the 2002-2003 pilot project, seven music schools appointed a composer-in-residence. The composers have worked closely with pupils and instructors since autumn 2002. The Finnish Music Information Centre (FIMIC) and the Association of Finnish Music Schools (SML) launched the initiative.

Background

The project was prompted by the lack of contemporary music for children. Most contemporary compositions are too difficult for children to perform. The goal is for composers to experience and gain an understanding of what makes new music suitable for children to play. Furthermore, students often play music straight from notes, which does not afford them an opportunity to develop their individual creativity. The ideology of the project is to nurture the student's 'inner voice' and creativity.

Concept

The project aims mainly to build a bridge between music schools and composers. At the core of the cooperation is total interaction: besides teaching composition, the composers will also acquire an understanding of the demands inherent to music written for children. The project will produce new music suitable for children of various ages and technical abilities. In addition to composing, the seven composers will rehearse contemporary music with children and teachers, and participate in music theory lessons and workshops. For the pupils, the collaboration offers an opportunity to become familiar with the creative process of composing, and makes contemporary music a natural part of their instrumental studies.

The project will also involve testing out new educational methods, the most successful of which will be introduced later in other music schools.

Objectives

The project objectives are to make new music suitable for children available; to familiarize children with the creative process of composing; to make contemporary music a natural part of their instrumental studies; to test educational methods; and to implement the most successful methods and introduce them at other music schools. The aim is to reach a total of 40-50 music schools between 2003 and 2006.

Description

The seven pilot projects commenced in 2002-2003. Each of the pilots featured a highly individual character, involving different groups and students aged 4 to 20. Most of the students were in the 12 to 18 age group. The projects are designed for ensembles and individuals alike.

The composers participated mainly in workshops, which integrated a number of subjects. The students learned to compose, play their instruments, learn music theory, improvise, and gain a sense of self-expression. They were also schooled in chamber music incorporating compositions made by the students. The projects lasted at least one year, or a total of 60 hours. Every project started with an introductory meeting with the composer, and concluded with a concert showcasing the young students' compositions. There were no admission requirements to the project aside from an interest in contemporary music and composing.

Organisation

The project is the brainchild of the FIMIC, who organized it in cooperation with the SML. The associations planned and designed the project after meeting with composers and music school headmasters. Project coordination was in the hands of an FIMIC contemporary music expert, the headmasters of the seven participating music schools, and project secretaries from both organisations. Each of the music schools appointed a composer-in-residence.

The following lists the music schools and their composers-in-residence that participated in the year 2002-2003:

Hämeenlinna music school with composer Riikka Talvitie; Koillis-Lappi music school with Harri Wessman; Kuopio conservatory with Kai Nieminen; Lappeenranta music school with Markus Fagerudd; Western Helsinki music school with Anneli Arho; the Turku district music school with Kirmo Lintinen; and the Vantaa music school with Lauri Kilpiö.

Publicity

The FIMIC has handled the majority of publicity at the national level. Almost every project gained widespread publicity locally.

Finance

The pilot projects were organized with the help of the National Board of Education, which granted a subsidy to the SML. During the pilot projects, the association paid for salaries, travel and expenses. The pilot costs amounted to €30,000.

In 2003-2004, the project will be available to every music school, with a shared responsibility for costs. The SML will pay the salaries, and the music schools will cover travel and expenses.

Results

The concerts given after project conclusion were a direct result of the initiative. Other results include: new music suitable for children of various ages and technical abilities, and innovative educational methods.

An evaluation of the pilot project indicated that the only problem was the lack of information given to teachers and students. During the next wave of implementation, school headmasters must work more closely on the planning aspect, and assume more responsibility for disseminating information. Otherwise, the teachers considered the projects highly inspiring. In the long run, teacher (and headmaster) attitudes toward contemporary music may be more positive. Hopefully, composing will become an elective in every music school in Finland.

Literature & Information

Literature on composing in music schools seems scarce. For further information, please contact:

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