

Bulletin #2.1 – Oct. 10, 2008

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NOTICE: due to greatly reduced funding for the bulletin, we will not be able to include member articles in translation in future bulletins. Regrettably, we just can't afford translation costs.

1) FORUM 2008 - June 1, 2008 – by Tim Brady

The CNMN Forum 2008 in Toronto this past spring was very successful. There were 67 people officially participating in the event. Because of our coordination with another conference (organised by Lawrence Cherney and Soundstreams Canada), there were quite a number of international folks - Holland, Russia, Germany, Mexico, Sweden, Finland, etc. There was also reasonable representation from different cities across Canada: Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria, Kitchener, and Guelph, to name a few.

The steering committee chair Joe Sorbara (also an improvising drummer) suggested having performances during the breaks, and this worked really well. They were improvisations, sometimes integrated simultaneously with our lunches, but they kept the project focused on music and refreshed us so that we could effectively return to talking about music. I hope we do this at other events.

The talks were all great. People have high-quality, strong and articulate ideas. One of the main practical details that came out of this (a confirmation of something I have kind of known for years) is that just sending a press kit and CD, even if it is truly great, is of little value, especially to international presenters. Huddersfield said that maybe 1 - 5% of the programming comes from blind submissions. Bang on a Can put it at 10%, Muziekgebouw the same. So 90% of hired music comes from contacts and "word of mouth", not through press kit mail-outs. Killing ourselves to get these kits out there is not very useful.

Making personal contact is useful, however, very useful. So these kinds of FORUM events are of value, it seems. And during the breaks (as we listened to these nice improvs!) people were networking like crazy - everyone getting to know each other as artists, presenters and people. Very convivial.

At the end, the event did generate the kind of community and connections that we had hoped it would create. The FORUM worked. There is great interest in upcoming FORUMS (Montreal this coming February), and a few cities enthusiastically offered their services for the 2010 and 2011 events.

The main results are, in fact, intangibles: the meeting of artists and presenters was just the beginning of perhaps many potential collaborations both nationally and internationally. Our knowledge of how the international new music market (as such) works was greatly expanded, as were our contacts.

2) FORUM 2009 – PUT THIS IN YOUR AGENDA!

- Feb. 27 + 28, in collaboration with the Festival Montréal Nouvelles Musiques
- *THEME: Audience Development, Creative Music and Education: Towards the Future of New Music*
- *GUESTS:* R. Murray Schafer, The Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, REDCAT Disney Hall Theatre, Los Angeles and many others.
- Special Hotel rates will be available to go to the conference/festival. More details will be sent very soon in the form of an e-brochure.

3) Federal Election Information

MAKE SURE YOU GET OUT AND VOTE

We strongly urge all members to read the cultural policies of all the main political parties and to judge them on their past actions and their proposed vision for the arts in Canada. The federal government has a major impact on the development of the arts in Canada. Artists must make their voices heard in this election!

Here are some useful links on recent cultural issues:

CCA Bulletin Links:

- <http://ccarts.ca/en/FedGovCuts.htm>
- <http://ccarts.ca/en/advocacy/bulletins/2008/2708.htm>
- <http://ccarts.ca/en/advocacy/bulletins/CCAnews.htm>

Other Links:

- www.cirpa.ca/Page.asp?PageID=751&SiteNodeID=212
- www.thestar.com/article/483378

4) An international web site of potential interest to all CNMN members:

<http://netnewmusic.ning.com/>

5) Member Articles

In the fall, there was an open call for submissions by members, in efforts to promote an open and honest discussion of CNMN-related issues. The following were the results. The opinions expressed in the articles are those of the author alone, and not those of CNMN or its board.

The new professional

by Glen Halls

When I was a young musician, I wondered who or what I would have to do to gain credibility and be successful in music. I thought perhaps it was some producers at the CBC, or maybe some guys at SOCAN, or perhaps some academic types. And I think that there was a time, perhaps about 40 or 50 years ago when this was the case. And what about joe public? Selling records, gaining airplay, getting gigs – do these equate to credibility and respectability? Well, yes they do... it points to a certain kind of credibility. But I have observed, as I begin my classes in elementary education in pursuit of an income, people are not buying records, we are not getting airplay and if we do we are not getting royalties, and, sadly, people are not coming to concerts. So who are the “nod-givers” in music now? Let us call it art music for now, music which offers hope and celebrates the higher accomplishments and potentials of being human. Those nod-givers are you and I.

So we come to the topic, “the professional musician.” The professional musician of today is an amateur. I believe the word amateur comes from a Latin word, meaning “for love.” If you have experienced or aspire to a certain level of excellence, a certain transcendent experience through music perhaps, or simply to maintain what we have come to regard as a professional standard, both in terms of performance and also of intent – what I call “creative – intensity” – you must do so at your peril, as an amateur, and at your own expense. For me, personally, I need to make music a normal and regular part of my life - something that happens weekly at the least. Waiting two years for a symbolic “paid gig” at the local jazz society, or gaining grants to put on a performance of composition once or twice a year, is simply not good enough. It is not a question of money – it is a given that a musician interested in any kind of art music will make no money now – it is a question of quality. Do you think, for example, that a concert of say, contemporary jazz music, in which the musicians are gathered two days a year, with one rehearsal, and indeed paid well by a grant or such, will be anything near the caliber of music made by individuals playing on a weekly basis or more? Of course, it will not. So, I have chosen to become an amateur: to some how find some other way of earning a living and trying to find like-minded players who wish to play music on a weekly or regular basis, paid or unpaid. This music will occur in apartments, in churches, in living rooms, in basements. This is where the real music is now; the home is now the domain of the “professional” artist.

We work in isolation; we are now torchbearers. There will be no media frenzy, no royalties, no reviews, no money. It is you and I and our friends and like-thinkers. We give each other “the nod.” It extends no further than that. And, if we go back in time a little bit, 100-150 years or so (before mass media), we find that this was always the case - for those who make art music. We have lost all sense of value and all sense of community and I think the time has just about come now for those, who have the courage to call themselves artists, to step outside. We make this music for our community, and for ourselves, and we hope that in time our society will once again progress to the point of recognizing the value and necessity of what we do.

improving networking and communication: a proposal

by vivienne spiteri

the essence of networking is the proper contact and mutual respect between artists and artistic directors, both of whom are players in the cultural and artistic enrichment of humanity. yet this "relationship" is far from perfect and as an independent artist, i find it for the most part, frustrating. it is often very hard to know who to send projects to, and what the groups' general mandate and policies are.

i would like to make the following suggestions – which i think would be of value to artists and production companies alike – to improve the process of networking and especially to enable, to empower and to tap into artists' creative energy, which it pains me to see is often unappreciated and wasted.

first, concert organizations should be sure to include the following on their web sites:

1. provide an up-front, straightforward and honest explanation of the way your organization works. it doesn't have to be more than a paragraph long, but it should be to the point.
2. indicate whether you do or do not accept unsolicited projects
3. if you do accept unsolicited projects, indicate one of these two:
 - a. unsolicited projects are considered as seriously and equally as solicited ones.
 - b. unsolicited projects are not considered as seriously as solicited projects and are not a major part of programming.
4. clearly indicate deadline dates for submissions (clarify whether these are postmark or reception dates) or whether proposals are accepted at any time.
5. clearly outline the date or period of time during which propositions will be studied, and when artists can expect a response.
6. indicate that an answer will automatically be sent to artists who send either a self-addressed stamped envelope or an email address.
7. clearly outline names of directors and other staff, their titles and functions. comprehensive contact information should be attached to each name (postal and email addresses, telephone and fax numbers).

secondly, some other points:

8. directors should take telephone calls from artists who call to discuss their rejected projects. in the case of unavailability of directors, appointments should be made for exchange at a later date. these exchanges can be enlightening for artists and directors alike. when proposals are not accepted, it would be very useful and professional to receive a clear reason why. this improves artist-producer relations on the long term and avoids short/long-term misunderstandings.
9. organizations should send out an acknowledgement of receipt of proposals to the artists
10. in cases of rejection of artists' ideas, organizations can prepare a simple and courteous form letter of rejection.
11. directors and organizations must act in good faith at all times towards the artists in all of the above points.

unfortunately, as long as direct, responsible, respectful, professional and concerned communication between artist and director continues to be repulsed and refused – as i feel it is by organizations for the most part – “networking” will remain no more than a fashionable word-trap in the gerund, a meaningless sequence of letters. to quote linda loman from arthur miller's *death of a salesman*: "care must be taken and attention must be paid."