



ExTra! Music and intercultural dialogue

by Isabelle Metrope

The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue was officially launched in Ljubljana, Slovenia on January 8 this year, thus providing the European Commission with a chance to remind the founding values of the European Union, namely cultural exchanges, peace and protection of human dignity, and providing the European Music Council (EMC) with a chance to relate the latter to its triennial project 'ExTra! Exchange Traditions'.

The ExTra! project builds upon the acknowledgement that exchanges between several cultures produce more value than the sum of these cultures considered separately. The generated added value enhances the compatibility between the construction of a common European identity and the preservation of the European cultural identities already existing in Europe.

To achieve this goal, since its inception in 2006 the ExTra! project has organised panel discussions, workshops and concerts in order to relate together traditional, extra-European cultures and traditional cultures from various European backgrounds. Thanks to immigration processes, these extra-European cultures have been present on the continent for many years; yet instead of a constructive exchange only a mere cohabitation has taken place.

The underlying objective of ExTra! is to make these exchange platforms perennial. Through their local or regional action, they meet the desire expressed by the European Union to take actions closer to European citizens, and no longer on the international level only. Another characteristic highlighted by the Commission during the opening conference of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue is the importance of associating different fields: education, technology, or culture are thus elements likely to be combined. In this spirit, the European Summer Academy organised by the Cité de la musique in Paris in 2007 has combined presentations of music from Senegal, Morocco and Transylvania through workshops opened to students, intending to show them the learning techniques peculiar to these cultures and which are not used in European conservatoires. Other examples of events combining several areas of application are the yearly workshops initiated by the *mica*, the music information centre Austria, in order to raise public awareness of intellectual property issues, including creative content posted or broadcast online. These workshops suggest approaching musical activity from the legal viewpoint, which seems to be an integral part of artistic creation today.

The issue concerning the legal framework regulating the broadcasting of creative content online has also been raised at the Ljubljana Conference. There is no legislation on the European level to this day; only the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions mentions that the European Union has taken a stand on the subject. In order to spur the exchange of ideas about this and review the opinion of the various

stakeholders, the Commission published a communication on creative content online in the European unique market in 2007. All organisations and individuals are invited to express their opinions on the issues raised in the appendix of this document (available online on http://emc-imc.org/archiv/col_en.pdf).

In addition to these practical activities, ExTra! wishes to fuel the theoretical debate on Intercultural Dialogue through a scientific publication. This interdisciplinary work, to be published in spring 2009, will gather essays on the subject written by experts, notably in ethnology, sociology or ethnomusicology. As the events organised in the framework of the ExTra! project, this publication will deal with the exchange of traditions in relation to several areas of application, such as music education, gender equality, the concept of identity and the media. Besides, the second part of the publication will be devoted to the presentation of original projects, notably projects having an influence on the local level, with Intercultural Dialogue as a background and likely to give momentum to other initiatives.

With the project ExTra! Exchange Traditions, supported by the European Commission, the European Music Council hopes to act as a carrier of information and a creator of impulses through cultural events involving European citizens at the local level (Festival des cultures du monde de Gannat, France) as well as international level (Académie d'été européenne, Cité de la musique, Paris). In return, the EMC, regional group of the International Music Council, intends to place ExTra! on the agenda of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.