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Making Music Together – The Queensland Experience
Simone de Haan

Active music making embraces a process of creative interplay or the performance of a “sounding music” in a live setting with which listeners can engage, as opposed to the dissemination of music as an object of admiration: an object to be read; read about; listened to passively; or consumed. In a creative music making environment, and as a means of engaging the listeners, the three essential processes of composing, performing and listening, can to various degrees be undertaken by the listener, rather than lie solely in the hands of the professional composer or performer. Recent Western art music practice has, however, traditionally differentiated between these roles to the point where a composer is seen to produce the score or musical work, the performer to play it, and the listener to hear it performed, rather than be an essential part in its creation. This has tended to distance listeners from the music making taking place on a remote stage, and also established a hierarchical gap between the professional artists and listeners, to the extent where they may find it difficult to recognise their own ability to make music and become an integral part of the creative process. In order to readdress this situation, therefore, irrespective of the style of music being produced, the stated roles, or the nature of the musical environment, in creating participative musical rituals, it is vital that we look to establishing connections and actively engaging the listeners in the music making.

In an active and live music making context the potential exists for the sharing of a sounding music and the creation of unique events in which the primary focus is on enhancing the relationship between the performers and listeners. At jazz or improvised events when the music is “really happening”, a spontaneous energy is produced in which the music evolves in the moment, with both performers and listeners engaging in an interactive process. The intensity of the ensemble playing and solos provide for an intimacy and feeling of call and response to emerge between the performers and the audience. This in turn provides the inspiration for the performers to extend their creativity to higher levels. Group dynamics can in these special moments transcend the individual contributions to the point where the music becomes a collective composition in which the performer/composers and listeners are all active in “composing” a shared musical event specific to a time and “sense of place”. A feeling of community as a result emerges, with performers and listeners joining together as one, the music unfolding in a supportive ambience, also influenced by the nature of the performance space.

The integration of the roles of composer, performer and listener is most strongly demonstrated in indigenous cultures, where their music and arts practice plays an essential part in the life of the community. Ceremonial rituals underpin several aspects of cultural life, from birth to death. Although there may exist ‘song men’ or ‘master musicians’ in some of these traditions, the community as a whole partakes in the rituals in

an active way. In order to re-examine our forms of presentation of public music events from a participative viewpoint, therefore, models such as the music and dance traditions of the Aborigines and a range of African cultures, may provide an alternative perspective in looking at our own practice. These innately theatrical artistic forms engage with the listener in a direct and physical sense, combining music and movement with strong visual and symbolic elements, the listeners in many cases also being performers. Within these cultures, the environment also contributes to the nature of the rituals held in their communities, in contrast to the specially designed concert halls or constructed performance spaces, as is the case in our Western culture. The more formal Western art music concert rituals seem designed to take us away from our immediate environment, are generally held in a central city location away from our communities and delivered to us as commercial products at high cost. This type of listening context and product mentality tends to produce rituals for an elite class coming to be seen at a social event, rather than developing a sense of community or connection with the music.

Last year I visited Nullumbuy to take part in an educational project in a school there and was given the opportunity to witness one of the ceremonies taking place after the death of a community member. Through the invitation of one of the song men and dancers Wityana Marika (who acted as an interpreter on this occasion), I was fortunate to hear an extensive ceremony outlining the spirit journey. The songs were sung by three groups, one a women's group, each led by a song man or woman, with the other singers responding in cascading phrases and inflections around the principal melody line, accompanied by clap sticks. The different vocal qualities and inherent sense of improvisation in the flow of the lines created an exquisite fluidity in the articulation of the songs and brought out the individual qualities of each of the groups. Prior to the ceremony the women sat in one group and the men in another, talking with each other before moving to their different positions to begin. As the ceremony evolved, the strength of the connections emerged, not only with the spirit journey of the person that had died, but also amongst the musicians themselves. Call and response was central to the antiphonal ritual, with a differing emotional intensity emerging from song to song, each group responding to the other. The unique "sense of place" – and spiritual power of the community coming together to share in a ritual of meaning was at the core of their music making process. Even from the perspective of an outsider who did not understand the tradition, the experience was deeply moving, as the multiple layers of the music sounded into the night in this natural setting.

It is not that we should attempt to directly replicate the practice of other cultures, but more that we address our own practice through reflecting on the degree to which it is evolving and creating meaningful connections between us as composers, performers and listeners. Rather than continue to repeat the standard modes of presentation that have tended to dominate our performance practice in recent times, this type of analysis could bring a fresh perspective to the way we create and present music in our own culture. By sharing ideas and bringing together musicians from different backgrounds, the potential arises for new music and ways of music making to develop within our own communities.

In relating events to their immediate environment, or drawing on the environment as the inspiration for an event, the nature of the experience can be radically altered from the perspective of the listeners. Consequently, barriers can be broken down between the performer and listener, professional and amateur and art and life, creating events which have fluidity within them and relate to their listener and surrounding environment in a more direct way than a formal concert. Examples include: street parties and parades with community members building their own sets and costumes based on themes from their own location; composing new drumming works that involve the listeners as performers; improvisations being developed involving the listeners, where the environment provides the sonic materials with which to react; listeners walking from one venue to another as part of a 'moving' concert; creating new participative performance arts works for specific sites under the mentorship of professional artists; and building musical instruments and performing on them in group devised works. .

The Darwin Symphony Orchestra's style of presentation provides an excellent example of innovation, drawing on the environment as its inspiration in the performance of orchestral music in unique natural locations. This process also involves the commissioning of new works from Australian composers for sites such as Katherine Gorge, in which both the concert and some of the works played were designed specifically for that environment. The orchestra's concerts generally consist of a mix of newly commissioned works, together with classical and popular repertoire. Listeners who would normally not have the opportunity to take part in such unique listening experiences often travel hundreds of kilometres to hear the sounds of the orchestra supported by the visual backdrop and sounds of the outback. The DSO, as part of their creative process, is also committed to the development of collaborative work with indigenous communities. In a recent concert held on the sports oval at Daly River, the women's choir sang sacred songs accompanied by the orchestra in an evening that finished with Strauss waltzes – a concert that could only have happened in that place!

Festivals can provide an opportunity to create events that embrace the listener in special ways. As they are centred within a community or communities, the potential also exists to look to the community as a resource in establishing a sustainable festival culture. In order to build a festival that has relevance and/or longevity, however, it is necessary to get a feeling of what is happening at the "grass roots" level before commencing the programming process. Time needs to be given to dialogue with the various community groups in order to establish creative processes that can both lead up to the festival and carry on once it has finished. This not only supports a sense of ownership amongst community members, but also gives the opportunity for them to engage in the creative process as musicians, listeners and advocates.

For the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music and *Jammin'...making music together*, a key goal for both events was to build on the sense of place. To achieve this it was essential to work with existing festivals, community, arts groups and schools, to integrate their work within the evolving festival concepts and to create new work. This naturally led to a strong emphasis on building participative processes through: artist in residence programs; joint events involving several like groups in building critical mass; providing a

range of culturally diverse music experiences to reach a broad range of listeners; and taking music out to public locations. In the Biennial, several of the major national and international artists worked in residence with community groups. Although they also presented their own materials in concert, collaborative processes were involved in the majority of projects. As a result, a stronger connection was made between artists and the community, international and local performers, professional and amateur activities and performance and music education. This tended to blur the traditional boundaries between roles and categories of presentation, and as such, the festival had a multi-layered feeling, moving from workshops leading up to the concerts, to events in which the public were the performers and celebratory rituals combining music and food. Consequently, a more direct relationship was able to be established between the nature of the event and the experience of the listeners. This was also supported by providing participative activities in which they could take part, through offering basic skills workshops for themselves and their children and a diversity of musical experiences in the one event, as opposed to reinforcing their existing tastes and prejudices by only offering styles of music with which they were familiar.

In order to establish a festival context that has a direct meaning for its community, or communities, it is essential to address the issue of building mutual trust, respect and effective relationships at the core. The greater the number of stakeholders involved and the more the community is engaged, however, the more communications can become an issue. It is fundamental, therefore, in ensuring that a strong commitment is maintained to working towards the same goals that those responsible for the development and implementation of the festival set up communication processes in which there is ongoing contact and coordination between all parties. For both the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music and *Jammin'...making music together*, the organisational models were centrally driven, but also relied on delegation of key artistic decision making processes and project management to teams responsible for the individual events. The core festival management, however, ensured that quality controls and all aspects of production, budget and marketing, were carefully monitored, and that regular project meetings were held to ensure that collaborative projects remained on track. Within a delegated artistic framework it is central that artistic overview and a degree of freedom is given to project leaders who then take responsibility for the implementation of the agreed concepts in liaison with the artistic director. By providing an effective management framework it becomes possible for the spirit of collaboration to rest at the core of a festival concept, and as a result, the creative work that evolves out of the developmental processes will have a stronger connection with its community. This can also provide the opportunity for “word of mouth” publicity to be achieved through the evolution of the creative process and resultant artistic medium itself, rather than expensive marketing techniques.

In the case of the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music the primary stakeholder was the Queensland State Government who provided \$2 million of festival funding. The Biennial rose out of an undertaking to bring back the Brisbane Biennial Festival of Music after it was discontinued by the previous Government. Minister for the Arts, The Honourable Mr Matt Foley MLA, however, determined that it should be taken statewide and bring music of all styles to the people of Queensland. Other major stakeholders included the

key City Councils in each region. The establishment of a statewide festival for the first time provided Queenslanders with a unique opportunity to share a rich journey of discovery towards creating a distinct musical identity for its vast community. In geographical terms the scope of the festival compared to staging one simultaneously in London, Warsaw and Moscow, but in this case, the cities had much smaller population bases and a strong sense of community.

The following key factors emerged in the evolution of the Biennial programme:

What we share in is unique in each community. Whilst each of the cities had its own individual character and environment as expressed through its artistic activities, Queenslanders share a strong sense of a single cultural identity.

An emphasis on physical journey and what connects us. To emphasise our existing connections and to create new opportunities for development, major statewide projects evolved including Jazz Train and Rock on the Back of a Truck.

New relationships and shared music making. Visiting artists were offered the unique opportunity to work with the professional musicians, emerging artists and communities. By participating in the festival they had the opportunity to intimately experience the feel of Queensland – its people and environment.

The importance of partnerships and collaborations. Community projects were designed and partnerships forged to support artistic infrastructure, new visions and musical works to be sustained into the future.

The physicality and dynamic nature of the Queensland experience and its people. Using the environment as its inspiration, Biennial events reflected the elements of Fire (movement, energy, dynamism), Earth (nurturing, new life, solidity, sense of order), Air (receptive, communicative, intellectual, aspirational), and Water (water, compassionate, perceptive, intuitive).

And most of all...the fun in making music together!

The statewide nature of the festival led to the opening night being held simultaneously in Townsville, Mackay and Brisbane. The Brisbane opening, *Queensland to the World* was a collaborative event in Musgrave Park, the traditional home of the indigenous people of Brisbane and featured internationally recognised Queensland artists, Jeffrey Black, Lisa Gasteen, Combo Fiasco and others, supported by the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra. The night commenced with a group of young didgeridu players performing a group-devised composition, mentored by Rodney Boschmann and William Barton, whose work has been inspirational in influencing the writing of leading Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe. The Townsville opening, *Igniting the Spirit*, was held in the Sacred Heart Church overlooking Townsville, featuring the Tibetan Singer Yungchen Lhamo, English soprano, Susan Bickley, Fretwork an English Viol Ensemble and Dance North, Townsville's professional dance company, in a collaborative ritual composed for

that space, finishing with a feast prepared by the Townsville chef Michel Flores. Mackay opened with *Voltage Concert* featuring leading Queensland bands performing in *Rock on the Back of a Truck* together with young Mackay musicians in an open air concert on the river bank.

One of the most successful of the artistic collaborations of the Biennial was a project between Dance North and Huun Huur Tu, a visiting Mongolian musical group, who worked together in Townsville to present a joint event to critical acclaim. Another collaborative project *Gershwin Country* featured leading Australian country singers including Gina Jeffreys and Troy Cassar-Daley, supported by the Queensland Conservatorium Orchestra performing Gershwin songs across the state – quite an experience for the young musicians. Other major projects were developed with a range of communities as part of the Composer in Residence programs and led by Graeme Leak (percussion), Stephen Leek (composition and choral), Sean O’Boyle (community events), Kavisha Mazzella (choral), Stuart Dempster (trombone and didjeridu) and Vincent Plush (composition).

As part of the consultation process, the first trip to Mackay incorporated a visit to the “The Lagoons”, a beautiful parklands area near the centre of the city. A Meeting House for the South Sea Islanders was located there, as were the sacred sites of the Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines. The spirit of the place was immediately apparent, with the parklands also surrounded by sugar cane fields, another strong part of Mackay’s history. The first musical image that came was of involving the indigenous communities in a collaborative event that moved throughout the parklands. The final event “Journeys in Time” built on this concept, involved music making happening through the day in the different sites, with two visiting indigenous groups Waak Waak Jungi from the Northern Territory and the Burundi Drummers from Africa joining with the local indigenous and choral musicians to create one of the heart-based events of the festival. Through the community consultation process, it was also evident that there was a strong choral culture in Mackay, including indigenous school and Islander choirs. Although initially difficult to bring the range of diverse choral groups together, a successful community choral project was developed by Aria award winning singer and composer Kavisha Mazzella. As Artist in Residence she worked with Mackay choirs to create a write a new choral composition based on the stories of the region and as well as *Sonic Manoeuvres*, choral performances in public locations around the city.

Flying into Mackay for *Journeys in Time*, as we were about to land at the airport, the rain started to pour down. The stage had no cover and it was too dangerous for the Burundi Drummers to dance on it, or for the amplification system to be used. A contingency plan was immediately put into place and although the space was much smaller, the spirit and sense of place that initially directed us to this area, pointed to the Meeting Hut as the replacement venue for the choirs and local indigenous musical acts. The rain stopped just prior to the evening performance, however, and the Burundi Drummers, who needed more space, came out and danced spontaneously on a traditional earth mound outside the Meeting Hut as they would have done in their own community. The performance was electrifying and the reaction of the 4,000 listeners who came together around the mound

to see the Burundi Drummers drumming, dancing and jumping into the air, turned what could have been a disaster into an incredible musical and dance experience for all concerned. After they sang and danced, the local indigenous groups and choirs played on in to the night with the audience enjoying the indigenous foods of the region that they had prepared. This was truly a unique event that could only have happened in this place at this time. One of the major legacies of the Biennial, however, was that *Journeys in Time* brought together these three indigenous communities to perform together for the first time in the history of Mackay.

In taking the Festival statewide it was necessary to balance the previous expectations regarding the Brisbane Biennial Festival of Music with the imperative to reach a larger audience and travel the artists greater distances at significantly higher costs, yet still provide a critical mass of events in Brisbane. Additionally, the logistics of setting up the production aspects required building good relationships on the ground and the setting up of collaborative teams in which there was strong ownership of the artistic concepts and management of the events in each of the individual centres. The model that emerged around the concept of “journeys” was one of choosing iconic projects that demonstrated maximum engagement with listeners across the state and a commitment to musical diversity and the educational process. These projects included *Rock on the Back of a Truck*, with rock bands performing in regional centres across Queensland ending up at The Longreach Hall of Fame and *Jazz Train*, traveling from Cairns to Brisbane, with two school big bands on board, Brisbane State High School and Kirwan State High School from Townsville, tutored by Don Burrows, Kevin Hunt, Andrew Firth, John Hoffman, Paul Hudson and guest Canadian trombonist Ian McDougall. On the way down the coast, the train stopped in several key centres, conducting workshops for schools in the afternoon and performing a joint concert in the evening.

Public participative events included: *Concert on Bicycles* with listeners combining the exhilaration of riding with music broadcast live over the local FM stations; *First Light*, a devotional event led by Yungchen Lhamo held in the early mornings; *Sonic Manoeuvres* with the sounds of car horns, junk instruments and wood chopping being the music; *Dha:fu Dja:gun*, a special ritual for the Aboriginal community; *Gospel Workshops*; *Café Concert Series*; *Feastival*, a community event exploring the idea of the feast; and *Sound Garden*, an interactive sound sculpture.

Jammin'...making music together was created as part of a process of developing a sense of community on South Bank in Brisbane. Although it was of a smaller scale than the Biennial, even more so, it explored the relationship between music making, educative processes and the community. Its primary focus was on community participation and to that extent the event catered for all ages and tastes and was designed to bring the South Bank parklands alive with the sounds of music making. In parallel, an international symposium *CONNECTing with...* was held that focused on the examination of contemporary music making and its relationship to the community.

The South Bank area as a whole was under a period of change, with disruptions caused by commercial development that had caused bad press and alienation of the restaurateurs

from the South Bank Corporation, the body responsible for its management. Although there existed commercial and cultural bodies on the site, the building of a cohesive approach to arts development and marketing was still in its early stages. The South Bank Business Association was also looking to develop more vibrancy in the area and to increase exposure and bring more people and income generation to South Bank, similar to that which had occurred as a result of the 1988 Brisbane Expo. After an extensive period of dialogue and recognition that events and cultural activity would be central to enlivening the area, a new marketing campaign concept *South Bank....Always Creating* was launched. With that, the focus shifted to bringing more events and creative activities to the parklands.

As part of this creative development process, the idea was put forward for a participative music event to be led by the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University in bringing together the South Bank Corporation, Brisbane City Council, restaurants, corporate stakeholders, Brisbane and Ethnic Music and Arts Centre, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland State Library, Queensland College of Art, The Mater Hospital, The Australian Army Band and other community schools and professional groups to work together. The focus was on building a range of collaborative projects designed to engage the community as active workshop or symposium participants, performers and composers, or simply by providing them with dynamic rituals in restaurants and sites around South Bank which they could attend.

Participative events were held throughout the South Bank parklands, with the music presented closely linked to the cuisine or style of the various restaurants. One of the major events *Queensland Sings* was held in the Piazza, with The Australian Army Band and Brisbane Chorale providing both leadership and accompaniment for the audience in a programme of Australian traditional and popular songs. The atmosphere of the evening demonstrated the potential for engaging the listener in an active way, with the audience visibly moved by the experience. Each night finished with artists from a diverse range of musical traditions and styles coming together for a jam session at *Club 10* in the Conservatorium Foyer.

The potential for blending the roles of amateur and professional was demonstrated by *Weekend Warriors*, an international concept that was launched as part of the festival in which amateur contemporary musicians from all walks of life rehearse weekly under the guidance of a tutor and perform monthly in a public venue in front of an audience. Performances were held in the Piazza and standards most professional. In addition, *The Big Jam Thing* was also held, where members from the public could come as part of *Jammin...* and audition on the day to perform in the Piazza before an audience.

In *Sound Hunters*, another participative environmental work led by Graeme Leak, people were encouraged to bring paper bags, balloons, plastic piping and objects to South Bank to develop a special environmental performance inspired by the waterways of the area. *Doin' it for the Kids* presented a number of workshops for young children from creative interactive sessions, to singing, drumming and finding more about the instruments of the orchestra. There was also an Under 5's disco, the chance to design a CD cover, the

opportunity to learn the didgeridu, making musical instruments and dance theatre workshops. The event as a whole ended with Opera in the Park featuring international artist singing with Conservatorium students supported by the Conservatorium Orchestra which at the last minute had to be moved to the Conservatorium Theatre due to rain – and with the support of the media sponsors in getting the late change of venue news to the public, a great event was produced out of adversity.

One of the major collaborative projects in *Jammin'...making music together* involved Guildhall School of Music & Drama staff working with students from the Acacia Ridge Aboriginal and Islander School, a range of musicians from BEMAC and the Queensland Conservatorium Chamber Orchestra. The intent was to create a performance work from the individual music that each of the musicians brought to the rehearsal space through processes of improvisation. Although there had been a general brief sent out, when the musicians first came together they were nervous about the unknown and how a musical work could be created in such a short time, particularly given their diverse backgrounds. Gradually, however, each individual musician was encouraged to play or sing music from their own tradition and through a process of collaborative dialogue and listening to each other, a sense of relationship emerged. Sean Gregory the group leader then “composed” a coherent fusion work around the individual contributions, bringing together the various elements through an aural process of verbal and musical feedback amongst the musicians. The improvised music produced for the concert was truly exquisite, the audience response positive, with the performers feeling that the creative experience had given them a new musical perspective that had changed the way they viewed their own practice.

The Biennial Festival of Music and *Jammin'...making music together* were both centred around a sense of place and the active role the community can have in creating a festival as a dynamic event of relevance. Another central characteristic in their modeling was the acknowledgement of the diversity of music making that is currently operating within our culture. This embraced the need to establish shared listening environments in which audiences were exposed to creative processes and music with which they would not normally have been familiar.

Through establishing collaborative processes it becomes possible not only to create events which can support new artistic work, but also to increase artistic activity of relevance within a particular community. Festivals can be strongly influential in contributing to the development of cultural identity. A responsibility therefore exists for us to design them in such a way as to engage the listener actively and on a number of levels. By forming a deeper connection between those taking part, be it from the perspective of the composer, performer or listener, the potential exists for us to keep our practice alive and dynamic, and for it to become fundamental to our everyday existence. In looking to the artistic practice of the Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities that are so much part of Australia's cultural identity, we have a unique opportunity to reappraise our own practice in a way which could lead to a recognition that a “sense of place” and the building of community should ideally lie at the heart of our music making process.