

MUSICKING IN ABUNDANCE

DECLARATION Towards A GREATER DIVERSITY in Music Curation

With this declaration, we aim to start a process of exchange and collaboration between institutions and relevant stakeholders towards fulfilling the requirements of a greater diversity in music curation in a sustainable way.

PREAMBLE

For several decades now, initiatives and proposals have sought to address the starkly uneven distribution of resources in publicly funded musical life; they seek to dismantle the historical – and ongoing – dominance of Eurocentric, white, male, and elitist traditions within repertoires, performances, texts, research projects, and funding. In support of these efforts, alliances have been formed, biographies and encyclopaedias have been written, databases have been compiled to inform directors, curators, and musicians in their programming. These efforts do not only aim to counter injustices; they also want publicly funded cultural life to become a central concern for broader and more diverse audiences.

VISION

We welcome these diverse initiatives as vital first steps towards a musical life that opens up the abundance of cultural practices to all music and sound art enthusiasts. With this declaration, we commit to structural and in-depth measures that foster coexistence and collaboration among a variety of artistic traditions and practices, along with a fair distribution of and equitable investment in resources. These measures include but are not limited to promoting greater attention to creative sonic/music artists that are present and active in our

societies but not structurally visible (e.g., women, LGBTQIA+, non-dominant traditions). These measures will affect both the artistic programme and the methods, practices, and individuals involved in the programme. Moreover, we aim to analyse and evaluate our own practices, programmes, and participants, and to precisely position our institutions within a diverse cultural landscape. Our long-term goal is to create a clearly identifiable network of various cultural institutions, collectives, companies, ensembles, and other cultural actors involved in musicking within diverse social contexts.

Such long-term goals require sustainable strategies in dealing with all participants in our creative processes, whether technical, administrative, or creative staff, as well as in our relationships with audiences, collaborators, and institutional partners. We recognize that such processes require time, money, and committed participants. Their implementation will require new resources and new types of processes from the individuals and institutions signing here.

This declaration, arrived at in discussions between experts and the signatories, therefore merely recommends goals as well as actions towards these goals. Details must now be worked out, and actions must be adapted to the realities of each institution.

STRATEGIC FIELDS OF ACTION

PROGRAMMING

We aim to align our programming with the realities of contemporary life and its abundance of traditions. This shifting of accents gives rise to new, more diverse traditions and a redefinition of various canons.

We propose the following actions and measures: a) the intensified curation of contemporary works and traditions, b) curating works from historical composers with alternate life realities, gender identities, and musical traditions, both of which are c) coupled with intensified reflections and consultations on cultural appropriation.

PRODUCTION

We aim to re-orient our internal processes towards diverse artistic and social contexts and necessities: We acknowledge that curatorial work will require a decisive change in the design of artistic processes.

We propose the following actions and measures: a) respect the right to artistic autonomy and cultural openness of each artist, b) offering opportunities for alternate presentation contexts, c) scheduling of production processes according to diverse life circumstances, cultural backgrounds, and socio-economic conditions, d) diversification of teams.

POSITION

We aim to work towards a decentering of dominant Eurocentric art forms. We do not want to dismantle traditions, but we recognize – especially as Euro-American cultural players – that one's own cultural tradition and practice is but one of many.

We propose to a) share spaces, b) emphasize dialogue and collaboration, and c) open up the repertoire, d) for those who receive public funds: we will practice equitable curation so that other music practices and scenes benefit from these public resources.

SUSTAINABILITY

We aim to work towards sustainable practices. A sustainable curation of music and art requires the creative, discursive, and practical anchoring of artistic activities in communities and people in local contexts.

We propose a) the responsible use of resources (natural, social, appreciation of work), b) the anchoring of artistic activities in communities and people in local contexts, c) continual dialogues of mutual learning, d) the sharing, preservation, and accessibility of new artistic works and experiences.

EVALUATIONS

To adapt the steps and thoughts articulated in this declaration for our institution will require time and space. We aim to provide regular occasions for exchange and mutual evaluations.

We propose a) to conduct internal evaluation sessions at regular intervals as creative moments of mutual sensitization and reassurance, and b) to meet annually among signatories in order to compare learnings, successful implementations, and ideas for optimization.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES

PROGRAMMING

We aim to align our programming with the realities of contemporary life and its abundance of traditions: As long as historical works by deceased male composers constitute approximately 90% of all music performed in the publicly funded music scene, efforts at gender-based and cultural equality must remain merely cosmetic – we will invariably rely on repertoire from past centuries when inequalities of many kinds were social consensus. Curatorial progress towards a more realistic gender and cultural balance is decidedly more pronounced in contemporary music forms. This shifting of accents gives rise to new, more diverse traditions and a redefinition of various canons. Curators should be aware of and highlight such developments.

ACTIONS

- a – Curating contemporaries:** We can only address historical inequalities by drastically increasing the proportion of works by living composers or contemporary, newly formulated traditions.
- b – Curating histories:** In the ‘historical’ part of our programmes, we aim to much more frequently consider works from historical composers with alternate life realities, gender identities, and musical traditions.
- c – Considering appropriation:** To become more aware of cultural contexts of and entanglements between musical languages, we aim to make aspects of cultural inspiration and appropriation (including ‘stolen music’) visible, both in historical works and in contemporary projects. In doing so, we will coordinate our approach in consultations on equal footing with the source communities concerned.

PRODUCTION

We aim to re-orient our internal processes towards diverse artistic and social contexts and necessities: We acknowledge that curatorial work that reflects the diversity of musical practices and is not limited to a Eurocentric focus will require a decisive change in the design of artistic processes. In addition, we realize that project workflows are too often based on constant availability and flexibility, which can serve to structurally exclude participants contending with diverse social situations.

ACTIONS

- a – Artistic autonomy:** We do not want to limit artists from non-dominant demographics to representing their contexts of origin. Every artist has the right to mindfully engage with any subject and tradition and reflect a spectrum of existences. This means that each project creates its own specific (trans-)cultural context and thus requires its project-specific production schedule.
- b – Production schedules:** We aim to develop a curatorial and artistic work plan appropriate to each individual project instead of blindly adhering to historically adequate but sometimes rather rigid production templates. We aim to provide and seek opportunities for alternate presentation contexts (places, times, media) from a diverse perspective. In doing so, we aim to involve all creative artists and all participants of an institution, including, for example, technical staff and front-of-house personnel, as far as is sensible and possible.
- c – Schedules and budgets for music – and for people:** In scheduling and budgeting, we aim to consider the life circumstances and resources of all participants (e.g., regarding care work, family, child care, illnesses, physical abilities, etc.) in parallel to the requirements of the artistic process.
- d – Diverse Teams:** We want our teams to bring diverse professional and demographic expertise as well as cultural and gender-based backgrounds to our work. Diversity in the team constantly necessitates renegotiating what is otherwise taken for granted. But: No one should primarily be seen as a cultural representative of their ethnicity, skin colour, culture, or tradition.
- e – Awareness of Differences:** We recognize that not everyone we work with shares the same cultural or professional background in music. We want to understand and respect different cultural codes and neurodiverse perceptions and create work processes that integrate a diversity of ways of doing things.
- f – Time for internal discussions:** We allocate sufficient (working) time and resources for internal discussions about artistic practices from various traditions. This also means that we aim to diversify and financially bolster artistic/curatorial planning teams so that they can also conduct internal training sessions for all stakeholders involved.
- g – No lowering of standards of working conditions:** We pledge to not abuse the re-thinking of established production protocols to undo protective human resources regulations. We aim to actively shield our employees and (invited) artists from the threat of precarization.

POSITION

We aim to work towards a decentering of dominant Eurocentric art forms: The dominance of white, male, and elitist traditions is often veiled by claims of human universality. We believe that it is therefore essential to recognize – especially for Euro-American cultural players – that one's own cultural tradition and practice is but one of many such phenomena. That we always are just one cultural province, both in a wider world and sometimes even in our local context. We do not want to dismantle traditions, but to share spaces, emphasize dialogue and collaboration, and open up the repertoire.

For those who receive public funds: As public funds do not tend to increase, this honesty requires us to look at an equitable curation of public subsidies so that other music practices and scenes can benefit from public funding and resources (space, time, money, personnel).

ACTIONS

- a –** We will analyse our **position in the context of diverse art forms** and work towards a coherent description of our central cultural, artistic, and aesthetic concerns, roots, and branches, which can guide us in finding a more appropriate self-description of our institution and to thus make criteria that guide our artistic decisions transparent to ourselves and to others.
- b –** On a curatorial and organizational level, we will closely **collaborate with actors from diverse artistic traditions** and civil societies, particularly in the case of source communities touched by our curatorial decisions. We thus aim to always remain in dialogue, especially about contents and approaches which may be sensitive subjects. In doing so, we must from time to time be prepared to act as silent partners, and let our partners make curatorial decisions according to their own value systems.
- c –** We analyse to whom and to which musical traditions we allocate our **funding and institutional resources**: Who do we commission, who holds positions of power within our institution, who is accorded disproportionate amounts of money, personnel, and space? We want to develop a plan for how we can distribute resources proportionally and appropriately.
- d – If we are a large publicly funded institution:** **We are in solidarity** with smaller music initiatives, ensembles, or cultural institutions, especially when it comes to financial means or infrastructure. Together with them, we pledge to establish networks that work towards a culturally and gender-representative and tradition-agnostic master plan for cultural policy in our city/region/state: Together, we want to rethink public cultural subsidies by opening up cultural resources towards a greater diversity of traditions and players. We aim to lobby for this plan in the context of our local or regional debates on cultural policy.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability means responsible use of resources (natural, social, appreciation of work). A sustainable curation of music and art requires the creative, discursive, and practical anchoring of artistic activities in communities and people in local contexts. We do not see our mission as a one-sided transmission – rather, we envisage continual dialogues of mutual learning. Sustainability also means to widely share and preserve artistic experiences by publishing and making resources and knowledge about them accessible for many and for later.

ACTIONS

- a** – in our artistic processes, we want to **involve ‘knowledge bearers’** from our public and our community right from the outset. We will invite them to contribute information, ideas, or cultural techniques – or to express any concerns they might have. For this purpose, we will develop specific discursive, educational, and performative dialogue formats.
- b** – We will include **contextual activities** (within or around shows) as ways of storytelling. We seek to share substantive, enlightening, and perhaps poetic insights about the music and the curatorial concept itself. We reflect traditions and limitations of our concert practices and think about new ways of presenting music from a diverse perspective.
- c** – We will **document and analyse** our production processes and presentations – not only for later dissemination, but also and especially as working materials to feed the creative and institutional process itself. We invite partners (scientists, media, etc.) to share their view from outside and their critical reception. These documentation processes are opportunities for reflection.
- d** – Sustained accessibility of newly made music: We understand that one of the difficulties for new music to find listeners is the fact that it rarely gets performed more than once. We want to find ways to make a commissioned work accessible over longer periods of time as well as for diverse audiences. This might mean repeated presentations or new types of agreements with copyright stakeholders to enable us to archives of audiovisually documented performances.
- e** – We will **share the wealth of our experiences**. We will cooperate with our artists, other institutions, archives, and publishers to make resources (scores, sound examples, video recordings, etc.) and learning experiences related to our work accessible in a culturally sustainable manner.

EVALUATIONS

To make the steps and thoughts articulated in this declaration sustainable for our institution will require time and space for internal evaluations. We will provide occasions for such internal evaluations at regular intervals: What has been implemented, what has proven effective, what has not fulfilled its promise, and why? These informal evaluations should include as many stakeholders as possible. They should not serve to exert administrative control; rather, they are to be understood as creative moments of mutual sensitization and mutual reassurance within the institution itself.

We propose a) to conduct internal evaluation sessions at regular intervals as creative moments of mutual sensitization and reassurance. b) to meet annually among signatories in order to compare learnings, successful implementations, and ideas for optimization.



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