

CONSERVATORIA: REFLECTING A WIDER AUDIENCE

[A paper delivered to the ISME Commission for the Education of the Professional Musician at Stavanger, Norway in August 2002.](#)

Preface

The professions into which future music graduates will move is more diverse than ever before, and less dependent on conventional music training. Financially, many institutions are finding it more challenging to meet their objectives. Each institution exists in a unique environment which has individual characteristics reflective of the various communities with which it connects.

Such factors make it important for the institutions to be reflective of their reason for being, their practice, and most particularly, of their relationships with their various communities – geographical, social, artistic, political, professional, industrial and educational.

In this context, one of the essential questions for conservatoria is whether 'reflective' should only be seen in the 'responsive' sense (responding to the needs of which it is made aware), or whether there is a responsibility to be pro-active, to anticipate and lead reflective practice.

The first conservatoria were reflective of their social and professional music environments. Is it not therefore appropriate for modern institutions to be equally reflective of their respective times and places?

“They (conservatoires) advocate excellence but are in fact producing a majority who are moderate by traditional standards and generally unable to realize their potential as contemporary musicians within a diverse and bewildering culture. The classical conservatoire culture is, of course, valuable and vibrant. It just won't do for the majority of people. Worse still, it alienates a huge number of potential music-making participants of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Both the conservatoire and the wider community appear to be left 'high and dry'.”

This paper describes two case studies of new conservatoria which have in their different ways demonstrated reflective practice. Establishing a new institution cause one to reflect on why things are done, why they need to be done, and how they might be done. Having to fight for the survival of an institution intensifies that process of reflection. Why should it be there at all? Is it worth fighting for?

Traditionally, the conservatory has been associated with quality music training, a place for 'conserving' and nurturing competent musicians, both acknowledged and evolving. Today that description is not exclusively applied to the title 'conservatory'. A variety of providers (including the music industry itself) assume roles which have traditionally been associated with conservatoria, and conservatoria are themselves assuming a wider range of responsibilities than in the past.

Given that in many cases survival in an increasingly competitive market has been one of the fundamental reasons for these changes, one must ask the obvious question why new conservatoria are being established at all. The answer is directly related to the needs of the surrounding communities, and more importantly, the relationships which are established with those communities; and to the opportunities the changing circumstances provide to think outside the square.

Whatever its title, the ethos of the conservatory environment implies a natural link to the community through the provision of performance and teaching services, and a reflection of its own unique environment. Because the training of performers requires the supply of appropriate role models, professional artists both resident and visiting are usually employed in a range of performance activities, most of which are accessible to the community. Teaching services become a natural extension of this resource. Performance venues and soundstages in their turn become part of the repertoire of "community" performance venue and recording resources.

This fundamental link between institution and community can be both positive and negative. It generates obvious cultural benefits including public performances, and has the potential for contributing to growth in the cultural infrastructure of the community. The extent of growth is very likely to be affected by the institution's perception of its relationship with its city or region, and whether it maintains a policy of proactive involvement in the various musical communities and relevant industries in the area. The institution's perception of its role within the community is the single most significant factor contributing to the realisation of its full potential.

The potential advantages extend beyond the educational and artistic. A conservatory has the capacity to attract visitors as both artists and audience, bringing economic benefit to the area through cultural tourism, increased population, and changing demographics. Student and staff performers have the potential to provide entertainment for the tourist and leisure industries, further developing economic progress. The peripheral advantages of a proactive conservatory enhance the region's reputation, building confidence amongst those who might be considering relocating to the area. This can be of particular significance to non-metropolitan centres.

Regardless of the level and variety of contribution, the existence of a conservatory suggests at the very minimum, some degree of advantage for the community in which it resides.

"The great benefit that the regional institutions brought to their communities was the development of more comprehensive teaching staffs, and more cohesive centres for music making."

Such a suggestion has reverse undertones. If a community which accommodates a conservatory is likely to enjoy benefits from the association, it follows that communities which do not house conservatoria are likely to be disadvantaged. Without access to the ongoing benefits which are associated with conservatory-style institutions, a community may lack the strength to create and maintain a strong cultural foundation.

In any community, such a foundation recognises the importance of culture of all kinds. Music is only one of many cultural elements, all of which stimulate and nourish the community in numerous ways. In the words of Lyndon Terracini, Artistic Director of the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music:

“A creative culture ... provides sustenance and inspiration. It generates optimism, wealth and harmony within communities. Essentially a creative culture is a community of any scale, which can connect the many diverse individuals who are part of its landscape.”

“Developing the existing culture of a town or region is the first building block in the creation of art. Art develops from a strong cultural base. It cannot exist in isolation. If we aspire to create great art, then we must first develop our cultural life.

Engaging with people to stimulate their interest and participation, articulating the notion that as human beings we need art to function in a complete and holistic way and observing the difference that participation in a process such as ‘making music’ can make to a community is what we need to connect with.

The cultural life of our nation begins in individual communities, it begins with individual human beings, it begins with us.”

A strong community culture encourages art of all kinds, and cultural differences. This culture is built from grass roots, but may aspire to excellence. It will do so only with stimulation, and for music, such stimulation is the responsibility of the conservatory.

The obvious implication for a conservatory-free society is two-fold: at the very least, it means fewer performances of quality and the reduced likelihood for students to access teaching of a standard normally associated with conservatory training. Without doubt, fewer performances reduce cultural opportunities, but lack of quality training has a more acute effect. The element of choice for the student is either eliminated or reduced in effectiveness, that is, the student may believe that the available non-conservatory training will provide a suitable foundation. By the time the student is faced with the realisation that it has not been sufficient, it is already too late.

The reality is that the otherwise usual concept of waiting until higher education to move from one community to another for quality higher training does not necessarily work with music. Unless the early training is of sufficiently high standard, talent may not receive appropriate momentum and the opportunity might present too late for it to have adequate effect. For some, this means that potential talent, even if acknowledged, may remain uncultivated.

“... a critically important objective of the teaching programs in the

regional Conservatoriums ought to be to bring children, by year twelve, to a level which would equip them to enter tertiary programs broadly educated, confident and well-prepared for success in music.”

On the surface of it, these undertones are sufficient for concern about inequity. When one considers the broader potential advantage a conservatory-style institution might bring to a community, the implications are considerable.

The conservatory is more than a venue for music training, rehearsal and performance. It is a cultural asset with the potential to offer cultural energy to the various communities in which it exists: the artistic, educational, industrial, political, geographic and societal communities. It has the capacity to serve as a focal point for music within its geographical region. The creation of enduring links of many kinds brings the institution into closer contact with the broader community, reaching beyond those who study or have interest in music performance. In these ways, an institution is being reflective of the community in which it resides.

In the words of renowned Australian singer and director, Gerald English, speaking on the role of conservatoria:

“... One mustn't forget the community. It's really terribly important.”

Some conservatoria rely on this potential for their success. Understanding that restricting the institution's interests to the obvious teaching and performance markets also limits the impact on the community, they seek to both reflect and influence a wider audience via other communities, particularly industrial and political ones.

The Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music, a small conservatory established in 1989 in regional Queensland provides a good example of how an institution might embed itself within the community beyond the predictable measures.

Initially, the CQCM was established in the city of Mackay as a regional campus of the Queensland Conservatorium, to address the negative implications related to the absence of a conservatory outside the metropolitan area of Brisbane.

The rationale for establishing the regional campus seemed simple. For the Queensland Conservatorium, it was intended as a 'feeder', and in some ways a 'filter' campus, allowing Brisbane staff access to regional students for a period of quality training and evaluation before they might be considered for relocation to the larger parent campus in Brisbane. It eventuated that the potential students, and the city, were to have different expectations.

The choice of the city of Mackay was equally straightforward. Mackay is one of four major regional centres on the Queensland coast, together with Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton. A feasibility study conducted at the time investigated the potential of each city and chose Mackay because of the high level of advocacy evident in the community. Negotiations with each centre demonstrated that the strongest commitment emanated from a community group based at the Community Music Centre of Mackay. The CMC, in turn, had local government support, and representatives of local government had indicated that the same support would extend to the establishment of a

conservatorium.

Although Townsville and Rockhampton are university centres and may thus have seemed logical choices for the site, neither of those cities demonstrated a local government interest or a strong community resolve to support the venture. The James Cook University in Townsville indicated an interest in the venture but offered no support for its establishment. Townsville boasted a newly-established Community Music Centre, but it was without government support and at that stage was too undeveloped to tender a proposal of its own. Cairns and Rockhampton had no comparable infrastructure to support a formal bid.

The city of Mackay's determined backing was to shape the evolution of the new institution. Because of the community's financial sponsorship at the time of establishment, conservatorium management chose to give higher priority to community needs than to the rationale of the parent institution, Queensland Conservatorium (Griffith University). Thus began the relationship which created for the city of Mackay an enduring cultural infrastructure. It was a relationship never anticipated by the parent institution.

From the outset, the Central Queensland Conservatorium responded to community influence more than is usual of an academic institution. The reasons were various, but the underlying factor was the need for community support to subsidise its establishment. This required the institution to demonstrate its value to a larger audience than would normally be involved in music training and performance. Conservatorium management therefore expanded the traditional focus on teaching to include the creation of cultural industries which would complement the work of the institution. The critical factor in this strategy was survival. In an article reflecting on the issue, Anne Lim noted that:

"(The newly-elected chair of the National Council for Heads of Music Schools, Gillian Wills) believes music schools can learn from the entrepreneurial spirit of the Central Queensland Conservatorium which is earning between 30 and 40 per cent of its annual budget from continuing education and performance programs."

Survival required that the conservatorium should be woven into the cultural fabric of the region in order to provide a tangible demonstration of its usefulness to the community. Part of this strategy resulted in the establishment of a feeder system of instrumental teaching in the schools as well as at the Conservatorium. Sponsorship from corporate, private and local government sources were essential to the continuing growth of the young institution. As Patricia Kelly points out,

"...the Central Queensland Conservatorium never forgot its community roots. For instance, it has nine music teachers employed to travel to the tiny one-teacher public schools in a wide surrounding area. It instigates all sorts of other performance projects with community involvement. Let us hope that it becomes a model for emulation."

Survival also required a capacity to attract high-quality students. The original rationale of servicing only the regional students was short-sighted. Many regional students opted to relocate to the city, lured by the status and quality of the longer-established institutions and also by their desire to relocate from

a regional centre.

It was obvious to management that, if the new campus was to attract quality students, it had to offer options which were not available elsewhere. It needed to appeal to students from outside its own region. It was equally obvious that the community's initial financial support would not continue on an indefinite basis. The conservatorium had to become viable on its own.

Thus began the development of unique ('boutique-style') programs, including the Bachelor of Music Theatre (the first of its kind in Australia), first offered in 1996, and degrees in Jazz Studies and Performing Arts. Simultaneously, a number of relevant industries were created to the advantage of both conservatorium and city.

Amongst the cultural industries established by the new conservatorium was an entertainment agency which continues to service the professional performance needs of the tourist industry in a geographical area which extends more than 100km north, west and south of the city. A professional chamber orchestra was established, making possible a high level of pit support for professional and pro-am productions of music theatre and dance. A recording company was set up, the only professional one in regional Queensland at that time.

Support from the Conservatorium made possible the establishment in 1991 of a pro-am opera company, Opera North. This company was managed independently of the Conservatorium but was aligned to the Conservatorium and relied on its institutional support to produce work.

The pro-am structure of this company was a necessary strategy for a regional centre. It brought professional experience into the community whilst at the same time involving student and community participation in all aspects of production. Opera North was thus to become one of the external "industry" training grounds for the music theatre students at the CQCM.

Similarly, other cultural industries matured. The annual Mackay Festival of Arts gained from the bigger pool of artists living locally. The professional chamber orchestra, The Lyrebird Ensemble, was available for performances of high quality, and was used on its own, to accompany Opera North productions and also to accompany other touring artists, including Sydney-based Judy Glenn's "Spaghetti Opera". International jazz artists Don Burrows, George Golla, Don Rader and Kevin Hunt each chose to perform accompanied by jazz staff from the Conservatorium instead of bringing their own bands with them.

Expansion wasn't restricted to the performing arts. Collaborations between performing and visual artists gave impetus to the regional visual arts industry. Indigenous artists, visual and performing, enjoyed a higher profile. A South Sea Island Chorus collaborated with Conservatorium staff to gain experience in developing their own repertoire and rehearsal techniques. Local artist Rosemary Payne spent three months in residence at the Conservatorium, sketching various activities and preparing an exhibition of paintings based on classes, activities, rehearsals and performances. The exhibition sold ninety per cent of the artworks.

There was a flow-on effect from these ventures. Demand from the tourist industry indicated the need for strengths in jazz, contemporary music and

music theatre, supporting the new specialised areas of study which were in turn addressing the needs of the performance industry.

Specialisation had its own set of benefits. It attracted national media attention and industry support, and in a very short space of time, the conservatorium was attracting a competitive intake of students from a national base. In a climate of restraint amidst the closure and decline of other music institutions, the young CQCM was growing at a rapid rate. Of greater significance than the actual numbers is the fact that in each year the intake became more competitive, each intake of higher quality than the one before.

The incoming students created the need to cater for student accommodation, laying the foundation for a new commercial industry in the city. Better residential facilities and the higher profile generated by the success of the conservatorium were contributing factors in attracting more students at the newly-built campus of Central Queensland University. Local independent schools began to market to international students, beginning a new stage in the development of the education industry.

By 1999, Mackay's strong cultural infrastructure made it an obvious choice as one of only two regional cities (the other being Townsville) to host the inaugural Queensland Biennial Festival in that year. The specific feature of the Mackay program was collaborations between various arts groups within the community and visiting professional individuals and companies. The Mackay infrastructure made such a program easily achievable. In the words of Malcolm Gillies who reviewed one day of the festival for *The Australian*:

"Mackay's great Biennial ... was not about music as music. It was about music as a means of forging new social connections. According to (Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Matt) Foley, such art is 'core government business'. Saturday provided abundant evidence that that investment has paid off."

The Mackay component of the inaugural festival was so successful that Mackay secured a place as one of the pre-determined cities for the subsequent festival in 2001.

Such progress was not automatic. It was much influenced by the proactive policy of conservatorium management which placed priority on involvement in the development of political policy, at local and state government levels. From an early stage in the evolution of this infrastructure, Conservatorium management provided for Mackay City Council the service of coordinating music performance and education activities for the city, advising on the development of cultural policy in return for an annual financial subsidy to the Conservatorium.

It was during this period that the Mackay City Council gradually increased its annual commitment to the State Government's Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF). Through the RADF fund, the State Government matched dollar for dollar the local government contributions towards local arts development. In 1996-1997, the Mackay City Council was the single highest contributor to the RADF fund in the state of Queensland. The increased funds allowed the Mackay City Council the opportunity to support many new arts projects in the region, including visual arts exhibitions, the orchestra and opera companies, indigenous cultural projects and the commissioning of new works for festivals.

Involvement in building long-term policy extended to other regional council bodies and the Queensland State Government. The conservatorium Director was invited to join an advisory panel to the Queensland Minister for the Arts, allowing direct influence on policy-making which would impact on the development of arts policy relevant to regional centres. Over the period of seven years, this liaison with policy-making at local and state levels influenced the evolution of a better understanding of the challenges for both regional and state governments. The policies that resulted from this process had beneficial effects for cultural development in Mackay and the Central Queensland region.

In less than ten years, the shift in the city demographics was obvious. In 1989, the largest industries in Mackay were sugar, coal and beef. By 1999 they were sugar, coal, and education.

Although the CQCM was not solely responsible for the growth in education, it did exert a significant influence. Because the Conservatorium was attracting students from other states and overseas, student accommodation had to be provided. This, in turn, stimulated an increase in boarding amongst students at schools and at the local campus of the Central Queensland University. When the Conservatorium was first established in 1989, the Mackay campus of CQU had fewer full-time students than did the Conservatorium. By 1996, the campus had experienced significant growth, as the University began to accelerate growth at all regional campuses, the Mackay campus in particular.

There was good reason for the CQU management to focus on development in Mackay: in 1996, the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music became part of CQU. The University management was keen to take over responsibility for the Conservatorium, and Griffith University saw no obstacles to the change. The State Minister for Education proposed the move as part of a strong commitment to the development of regional infrastructure,

The merger was met with community concern, given that there had been a significant community involvement in supporting the Queensland Conservatorium venture because of its substantial international reputation. Staff and students were concerned that student mobility between the Mackay and Brisbane campuses would be lost, and the status of the institution would adjust accordingly.

Strategically, this merger was a turning point for the young Central Queensland Conservatorium. It was at this time that CQCM management chose to introduce the new specialized programs, eventually leading to the small campus developing a high profile in its own right.

Subsequent to the amalgamation, State Government funding was promised by the Minister for the Arts to subsidise a new purpose-built facility for the Conservatorium. Despite an offer from the Mackay City Council to further underwrite the Conservatorium's development by allowing the new facility to be placed in a cultural precinct within the city heart, the university chose to move the Conservatorium from its city location to the university campus on the outskirts of the city.

In their announcement, both State and Local governments demonstrated support for further development of cultural infrastructure in the city. However, the offer from the State Government did not limit the university's choice of

site. The CQU preference was more suited to their own strategic purposes to further embed the Conservatorium within the university's expansionist strategy.

The decision to move the Conservatorium out of the city had a substantial impact on the community. The perception shifted from the CQCM as being part of the city's own cultural precinct, to the CQCM being part of the university. The benefit to the university community was enormous: it gave great impetus to the university by offering direct access to Conservatorium study units and special facilities on the same campus, and by increasing student accommodation and conference venue options.

On the other hand, the community was angered by the university's decision because it reduced community access and marginalised the Conservatorium from the community which had nurtured it for ten years.

"The announced relocation by CQU of the campus of Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music (CQCM) to Planlands is of concern since this will increase the distance from the city heart.

The Conservatorium is a performance orientated institution and as such regular access to audiences is central to its success.

... CQCM was established in Mackay 10 years ago ... with substantial community support....

Since the decision is one that will effect CQCM over future years, perhaps a broader view would be more appropriate for such an important institution."

Subsequent to the announced plan, the Mackay City Council withdrew its annual financial support from 2000, the year in which the new facility was completed. However, the Council chose to reallocate the resources to the appointment of an Arts Coordinator for the city, in order to continue the work which had initially been undertaken by the Conservatorium. Thus, whilst the Conservatorium no longer benefits directly, the cultural infrastructure established over its first ten years continues to be supported by local government.

Other corporate and private support from the community was also withdrawn at the same time, and currently there is no community-based financial support. There is only some event-specific sponsorship which takes the form of free advertising for Conservatorium events.

At the time of these alterations to external funding, changes in both conservatorium and university managements were to exert other influences through policy shifts. The Director of the Conservatorium resigned, there were changes to the senior management structure of the CQU and the Conservatorium was placed within the Faculty of Education. This brought about a significant adjustment to the way in which the Conservatorium was managed.

In the following year, the professional chamber orchestra was not supported financially, and the policy of creating special performance projects for the annual Mackay Festival of Arts was halted by new management in 2000. Whereas in 1999 the CQCM made a major contribution to the performance and production needs of the Mackay component of the inaugural

Queensland Biennial Festival of Music, in 2001 CQCM management chose not to do so. With a lower public profile locally, the conservatorium enjoyed less community support than before.

The university used the changing shift in community support to adjust the Conservatorium's remit to servicing other campuses of the university, in Queensland and interstate. Thus began the need to develop internet delivery. This change in policy was reliant on the former policy for its success – global success is built on a strong local profile.

Since shifting the emphasis of service to the university rather than the community, the CQCM has begun to offer a number of courses online. Their internet delivery options are of a traditional kind, limited to the Musicianship, Historical Overview and Composition courses within the various programs available at the Conservatorium. The motivation for internet delivery is to increase awareness and access to Conservatorium offerings across all university campuses and beyond. There is an associated bonus in attracting additional revenue, to compensate for the choice of new management not to apply for funding external to the university.

Though it may challenge the rate of progress, a lack of supportive government policy does not necessarily result in a lack of cultural development. Another new conservatory-style school established in 1999, **The International Academy of Music (Bangkok)** demonstrates that change can begin with a private initiative.

The origins of this venture had similarities with the regional Queensland venture. In Thailand, pre-tertiary training in western music is currently not of a standard which might give the student a competitive chance to seek a place for overseas study. Many students who have completed undergraduate music performance degrees at Thai universities find themselves needing to complete a second undergraduate degree overseas before being eligible for enrollment in quality international post-graduate programs.

For this reason, a feasibility study commissioned in 1996 by a private company and conducted by Professor Anthony Camden of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, sought to address the need to improve student chances of success. The resulting Vision Statement proposed that an academy be established which would provide

“... specialised musical education and professional training at the highest international level for singers and performers on all instruments. This teaching will enable talented students to develop the musical skills, knowledge, understanding and resourcefulness which will equip them to contribute to musical life in Thailand and internationally.”

It is important to note that most Thai music students remain unaware of the deficiency in their training until it is too late. Those who can afford the additional time and expense of further undergraduate study overseas opt to do so, but many are without such an option. This leaves them in the Thai system, reinforcing the old standards instead of being in a position to contribute to its development. A post-establishment survey carried out in 2001 reported that:

“Music school operator (sic) said that most parents and students

expected more knowledge in music education. The reasons for their education varied, some students want to fulfill their goal in becoming professional musician (sic), some students want to continue studying music in other schools or institution of a higher level.”

Following their feasibility study, the Thai entertainment company, Grammy Entertainment, proposed the establishment of an Academy based on the benchmark provided by the internationally-acclaimed Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. The resulting International Academy of Music seeks to improve the standard of training available to music students in Thailand by creating better access to teaching and performance activities of international quality. This objective is mirrored in the revised Mission Statement:

“Vision : to become an academy of excellence, unique in Thailand, with high quality programs in music training from early childhood through to professional level, consistent with those in academies overseas”.

The greatest challenge for the Academy is to alter the level of awareness regarding the need for this change. To do this requires close connections with various parts of the community, from professional companies, artists and teachers to parents and students. Connections are important to Thai culture, but new ones are difficult to forge, requiring involvement of key personnel whose name and status lend strength to the venture. Professional musicians and teachers who have experience working in Thailand note the problem, and find it difficult to overcome. Among them, Jonathan Glonek, violinist and teacher at Chulalongkorn University; Peter Goldberg, clarinetist and teacher; Nick La Fleur, saxophonist; Chris Sweeney, drummer; Edward Top, composer and violinist; Kit Young, pianist and teacher at Payap University; Bernard Sumner, pianist, freelance arranger and teacher. All are Western musicians of international reputation and experience. In the words of Nick La Fleur:

“I was pleased to hear the plans (for the IAM), but I did not believe it would be possible to achieve in Thailand.”

Similarly, some Thai professionals in the music industry who have studied and worked overseas also acknowledged the problem. They include all the principal players in the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra and the Manager of the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra, Wittaya Toomoonsorn.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that the work of the IAM is already changing standards. Visiting artists who have travelled to Bangkok on more than one occasion have commented on the improvement in student standards, and students themselves are taking more seriously their approach to training. Every year, the Asian Youth Orchestra auditions young musicians from eleven Asian countries for places in the annual AYO Summer Camp and Tour. After the auditions in February 2002, Keith Lau, manager of the AYO wrote to the Academy’s Director:

“We must say (that) we are very impressed by the students. You have done a great job in educating the students the discipline (sic)...the standard this year is much higher than before.”

More significantly, in less than three years, the IAM in Bangkok has begun to reshape the local infrastructure by becoming a role model for other Thai institutions. Two universities with music programs (Chulalongkorn University

and Mahidol University in Bangkok) which have collaborated with the Academy on visiting artist classes and performance projects are now initiating their own similar ventures. Two more universities in Chiang Mai (Payap University and Chiang Mai University) have also negotiated joint ventures with the IAM over the past twelve months. It would seem that institutions look to the IAM for leadership in such projects and respond well to any suggestions which come from the new Academy.

The path has not been easy, because the lack of government subsidy required the Academy to operate on market terms when an appropriate market had yet to be created. Despite this, the progress to date would indicate that some change in cultural infrastructure is possible in the absence of supportive government policy. However, the prerequisite which cannot be ignored is financial support for the establishment of such a venture. If support is not forthcoming from government sources, substantial establishment subsidy is necessary from private or corporate funds.

That there are private companies prepared to do so is cause of some concern amongst public institutions in Australia, at least:

The success of (The Australian Institute of Music, Sydney) which aims ultimately to become Australia's first private university of the performing arts, worries Robert Constable, director of the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music. "My concern is that if a private college such as AIM suddenly demonstrated that it could do better than the Sydney Conservatorium, then the Commonwealth Government might take it into its head that music education is best dealt with not as part of the normal university profile but by private providers,".

Both of the examples quoted refer to newly-established institutions with a strategic direction based on community need. Whatever their origins, existing conservatoria are also forced to address community needs in differing ways. Looking to the parent institution in each of these cases gives examples of different methods of interfacing with the community.

The Bangkok Academy was established on the model of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. The School of Music at HKAPA has more than 200 full-time enrollments studying Western classical music, jazz and Chinese traditional music.

The HKAPA is the only tertiary institution specialising in performing arts in Hong Kong, and it enjoys substantial Government subsidy. The objectives of the Academy are

"to foster and provide training, education and research in the performing and related technical arts.

The Academy sees its unique role As the nurturing of artistic talents and the professional training of performers and artists in the performing arts and related fields."

The HKAPA takes a traditional approach to its conservatory role. It offers a high standard of teaching and practice, and a sound professional education for performing artists. In addition to its tertiary brief, the Academy offers opportunities to talented school-aged children to develop their potential and it provides continuing education and re-training opportunities for practising

professionals and members of the public. It has a busy performance program of a very high standard, both on and off-campus. The Academy orchestra also undertakes an annual European tour.

Of particular relevance to this study is the Academy's determination to contribute to the community beyond providing performance and teaching opportunities.

"...to contribute to the development and improvement Of the performing arts in Hong Kong.....

...to enhance the image of Hong Kong as a leading metropolis renowned ... also for its cultural development and quality of life of its people..."

As the institution which was the role model for the International Academy in Bangkok, the HKAPA determined the foundation on which the IAM would be established. However, because the Bangkok Academy had no government subsidy, it was necessary for its management to look outside the traditional role and create connections on a much broader base in the Bangkok community. Given that the parent company of the IAM was an entertainment company, the most obvious link was through the provision of training in the commercial music and recording industry. Projects of this kind now subsidise the commercial operation of the Academy.

One of the most interesting links has been in the field of internet delivery of programs.

The International Academy of Music In Bangkok began offering internet programs before even hosting a website. In Thai society, the best promotional tool is to utilise social and business connections, and so the Academy in its first years has used its connections with related companies and websites, to gain attention and to offer programs for commercial purposes. Some examples of this are providing detailed information to the websites of the Thai Marching Band, the Thai Horn Society (which is sponsored by the Academy), and the Bangkok Musical Society. In addition, special commercial programs have been designed for delivery through EO-today, a partner company under Grammy Entertainment management. These programs are a commercial venture jointly offered by EO-today and The International Academy of Music, and offer short-term access to students who very often choose then to seek long-term options.

Such ventures are far removed from the role model on which the IAM was based, that of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. This world-renowned institution does not use internet delivery for any programs, concentrating only on traditional forms of delivery in the traditional conservatory style. The Hong Kong Academy offers training in jazz, but not contemporary rock/pop music.

The former parent of QCCM, the Queensland Conservatorium (Griffith University) "also prides itself in making a difference to the cultural life of Queensland". The QCGU extends into the community in many more ways than does the HKAPA in Hong Kong. In 2002, QCGU will offer 230 concerts and strengthen already-established relationships with the Brisbane City Council, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, South Bank Corporation, Education Queensland, Opera Queensland, the Brisbane International

Festival and various businesses. New partnerships include those with the Brisbane Ethnic Music and Arts Centre and the Brisbane Powerhouse.

Whilst QCGU has always maintained a strong connection with the community, the range of these partnerships is far more extensive under current management. At the time of the establishment of the Conservatorium campus in Mackay, the Queensland Conservatorium had a relationship with the Brisbane community more like that of the current one employed by Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

Like the Academy in Bangkok, but for different reasons, the new Central Queensland Conservatorium found it appropriate to exceed the more traditional relationship with the community demonstrated by the parent institution. The connection with the community is then closely linked not only to community need but also to the institution's perception of the extent of the role it might play with its city or region. A significant factor in this perception is management strategy.

Despite their differences, most of the relationships which both QCGU and HKAPA have with their individual communities are performance-based or training partnerships. By comparison, other institutions have also begun to address connections directly with relevant industries. In the same city of Brisbane, the Queensland University of Technology has established a Faculty of Creative Industries which is "committed to building partnerships with a variety of stakeholder groups, through targeted events and activities, research and development opportunities, industry links and community service, nationally and internationally."

In this way, QUT Creative Industries assumes the role of a conservatory, particularly in the contemporary music and music technology areas, developing professional expertise in these areas through direct connections with the industries in which the students wish to work.

Conservatory-style training is facing many changes which relate to the evolving needs of their various communities. The traditional performance media of opera and orchestral music have faced a decline in audience response world-wide in recent years. To assume that this means a declining need for performance training is not necessarily appropriate. There is a corresponding growth in other genres of live performance – contemporary music, jazz, rock/pop music, world music, technology-based live performance. There is not necessarily a decline in the need for training, but a shift in the type of training required. Programs such as those offered by QCGU, CQCM, QUT and IAM (Bangkok) acknowledge these changing trends in the industries in different ways.

The secret in choosing the appropriate path lies in connecting with and reflecting the community in which the conservatory resides. Each community has different needs, and the roles played by each of those institutions mentioned above demonstrate how very different these needs, and, ergo, those paths might be.

Now, in times when elitism and the relevance of specialist institutions and programs are often questioned, conservatoria may find that they need to demonstrate tangible associations of diverse kinds if they are to secure a robust relationship with society.

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March 1, 2002