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This presentation will reflect on young peoples' access to music in terms of conservatoire education. Who are the young people that we admit to conservatoires, and what are their career options after graduation.

You could say that conservatoires have two main objectives:

- To educate professionals, who – based in the tradition – will seek to **preserve** and communicate that tradition, either by communicating the music in its original form, or - sometimes - by interpreting the tradition into a contemporary context.
- To educate professionals, who – based in a contemporary music culture – will seek to **create** and communicate the music of today and tomorrow.

The keywords here are of course **preserving** versus **creating**. Although all music obviously has been created at some point, the older and more widespread a genre or style grows, more time will have to be spent on preserving, and as a consequence – less time will be spent on creating new music.

In the classical music culture this situation is intensified by the ratio between composers and performers - the few compose music to be performed by the many. In genres like jazz and pop this ratio is quite different. Most often the composer and the performer is the very same person. As a consequence the **creation** of music plays a very important role to practitioners of these genres.

This fact must of course be reflected in pop and jazz curricula defining themselves within the contemporary music paradigm. You could choose to base the curriculum on a generally accepted canon (Bach, Mozart, Beethoven – Armstrong, Ellington, Parker – Elvis, Beatles, Hendrix), but such a choice can put too much emphasis on tradition, and would eventually bring the curriculum out of sync with the predominant contemporary music culture(s). Too much historicism and focusing on genres and styles can be fatal to contemporary music.

From the start in 1986 my institution RMC took the consequence of this, and developed programmes that are neutral to genres and styles. We normally use the Danish term rhythmic music that includes pop, jazz, rock, world etc. We do not have specific jazz or pop programmes at RMC, and you will not find genres or styles mentioned in our curriculum. We prefer having programmes with space for the students to define their own musical area of interest, and with plenty of room for developing their own music.

Recently, while preparing a new vision and strategy, we took a new and important step in this direction. We now define RMC as an **institution for contemporary music**, thereby clearly defining our key role as an institution that **educates professionals who will create the music of tomorrow**.

It is of course not possible to limit or define contemporary music in any precise way – neither by means of time, genre or quality - but in an educational context, giving the students a framework for developing themselves within their own artistic and personal preferences will often stimulate and support the creation of contemporary music.

As a conservatoire explicitly specialising in contemporary music RMC must also discuss the definition of a good musician.

Is it performers who play a traditional musical instrument, or must we include those who create and perform their music using computers – like many of the great DJs or producers of our time?

Is it performers who master a musical instrument at the highest technical level, or must we include songwriters who may not be the greatest instrumentalists or vocalists in a traditional sense, but who are nevertheless creating, performing and communicating their music in a highly artistic and successful way?

I think I have already given the answer. Of course we must be open to all kinds of new music and music professionals to keep up with the developments in music world surrounding us.

And please note that these new composers and performers are not just a minority sub culture. They not only dominate today's music culture in terms of audience, jobs, money, but they also represent high artistic quality and cultural capital.

This leads me to my concluding statement:

- If we put more emphasis on contemporary music and music education;
- If we admit new genres, performers, competencies, musical abilities and technology;
- If we develop new curricula to provide the educational framework;

Then conservatoire education:

- Could be made much more attractive and accessible to young people;
- Could be more relevant to present culture and society;
- Could support employability of future music professionals.

At RMC we are currently developing a new BMus degree programme in song writing that is catering to a new generation of music professionals. By venturing into this process we certainly face all the challenges I have just mentioned, and it is a hard and sometimes provoking process, but I also believe that our survival and quality as a higher music education institution lies in that process.