

Exchanges and communication

Why tour nowadays ? How is it possible to set up international projects in a difficult economic context where the increase in the number of actors leads to an ever-growing competition ? What are the new modalities of exchange between orchestras ? Such questions were debated during the three workshops. Far from defending an alarmist point of view, speakers and delegates explore the possibilities offered by an unprecedented globalisation process.

The context for global exchanges has considerably changed over the past years. In addition to the traditional obstacles linked to very different fiscal and social systems, the drop in public financing has compelled many orchestras to forsake too expensive classic tours. The diversity of fiscal and social systems, far from being a recent phenomenon, is more perceptible today due to the liberalization of global exchanges, in particular within the framework of the European Internal Market. In order to balance competition and facilitate exchanges, efforts could be made in three fields, insists Rolf Bolwin, President of Pearle* : musicians' social status (independent worker, liberal profession, employee or civil servant), double taxation (artists are taxed in their country of origin and in their destination country), as well as accounting for Social Security systems in different countries.

But such a harmonization is not planned for Europe, notes Sylvain Pasqua, from the European Commission. The impulse must come from the Member States which could already progress on three levels : elaborating bilateral conventions, informing on fiscal policies in different States, applying existing international norms, namely concerning territoriality.

More than on the European level, it is indeed on the States that the efforts must be concentrated, as culture is subject to the principle of subsidiarity. Anne-Marie Autissier, specialist of culture and Europe, denounces the general decline of the State's commitment and addresses a plea for more active national policies in the cultural field : to export one's culture, it is necessary to start by supporting it within the country ; if not, one runs the risks of "making mobility with no point of anchorage..."

Why do orchestras continue to tour despite a difficult context ? The beneficial effects of tours are evident on several levels : the group's cohesion, the artistic quality and the search for financing.

According to Benoît Braescu, Manager of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, touring is a kind of "group therapy" and playing in a foreign hall before a new audience stimulates the artists and encourages them to surpass themselves.

The General Manager of the Russian National Orchestra, Sergei Markov, is in full agreement with this and widens the statement to the relationship with donors and sponsors. According to him, touring is an investment profitable on the long-term, even if at the beginning the

orchestra has to take from its equity. These factors are even more obvious for specialized ensembles such as Les Arts florissants : for Luc Bouniol-Laffont, organizing tours is an economic necessity ; it is linked to the ensemble's identity, which is constructed by means of its international touring.

If orchestras' and ensembles' interest for tours is now undeniable, growing constraints trigger a renewal of traditional models. Benoît Braescu thinks that in the future, shorter tours possibly organized as residencies will be preferred. Hervé Boutry, from Ensemble Intercontemporain, insists on the necessity of developing a long-term dialogue between orchestras and agents or orchestras and halls. Richard Crossland, Consultant, speaks about going from a *business to business* model (B2B) to a *business to consumer* one (B2C)...But over all, speakers and delegates reveal the necessity of providing the orchestra with a strong artistic project.

In this respect, Martijn Sanders' message, from the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, is unambiguous : Be original ! Be different ! Because programmers are looking for a larger diversity in cultural offer.

The definition of a unique identity is an alchemy between a programme, a conductor and an orchestra. Martin Campbell-White sees in these three elements the secret to success. If a daring project has difficulties imposing itself in the first place, it will pay off on the long-term. The case of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is exemplary : Simon Rattle has little by little succeeded in imposing this orchestra as a world-wide reference which cannot be ignored.

Orchestras could be active in financing tours as well : the purpose is to convince public investors to make use of the orchestra to promote a town or a country ; associating private investors to a tour enables to make sure they will commit themselves.

Parallel to the transformation of traditional tour-models, new forms of exchanges have developed. Two examples are given : SymphoNet and ONE.

In both cases, the point is to join forces to be better armed to face the obstacles mentioned here above, but also to develop innovative artistic projects. The three cooperation axes are information exchanges, a related commission policy, and exchanges of administrative and artistic personnel.

SymphoNet groups together the Orchestre national de Lyon, the CBSO and the Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt ; the network ONE is composed of the Orchestre de Picardie, the Tapiola Sinfonietta, the Slovak Sinfonietta of Zilina, the Kamermuziki from Riga and the Iena Orchestra.

Thus, these structures apply to formations which are very different by their size, their repertoire, their territorial roots, their financial means... Each can choose the modalities which correspond best to its identity, its ambitions and its motivations.

Thus, according to Vincent Agrech, from the Association Française d'Action Artistique, it appears that the setting up of international exchanges, tours or other projects, depends less on a competition exclusively expressed in financial terms, than on a solid motivation to lead such projects, as well as on a capacity for creating supports in one's direct environment – audience, authorities, private investors. In order to be more present on the international scene, isn't it most important to propose a strong identity on a personal project and to convince its community ?