

GOING GLOBAL – THE FUTURE OF MUSIC TRAINING

A paper delivered at the 1st Conference of NACTMUS, Byron Bay July 2001.

There's rarely an article on business these days which doesn't refer to globalisation. It is important to remember that going global can begin at home. In more ways than one.

In a recent article, Professor Eleanor Ramsay, PVC Equity and Development at Uni of SA wrote:

*"The globalisation of the economy – and of higher education as one industry within it – increased and increasing international competition, and rapid technological change, are each and together transforming the context in which universities operate, locally, nationally and globally. This context demands changes both to what and how we teach, our research priorities and the conduct of our research, as well as offering interesting opportunities to work in new partnerships and alliances as we face these challenges."*¹

She's not alone.

For the first time in the history of higher education, the biggest alliance of them all, the world-wide network of open universities has provided an approach that allows for increased access, lower cost and higher quality – all at the same time. It hasn't gone unnoticed. Recently, UNESCO appointed a new Assistant Director-General for Education – Sir John Daniel, formerly VC of the UK Open University. He joins Dr Abdul Kahn, former VC of the Indira Ghandi National Open University. Dr Kahn is the Assistant DG for Communications and Information. The brief? To implement the internationally agreed agenda of *Education for All*, the centrepiece of which is to ensure that by 2015 all the world's people will have access to basic education. These appointments surely demonstrate that UNESCO must think the open universities hold some of the answers for the future.²

Not relevant to us, you say? Think again. We can't expect that only music will remain unchanged by a world-wide movement which will make education easily accessible to all countries, including those of the third world. Because such changes will by necessity make internet education easy, affordable, and more flexible. It also raises the question of addressing a wider audience than only tertiary students.

Universities across the world are exploring ways in which music might be delivered on-line. Commercial companies already deliver music, live and recorded, on line.

One might dare to suggest that there's potential there for a mutually beneficial alliance. We've started one in BKK.

Last year's World Bank report, *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Perils and Promise* flags a fact with which we're quite familiar – that universities enjoy low political and financial support. It also notes that globalisation is draining some of the best faculty and students towards the rich world.³ Not unfamiliar, is it? In fact, Saturday's SMH ran a comment from an SSO spokesperson about the possible effect of the falling dollar on the orchestra's ability to attract Australia's best musicians back to Sydney.

We won't change this by complaining about it.

¹ Ramsay, Eleanor, *Women and Leadership in Higher Education: Facing International Challenges and Maximising Opportunities*, *ACU Bulletin*, April 2001

² Daniel, John, *Distance Education and the Developing World*, *ACU Bulletin* No 147, April 2001

³ *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Perils and Promise*, *Report of the World Bank*, 2000, quoted by Daniel, op.cit.

It's easy to make the link between 'globalisation' and student mobility. But is that the extent of it? I doubt it. I agree with Professor Ramsay. Globalisation begins by extending our operations locally and nationally, as well as on an international scale.

The future of music training will offer many new ways of obtaining training, qualifications and professional experience, not all of them in one place for the duration of the degree or diploma. Not all of them for certification. For some time, the walls of tertiary institutions have been expanding to include on-line study, distance education, split studies between institutions, and now you can even pick up a unit whilst you holiday overseas ... The face-to-face option seems almost the minority. That is fine for many disciplines, but does it work for music? More to the point, is it relevant for all students?

As a result of growth in recent years, music programs of varying quality are now well-established in a greater number of countries. For most students, there is less pressure to travel for study, especially at undergraduate level. In Bangkok city alone, there are as many tertiary music schools as there are in Australia. But the level of study is no higher than our high school students enjoy. In fact, some of our high schools are better! Until we opened in 1999, there was no conservatory-style training at all. In any genre.

Still, many Asian music students seek study opportunities overseas. But Australian institutions have, to date, realised neither the potential of this nor have they become competitive at attracting students. Those which attract them take little account of the different learning cultures.

An article by David Tanner noted the example of Thai student Chathantip Maneepong who was quoted as saying that Asian students have to learn to be more independent in their studies than they are back home. "In Western education," she says, "your supervisor only plays the role of facilitator".⁴ The Asian education system teaches students by repetition and they do not learn to think or work independently, nor to initiate ideas for themselves.

It seems to me a crucial time for reflection on how these factors might be improved. After all, our dollar is in such a state that even Asian countries still recovering from their economic crises might consider us fair game.

My initial response to internet learning was "not with music, you don't"! Then I became CEO of a music institution with no government subsidy. Without sacrificing quality, I have found it possible to create ways in which the internet can work for the institution.

Sure, it means looking outside the usual box, and in fact, it requires the institution to become more inclusive of the community it serves. No more "tertiary students only", thankyou.

This isn't new, and it does happen in some places in Australia, and in my own experience in a number of countries it has been a vital link. After all, if we don't create our own feeder network, where will the students come from? If we do create it, we can also set the standards, and address the issues of genre and access to new ideas.

I would argue that now it is more important than ever.

If we don't make the connection with our potential students long before they face the decision of where to go, then the internet which might have been our friend in attracting them, might very well be our foe in taking them somewhere else. Without even leaving home. After all, net-study offers them the best of both worlds – work and study at the same time.

⁴ Tanner, David, *Study in Australia, Higher Education*, The Australian (website), May 2001

So, for me, globalisation requires looking not only at student mobility but also at those who aren't mobile!

Why do students look for international study options?

Generally, there are two basic reasons:

- perhaps in their country of origin, there are not the same standards of training available,
- perhaps they seek higher qualifications, a different type of opportunity, specialised training.

Before working in Thailand, I had assumed that for all Asian students the first reason would apply. In some countries, yes. But not all. For example, HKAPA is one of the best in the world, attracting many Western students as well as students from all over Asia.

Yes, for students from SE Asia, Taiwan and Korea, the first reason most often does apply. But for students from Japan, China and HK, the likelihood is that they will want specialist training of some kind, usually at post-graduate level, to make them stand out from the crowd. And in countries with populations in the hundreds of millions, the 'crowd' is substantial!

We all have an understanding of what international students can bring to an institution. I spoke about this in a public lecture given in Hong Kong earlier this year, and I invited comment about the advantages and disadvantages of student mobility on a global scale. The response was telling.

Members of the public optimistically acknowledged HK as a cosmopolitan centre, and seemed pleased that the market for international students (at least in music) has grown since the changeover in 1997.

Local students were concerned about protecting their own opportunities, their own patch. But, at the same time, they acknowledged the level of competition introduced by international students.

Staff were concerned about communication, language, conveying messages at a deeper-than-surface level. Not surprisingly, international students were concerned about receiving these messages!

The incoming students suggested various experiences, musical and cultural, as justification for their mobility. It was interesting that they also acknowledged that there is usually a difference between the reason for and the consequences of their international study. For some it brings only frustration, when the dream ends with success at the overseas institution and nothing back home. Politics still prevails in some countries.

The Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts management noted the enormous advantage brought to the institution by the international students – primarily that of profile rather than economic consideration, which (I might suggest) is different to the Australian approach.

Let's look at some of the examples of music training in the global context:

1. Going overseas to study at undergraduate or post-graduate level.

This is the most common of the options, and because it has been done in many ways for many years, it might be considered to be the best option. But is it? How does the student choose the institution – because of the program on offer? Connections? The location? Price?

All Australian music schools entering the Asian market are competing with the "big name" countries like the USA and UK. Note that I say 'big name countries', not 'big name institutions'. Asian students often believe that anything which comes from either of those countries will automatically be better. The reality is often far from so.

In Thailand, I have seen many examples of musicians who have gone overseas to study at music schools which are relatively unknown. The experience they have of living and studying overseas may be valuable, but the music training is not. The reason for their choice usually has nothing to do with the school profile or record.

Why do Thai students go overseas to study music? Generally the reason is because they believe they will benefit in status and have better employment opportunities by doing so. Unlike most Chinese, Vietnamese and Indian students, they intend to return to Thailand, and gain from the advantage of having studied abroad.

We would all acknowledge that the choice of institution is important. But the student doesn't always consider it relevant. In my experience, Thai students tend to choose an institution because:

- They have connections with someone on the faculty (the professor may have visited Thailand and encouraged the student to contact them about further study overseas);
- They have family or connections living near to the institution
- Their teacher studied at that institution
- They were selected by audition or through a scholarship process

They do NOT research the best available, and consider the curricula or the outcome at all. This is common among most students in SE Asia.

Why did I say “unlike most Chinese, Vietnamese and Indian students”?

For different reasons. Chinese students want to work internationally. Usually long-term, for political and social reasons. There is not enough credence for them as young graduates in China – they still have to work their way through the political appointment system. It is better for them to stay away until they have had 10 or 20 years of working overseas, and then, if at all, return into a more substantial posting. Whilst there is substantial economic turnaround in recent years, and there are some professions in which it is an advantage to be young, well-trained and in China at present, education is not one of them. It remains defined by political and social traditions and boundaries.

In Vietnam and India, there is no infrastructure to return to. Even if they are well qualified, there are no music schools of substance, no orchestras of worth, and it will be a long time before the new skills they have might be recognised (or useful) within their own countries. In the past 3 years, there has been development in Hanoi, and Ho Chi Minh cities at conservatory level, but it is not extensive enough to support an influx of highly trained young musicians. Consider the example of a brilliant young trumpet student from Hanoi who was selected to study on scholarship at the Hong Kong Academy, and winning the respect of staff, students and audiences alike in Hong Kong and Europe. The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra would have employed him, except for the visa problems for Vietnamese wanting to work in China. In his own country, he may be the best but he is too young and his former teacher is still working. He has not the money to travel for auditions in other countries. Two years after leaving Hong Kong, he is not working as a musician.

Students from Japan and HK students generally have a high standard of undergraduate training – but it is undergraduate training of a very different kind. They go overseas to study, usually at post-grad level, for the specialisations they might obtain in doing so. HK has a strong infrastructure for professional arts work of many kinds.

Whatever the reason for studying overseas, Asian students are not trained to think and work independently, or to initiate ideas, so post-grad study in a Western university presents many difficulties for them in adapting to Western requirements.

These are important elements in considering an approach to marketing and delivery of the program for these students.

2. Sharing of students: International agreements between universities

What does this mean? Many things. Perhaps we might think again about trying to be all things to all men. In a local/national context, perhaps we can provide the students with the best opportunities by sharing them instead of competing for them. Joint programs are an option. Travel options for project work, perhaps?

Some of the international suggestions I can offer are those which we are developing in Thailand now. For example, offering the initial year (or years) of a degree or diploma from an international source, after which the student will travel overseas to complete the training.

The advantages?

For the student, it means less time away from home, less financial impact.

For the institution, it means that the student is recruited through an established "base" which is a constant promotion for their awards, and provides a consistent connection internationally.

In the long term, this option means the Australian institution has a constant connection on a local level with the recruiting base. But it means more than this to the host country. If we offer the first year of international awards in Thailand, it will mean that ALL students will see the standards required without leaving home. They will understand what is expected of them if they want an international award. By improving the level of competition to enter the program, it should also improve the standards generally in other Thai institutions. That is essentially my goal – to lift the bar locally in Thailand. (It is also possible to do it at home).

There are some programs which can be offered entirely off-shore. The student does not have to leave home at all, or may choose to spend longer at home before going away to finish the study. Same result locally – a higher, more competitive, internationally-viable standard.

3. Obtaining one or more units internationally towards a degree at home

This is the one I would have liked when I was a student, and it's one we're using now. There are some American universities which actually require their students to take a minimum of one semester of study at an international university. This option is oriented to those planning careers in science, social sciences, arts, business.

My experience tells me that it is an option we should explore more for musicians. Why? To best deal with the expanding needs of the new style of student.

Perhaps even to improve the offering to the traditional students. In each of the universities in which I've worked, students (particularly those in four-year programs), tend to establish a 'pecking order' amongst themselves which can become quite limiting for many students. After all, if the same students are always expected to take on leadership roles, get the best opportunities, and enjoy the best exposure, then the other students may well lose opportunities on the way.

One semester away from the established pecking order might well give the top students the experience of being less than the best, and equally might give other students a chance of exposure which they have not had at home. At the very least, the students will return with a different appreciation of what they have at home.

This option is particularly appropriate to post-graduate study options where one unit might require internship in an international setting, for assessed study and/or professional experience.

4. Short-term options after graduation

The Music Department of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts excels at this. The 'Visiting Student' program is one of the best concepts available for a performer who needs more time to develop performance skills and maturity before taking on the professional performance circuit or employment options. For a minimal enrollment fee, it offers free tuition and maximum performance opportunities – leading ensembles, tours, solo performances. It gives the graduate space to continue to develop their performance skills whilst offering many opportunities to play.

We have borrowed the idea for adaptation in Bangkok with a "Professional Student" program. We have post-graduate 'professional' students who continue to study with us, and are given performance opportunities and support, whilst they begin to freelance in the music industry.

How do we benefit from this? There is a minimal enrollment fee which covers our cash outlay only. The professional students receive lessons, a lot of performance opportunities and teaching experience to boost their evolving CVs. In return, they lead sections, take sectional rehearsals when necessary, and some of them tutor an agreed number of hours free of charge in the junior programs. The commercial programs, in case you've forgotten....

5. Studying by distance education or on-line

You may be interested to know that here, Australia leads the world, but the competition is increasing and various methods and examples are now in operation:

The University of Auckland runs medical and business programs. With limited resources, **UniSA**net has developed an online teaching environment which is low-cost, easy to implement and with a common interface for all student users. The UNSW has developed "**WebTeach**" which replicates many of the normal teaching situations for flexible campus delivery and distance programs. In an environment where flexibility in peoples' working lives is of key importance, the **Open University of HK** has used technology to aid student recruitment and retention.⁵

For music, the normal response to on-line study is that this will only work with theoretical subjects. How can you study clarinet by distance education or on-line? I recall an attempt in Australia about eight years ago when one institution tried to video-conference instrumental lessons for regional students. The technology then was too restricted, the movement response too slow, and the project died almost before it had begun.

Now it does happen regularly with some classes. My old "home", CQCM has a composition class which has weekly on-line tutorials, and video-conferences where demonstration performances are done within the class. Sydney Conservatorium is teaching instrumental music by video-conference to regional centres, not yet at tertiary level, but it is happening.

The technology is the key – it must have the capacity to deliver high quality imaging which responds to movement at natural speed. But why would it not be possible? After all, we watch live performances on television. That which is crucial for our purposes is the interactive nature required within a lesson.

⁵ Law, Jocelyn, *Review of 'Innovation in Open and Distance Learning'* edited by Lockwood and Gooley, in ACU Bulletin, April 2001

We need to be ready to incorporate this technology to our advantage. After all, twenty years ago, computers were new technology and were the size of the average kitchen. When it was predicted that every home would have a personal computer within twenty years, it seemed unbelievable.

But the future of music training involves more than the training of performers. Already, there are many music careers which are easily developed (and available) on-line. One of the most competitive of them is Arts Management. There are many programs available from various countries, which offer different options for study in Arts Management. Some combine project-based work which can be assessed locally, together with the on-line or distance study provided by the institution which offers the award.

This may all be ho-hum to those of you who are working within the e-education field. However, let me give you another spin on the same principle, one you may not have considered.

In Bangkok, we have had to find ways of getting students to pay for their tuition because government subsidies only support government institutions. This is working within the framework of a culture where people make decisions not based on quality and curricula, but on connections they trust. We have developed a number of internet connections with companies of varying kinds – commercial recording companies, an internet library, a tourist magazine, the Thai Marching Band website NONE of them education-based. We're dealing with the hobby market, using the connection to attract new hobby enrolments. We offer e-learning 'bites' on other websites. Or e-opportunities. E-specials, e—anything you can imagine which will perhaps attract a click, which will lead them eventually to something we've done, then to us, or to our website.

I began this because of a frustration at the lack of progress on our website. We made some links which are more than just links – after all, people don't necessarily expect to find us anything other than specialist, and for hobby musicians, an 'international academy' isn't exactly what they go looking for. The ones we've used have been so successful that I think it opens a whole new world of marketing to the pre-tertiary generation – right back to younger primary students.

Let me give you an example – on a favourite recording company website, we might have a small banner which says, in rough translation from the Thai, "Guitarists: are you having trouble working out the fingering of X's solo on his new single?" When they click on this banner, they get a brief para which gives them just enough to get them started, and info about a workshop we're doing on this artist's music next month. One such example booked out within hours! (And we've had hits from Taiwan because the company we're using has a base there.) When they come to the workshop, they will be introduced to our own staff who will benefit from the credibility a link to 'X' will bring, and we'll have a few 'come-study-with-us' specials... hobby-level, which will lead to longer-term stuff. The message in all of this – endorsed by 'X' – is that without a good classical technique, a contemporary guitarist will be an also-ran. It sells the idea of serious study, even to the wannabe pop guitarist.

It may look to be the slow way around, but in these days of music as a leisure activity, to me it seems like a very obvious way to exploit a market we're missing. Before you reel in horror at the thought, think of how many corner guitar schools there are in your city. Why shouldn't the leading music institutions have a commercial section, separately catering to that market, which makes the money to keep other activities alive?

So you'll need more staff? Of course. But this operation would be managed on a variable cost basis – and you will pay only a percentage of what you're earning. Your infrastructure is already there, and so you've nothing to lose. But much to gain, because it reduces isolation, broadens access, builds strength through greater demand. That's how we're working in

Thailand, and over only nineteen months, we've averaged more than 18% growth per month. We're not alone – many schools in the US operate on a similar basis. Berklee School of Music has even franchised their operation!

And what we're doing through the internet is cheap – we operate on a commercial basis, giving the partner website a small percentage of our profit on anything we receive as a result of the hits through their site. There is no risk for us, and they make a profit from the venture.

From my experience before leaving Australia, tertiary institutions need to think outside the usual square. Don't be afraid of the need to become more commercial. It doesn't necessarily mean you need to lose credibility or quality. In fact, in business, it's of major concern because if there isn't quality, the client doesn't come back.

You may need to diversify, but if in doing so you are able to give better support to those things which are NOT financially viable, then why wait?

Besides, it's my belief that we have for too long relied on the fact that we "must be", and must be allowed to be, and therefore must be funded to be. No doubt you've noticed by now that not everyone agrees with us about this!

To summarise briefly, my points on globalisation in our industry are these:

1. I believe the training of music performers to be a unique market in arts education. Institutions have always fought hard to attract the best students. Often the reputation of the institution is reliant primarily on the people who work there, as opposed to the location or the facilities, although, those may well contribute to the ambience!

However, because the training of music performers is such a limited market, perhaps we should approach it from a different angle? In order to become more competitive, perhaps we have to be less competitive. We need to build partnerships to share the better students rather than settle for taking whatever is available.

2. We should be looking outside the square. What can we do outside the normal framework which might help us to generate funds to keep other things alive? And I mean give them real LIFE, not keep them on life-support systems.... We might use community needs to build networks, feeder systems and a broad access base Using these connections to strengthen chances of attracting students, at all levels.

We must not forget that the life that this brings to a department also attracts and keeps quality staff who bring their own special fuel to the growth of the organisation. Artistic growth as well as academic growth.

Let me give you another example of thinking outside the square. One of the growth areas in performance training is the post-graduate awards for specialist répétiteurs and accompanists. If I were a post-graduate student comparing two or three different options for study, I might welcome an option which gave one semester of study at an affiliated academy overseas as a necessary part of the program. By doing so, the institutions together share the student, gain the kudos, and it's not only the student who benefits. This is only one example of how institutions might find sharing the market more valuable than fighting over it.

And, along the way, I might align myself with a commercial entertainment company which had a website, offering them a percentage of the revenue earned if they were to give me a banner proclaiming something like "Need an accompanist for your gig?" A curious click provides information about the program offered, and a phone number. Not only might you be able to offer your students some financial reward (in fact, you might even start an agency), but also you'd be

placing your institution right in the market, linking to the industry we aim to serve. Therein lies another conference topic....

Helen Lancaster, July 2001

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