

# CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS

Conference Review: 18th IAMA International Conference – Konzerthaus Berlin, 17th-19th April 2008  
Andreas Flohr, Manager: Membership & Projects comments on the feedback from delegates.

A total of 474 delegates from 34 countries joined IAMA for its most popular International Conference to date. Chaired by Cornelia Schmid, President of Konzertdirektion Schmid, this year's title, "Reaching Out", encouraged a new thinking on the systems that IAMA had in place to help delegates with their business activity. We knew from feedback collected over the years that face to face meetings constitutes one of the main reasons why people attend an IAMA Conference. The new online messaging system we developed was another step in assisting delegates to contact each other while protecting their identity. More than 3000 messages were sent before, during and after the conference which proved the necessity for improved communication before the conference. More than 60% of conference delegates rated it as a very important aspect to their visit and two thirds of all attendees would have liked it to be available after the conference.

Individual meetings were particularly popular at the Konzerthaus Berlin, because the venue provided plenty of private meeting space. The committee also took this aspect into account when programming the individual sessions, allowing extended breaks as well as finding the most beautiful surroundings for networking opportunities - such as the boat trip and the Ice-breaker event at the Radialsystem V. From the feedback we received we know



Jochen Sandig  
Photo: klassik.com



Prof Frank Schneider  
Photo: klassik.com

that the experience of this year's ice-breaker was one of the highest rated events. When asked what delegates found to be the most important conference programme activity, for the first time, the panel sessions were rated highest with 27% of conference delegates citing one or more panel sessions as their favourite event. Every year, it is the committee's primary concern and challenge to provide a wide range of industry issues that are openly discussed with experts during the sessions. Of those presented, it was the welcome with Konzerthaus Intendant, Prof Frank Schneider's opening address and Jochen Sandig's (Co-artistic Director, Radialsystem V) keynote speech that gained the highest rating in addition to the highest attendance of delegates (50%).

Membership attendance at this year's IAMA conference was also at an all time high with 47% of all conference delegates coming from one of IAMA's 241 member companies (compared to 45% in London 2007 and 44% in Stockholm 2006). The largest membership delegation came from the United Kingdom (31%) followed by Germany (22%) and Austria (9%), but the highest overall proportion of delegates came from Germany. Germany is the first country (other than the UK) that has hosted the conference more than once. This strong international support shows that the industry, in which we work, is world-wide and the issues which affect us are international.



## Artist Development: The singer today and our management responsibilities

By Boris Orlob, *Boris Orlob Management, Berlin*

This session posed the questions: Where have all the big and distinctive voices gone? What effect has globalisation had on the opera world and has the role of the casting director been undermined? In our increasingly demanding world, where can the singer find the professional space to test new repertoire or work on technical problems and who do they reach out to in these circumstances?

The challenge with all panel discussions is finding the right balance of people and we were fortunate to have had Christine Schäfer, who has worked with all major opera companies, orchestras and festivals in the world, and who started her singing studies in Berlin; moderator and speaker, John McMurray, now head of casting at the English National Opera and previously with IMG Artists and Intermusica; Hein Mulders, artistic administrator at the Netherlands Opera and formerly casting director at the Vlaamse Opera in Antwerp; Christoph Seufferle, opera director, Deutsche Oper Berlin, a well known professional who has been working at the Bayerische Staatsoper München, the Opéra Bastille in Paris and the Opéra de Montpellier before joining the Deutsche Oper in his current position.

### Image today

Christoph Seufferle and Hein Mulders both mentioned the pressure they felt in searching for singers with the right physical image for a role. This they attributed to the growing influence of the stage director over the last twenty years and pointed out that it was a trend that was unlikely to be reversed. Both agreed, however, that although this was a given development, it would not serve the audience or art form of opera to resist or return to past styles of presentation which paid little heed to the visual element of the performers.

### Professional Support and Career Development

John McMurray asked if singers got the necessary support from the established system and how they could survive facing the globalisation of the opera world? My own view was that the German theatre system, with its traditional, stable ensemble system of singers, is in crisis today. The reality is that it is difficult for a singer to remain in the same opera house for more than three to four years let alone develop a range of operatic repertoire and experience. Past praise for the ability of the German theatre system to support the development of singers and offer them repertoire opportunities is no longer deserved as opera houses adopt a shorter term approach of two to three seasons before taking on new and younger singers. Christoph Seufferle, however, retorted that it was still possible to make this journey in vocal development within the structures of the small to medium sized houses and that the larger opera houses depended upon this system. One delegate was quick to voice his view that few conductors today seemed to know about the right repertoire for a voice and fewer still who could be regarded as a partner to the singer. Christine Schäfer added that the fundamental problem of the development of a singer was domiciled in the conservatories with the capabilities of students quite often underestimated or misjudged. For instance, when she was training, teachers tended to dismiss her potential as a future

opera singer due to her smaller voice. Generally, conservatories, she believes, gives students little preparation for the realities of the profession and a lot could be done to improve the situation. Further to limiting the singers developmental opportunities was the attitude that was found within opera houses to rehearsing. Time has been cut to a minimum and indeed, appeared to be an annoyance to some managements giving the impression that there was no true interest in the consistent development of an ensemble or its members. Today, singers seem to be urged to sing *forte* more than any other dynamic and the importance of the piano as a rehearsal tool seems to have been forgotten. All these factors have contributed to narrowing the range of singers available on the market with strong voices being favoured rather than interesting voices. John McMurray commented that the concert sector was in decline and that singers were much more dependent on operatic engagements but this was quickly disputed by an audience member who believed that the German market was different.

### Coaching in development

All the panel members agreed about the importance of good resources and believed that the time had come for opera houses to invest more into language and music coaches. Not only would it boost the artist's confidence, particularly since singers were increasingly from many parts of the world where contact with the main European languages was not always frequent, but improve the overall experience for the audience. Hein Mulders affirmed this point and responded that singers ought to sing in foreign languages as often as possible to enhance their experience and ability.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, globalisation is here to stay and no less so than in the opera world. For some, the "good old days" were in the past but if we don't take more care about the development of the voice and the preparedness for today's singer both artistically and in personal confidence, there will be little to recall in the future with pride. More needs to be done by the opera house such as investment in coaching and a renewed commitment to training and rehearsal time. The conservatories need to be in closer contact with professional practice today and could do more to equip the student in managing career expectations. Furthermore, conservatories, like opera house managements, should be more attuned to seeing opportunity rather than limiting choices. In the midst of this larger picture is the artist manager who plays an even more important role in recognising what is required within any system so that the development of an artist is sustained and successfully developed over a long career.

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Andreas Braun, Konzertbüro Andreas Braun; Leila Getz, Vancouver Recital Society; Peter Maniura, BBC; Earl G. Blackburn, Opus 3 Artists; Michael Haefliger, Lucerne Festival

## How are careers being made today?

Andreas Braun, *Konzertbüro Andreas Braun* offers a perspective from the conference

In former times, artists made their careers, and we, their managers, helped them. We made the right connections at the right time and found them competent partners, promoters, conductors or directors. We broadened their representation network in other countries, discussed the appropriate repertoire over a three year period and agreed how to get there. The manager was the advisor, stimulator, partner and sometimes friend but always serving the artists and the art. Today, it seems, careers are made. We have to face the artificial creation of artists' careers by an immense machinery of PR and media professionals. International partners are picked out for their global reach, together with the recording industry, with only a few chosen artists among the thousands of brilliant young singing or playing talents being selected. A business strategy, the operative term, is planned which seeks to develop a career without the responsibility for the real needs of a developing young artist.

Most of these young artists are undoubtedly very gifted and are not totally unknown otherwise our friends from the media business would not have recognised them. Overnight these artists are made media stars with little attention to the appropriate repertoire for the voice but rather the entertainment experience.

This being said, where should these young artists get this experience? I admit lots of the concert series in smaller cities have gone where young string quartets and pianists could experience and test their programmes before they began in the main stream. Audiences, even in the provinces of Germany, have disappeared because they are too old, or because their attitudes to local music and musicians have changed in favour of the super-star presentation. Repertoire seems to matter less today than before with a name and face taking precedence.

It is scandalous that public radio stations, such as the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) or Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR) in Germany or even the BBC, are all guilty of not serving art or educating audiences in unknown or unpopular repertoire. Too often, audience viewing and listenership figures count more importantly in what is presented. I blame the media industry for this decline in respect for art and, what I would term, the abuse of some great talents in the business. We run a great risk in betraying the audience's faith in what good music is by focussing on the unimportant aspects of the performance. The focus on the few and using populist methods will undermine what we all wish to achieve for all our artists whether big stars, smaller ones or young aspiring professionals.

## IAMA AWARD 2008



On the final night of the Association's 18th IAMA International Conference, the IAMA 2008 award went to Rosemary Pickering, Chief Executive of Young Concert Artists' Trust (YCAT). The award was presented at the gala dinner held in the Museum of Communication, Berlin on 19th April by the Artistic Director of the Wigmore Hall, John Gilhooly. David Sigall, IAMA Board member and Director of Ingpen & Williams, in his speech to introduce the award, noted that it was due to Rosemary's dedication over the past 14 years that YCAT has continued to flourish and prepare so many world-class artists for the transition from amateur to professional status. Tribute was paid to the role non-profit managements fulfil in providing artists time to explore repertoire, gain performing experience and get ready for the pressures of professional life.

IAMA Award 2009: who do you think deserves the IAMA Award 2009? Submit your nominations to the IAMA office before 31st December 2008.



## Taxation of foreign artists in Germany

By Ines Paucksch tax advisor with Baker Tilly Deutschland GmbH

A foreign artist providing artistic services in Germany is subject to German income taxation even if he/she has neither a domicile nor a habitual place of abode in Germany. To avoid double taxation, most of the double tax treaties rule in principle that the right of taxation lies with the country where the performance of an artist takes place. Accordingly the home country normally grants tax exemption or the tax credit method.

The decisive fact for the way of taxation and the applicable tax rates is whether the artist receives employment or self-employment income.

In case of employment income wage tax has to be paid: The base allowance amounts to € 7,664 per year. For amounts between € 7,665 on to € 250,000 the rates for single residents are progressive between 15% and 42% and from € 250,001 the rate is 45%. A solidarity surcharge of 5.5% is calculated on the income tax. If special requirements are met a lump-sum wage taxation at a rate of 25% is possible.

If it concerns self-employment/other income or if no domestic employer exists, withholding tax on the gross remuneration is withheld (20% for individuals/15% for corporations plus 5.5% solidarity surcharge). A graduated tax tariff is possible starting with a tax-exempt income until € 250.00 up to 20% for more than € 1,000.00 (remuneration per day and per organiser including

travelling costs etc. without VAT). Normally, job-related expenses are not deductible. In the case of an artist, however, resident in another EU-country (whose expenses exceed 50% of all revenues) the tax rate amounts to 40% of the difference between the revenues and the expenses.

The German withholding tax procedure is applicable as long as there is no application for a waiver (before the withholding procedure) or a refund (after the withholding procedure).

The remuneration received for a performance is subject to German VAT if the service is physically rendered in Germany, however, royalties and the exploitation of an artistic service etc. is considered as grant of rights of use therefore the taxable place of an exploitation service depends on the recipient of the service. If the taxable place for the service is in Germany the service can be tax-exempted, (normally) taxed at the reduced VAT rate of 7% or the standard VAT rate of 19%. The reverse charge method has to be taken into consideration.

### *Disclaimer:*

*This memo is for general information only. No one should act upon such information without appropriate professional advice after a thorough examination of the particular situation.*

## Organising Concerts in Germany - What are the consequences of cancellation?

By Dr. Daniel Kaboth, Sabine Richly, Schwarz Kelwing Wicke Westpfahl, Munich

In cases where organisers of concerts in Germany have to cancel an event, there can be a lot of insecurity about who has to bear the financial cost. We were asked by a number of people at the 18th IAMA International Conference to give advice on this situation with the result that we decided to provide a rough guideline to IAMA members.

One scenario might be a concert which becomes simply impossible to present. Examples may be severe storms (e.g. in case of an open-air concert), fires, etc. In these cases, the organiser is not liable to pay the artist's fees or related expenses. Rental fees for the stage and technical equipment also do not have to be paid. In exceptional cases, some fees may have to be paid where the reason for the cancellation lies in the organiser's sphere even though he has not actually caused the situation. As to the audience, payments already received through ticket sales have to be refunded however, the audience does not have a right to claim other expenses (e.g. travel, accommodation).

In other cases, an organiser decides to cancel a concert out of reasons that do lie in the organiser's sphere, such as an artistic dispute or bad ticket sales. Here, the organiser is liable to pay and compensate his contractual partners. Both the artists' fees and expenses, as well as the agreed rental fees for the stage and technical equipment need to be paid. The organiser is also obligated to refund tickets as well as other expenses (e.g. travel,

accommodation) that purchasers of tickets may have had.

Another problem arises where an organiser warrants certain qualities of an event beforehand and fails to meet them in reality. The more important example concerns situations in which a famous star soloist is promised to appear and tickets are sold because of his/her prominence. If the concert is cancelled because of sickness of the soloist, the organiser is liable to refund prepaid tickets and also to compensate the ticket purchaser in all other respects. It is wise not to cancel a concert in such cases but to try to find a replacement as adequate as possible.

Last but not least are the cases of only partial performance. Should a heavy thunderstorm sweep across an open air venue during the concert, it is always problematic how much of the performance has to have taken place to avoid a refund of tickets. German courts have decided that musical performances are deemed to have been essentially performed and no refund has to be paid if the performance included the main piece or if the first half of the concert has been performed.

Please note, that all that is said in this article concerns situations where the written contract or the terms and conditions do not specify which party bears the respective risks. The parties may modify the above stated principles substantially in their contract.

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## “Reaching Out” Showreel – How do we reach out?

By Emma-Jane Stokely, KDS UK Ltd.



Do you ever read those reviews written by a frustrated journalist disappointed that there wasn't a larger audience to hear a certain recital which then turned out to be the block buster of the season? This is how I want to report the spontaneous education session at the IAMA conference; too small an audience for an inspired session.

The session was organised and run by Rachel Bowron, formerly Vice President and Artists Manager of ICM (Opus 3). With her characteristic direct and open approach Rachel had amassed a starry line-up of orchestral and promoting colleagues involved in running Education departments (or “reaching out” incentives) of their respective organisations. They were asked to present specific examples of their organizations reach out; their brief was not restricted to education but could include new marketing initiatives and audience development strategies.

Hans-Herman Rehberg, Managing Director of Berlin's Rundfunkchor discussed the programme “Broadening the Scope of Choral Music”. This remarkably versatile organisation revisits forgotten works (Emst Pepping St Matthew Passion) and commission new pieces (Turnage, Shchedrin, Jost). They have had much success reaching out in all directions; exploring the use of light, dance, venue, multi-media and

community involvement whilst keeping the Radio Choir at the center of every event. This was contrasted by Arna Kristin Einsdottir, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra's Concerts Manager who introduced “Maximouse Musikus”, a beautiful children's book written and annotated by orchestral members, adapted into a children's concert performed to 1000's of children each year. Christian Thompson, Academy Director of the Verbier Festival, had us practically booking our plane tickets to the mountains; they have children recording sound bites amongst the Festival Orchestra as it rehearses and producing their own “musical postcards” which the kids can email to their friends back home. Momentarily I willed myself to be a 10 year old again! Simon Fletcher reported an intriguing experience with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe at the opening of the Graz Festival with Nikolas Harnoncourt. Literally reaching out to the community we witnessed audiences gathered in the outdoors (patios, bridges, fields) around their radios listening to the concert broadcast over the airwaves! And there can be no more impressive community involvement as in Cathy Milliken's overview of the Berlin Philharmonic's education programme reaching out with music, art, dance, visuals, its' own musicians and resident composers to Berlin's young community engaging with 1000's of able and disabled children.

What fascinated me was every example was so different and yet they all claimed total success in their achievements. Each result was the building block for the next project. This workshop turned into an animated exchange of ideas and airing of common concerns: clearly these efforts are ticking big boxes in education departments, so is it the business itself creating the phobia that the young aren't getting to experience music and art? Given the conference setting what drive is there for agents to get involved? Why does it have to be called education?

Can't we abandon the title of Head of Education asked Christian Thompson and just be called Head of Inspiration!? After all, whatever age the participants are – kids, teens or adults - it's the inspiration derived that matters. This had certainly been the case in this session which Rachel called to a close several times but we were reluctant to stop discussion. Perhaps IAMA should look at making this new initiative a regular feature at future conferences.

For further insights or contact details of the sessions' participants please contact Rachel Bowron via the IAMA office.

## THANKS TO...

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