Research group  Lifelong Learning in Music & the Arts
“Healthy Ageing through Music & the Arts”

Centre of Applied Research and Innovation “Art & Society”
Evert Bisschop Boele, February 1, 2012
The Research group LLM&A

• Fast changing society
• Changing role of music in society
• Fast changing professional practice of professional musicians
• How can musicians react?
• What does it mean for the conservatoire?
• For example:
  • New audiences
  • Cross arts and cross sector
  • …
LLM&A and Healthy Ageing

• Ageing is an important societal trend
• ‘Healthy Ageing = Active Ageing’
• What does this mean for professional musicians?
  • They carry on playing longer
  • Their audience is ageing
  • Active music making amongst the elderly is growing
  • A growing call from society towards musicians to contribute to the quality of life of older people
Music has proven to be an effective means for healthier ageing.

How can professional musicians contribute to a healthy old age?
Proven? – Cognitive scope:
“Bugos et al. (2007) (...) conducted an experimental study in which they tested “Individualized Piano Instruction” (IPI). They hypothesized IPI as a possible cognitive intervention with a variety of skills and tasks, which may have the capacity to integrate multiple neural networks and thus mitigate or prevent age-related cognitive decline. Participants (...) in the experimental group were subject to a rigid IPI regimen, with three hours of piano practice required per week. The authors found strong indications that their hypothesis was confirmed, and that its effects were transferred beyond musical cognitive domains.”
Proven? – Cognitive scope2:
• “Thompson et al. (2005) conclude that listening to music enhances attentional processes in both healthy older adults and dementia patients.”
• “While less is known about the effects of playing music in older adulthood, there is some evidence that this has a positive effect on brain activity, although it may be that such effects are limited as age increases (Habib & Besson, 2009).”
Proven? – Wellbeing:
• “In general, learning has been shown to be valuable to adults in the following ways: (1) helping with the processes of routine living, (2) adjusting to changed circumstances, (3) providing valuable knowledge or skills for particular purposes, (4) contributing to changing self identity, and (5) achieving agency (Biesta, 2008b).”
• “Koga & Timms (2001) reported decreased anxiety, depression and loneliness in those that participated in their music lessons. Hays (2005a; 2005b) also highlights the importance of music – both recorded and practical – to the lives of older adults living in the community.”
Q: How do we teach elderly people who want to take up playing an instrument or singing?
Q: How do we give creative workshops for groups of elderly people?
Q: How can we introduce good practices in the Netherlands for working with elderly people suffering from dementia?
Q: What does ageing mean for the career of the professional visual artist?
Results: New (or extended) possibilities for professional musicians to work with older people.
Press coverage

Muziek geeft iemand stem

Ofters zijn er niet, maar het aantal ouderen dat nog aan muziekles begint, neemt toe. Voor een deel zijn het de 'herintreders', anderen hebben hun leren lang nog geen noot gelezen. Het Prins Claus Conservatorium in Groningen deed onderzoek, waarin lesgeven aan ouderen anders is dan aan kinderen. 'Je hebt vooral meer getuist nodig. Maar je krijgt er als docent veel voor terug.'
Building up a general model

Diagram:
- Society
- Institution
- Elderly
- Musical Practice
Q: How do we teach elderly people who want to take up playing an instrument or singing?
“Music and the Elderly”

• RAAK-funded

• Aim: “strengthen professional practice of instrumental/vocal music teachers teaching elderly pupils”

• The project:
  - Exploring existing practices, formulating questions
  - Running pilot projects
  - Evaluating results
  - Test: transfer results on new practices
  - Adjusting results, dissemination
  - Consequences for the conservatoire
Elderly Society Learner as expert
Cultural sensitive Socially directed
Tailor made

Music lesson
Starting situation
"The lesson"
Goals
Teacher "learning" 
Competency oriented
Validating

Evaluation
Dialogic

Society Institution
Biographical Intergenerational

"professional development"
How do teachers and learners think about their practice?

• 10 interviews with teachers
• 12 interviews with older learners

• Three items:
  - Personal motivation: why?
  - The lesson: what?
  - Contact and recruitment: how do teacher and learner find each other?

• Analysis (confronting the findings with the model)
Further Research

- Recruitment/marketing: how to reach elderly learners
- Handling impediments: the “top 10” of most occurring impediments at an elderly age, and what to do
- Working methods and grouping: the possible added value of expanding the 1-to-1 working methods
- Repertoire (adjustment): which repertoire? How to adapt it to specific wishes and characteristics of your older pupils?
- More effective teaching when encountering motoric and auditory problems: explicitly using pedagogic-didactic principles
- Notation - improvisation
Piloting

- 10 recently graduated musicians teach each two elderly pupils for a period of nine weeks
- During this period they form a Community of Practice with experienced music teachers and researchers
- Monitoring of process and product as well as the transferability of knowledge and skills
Impact

“I hadn't been feeling very well in recent times and getting myself out and going to that, it sort of cheered me up, it brings you out of yourself doesn’t it. I think if you’re ever feeling a bit down or got some problem you forget about it for a little while because you are having a bit of fun.”
[Rhythm for Life keyboard learner 2010]
Impact

"I love to work with elderly people. They really `go for it’, as it were. I also feel I am taken seriously by them. [...] For as far as I am concerned, I hope many more elderly people will come to take lessons with me, the contact goes very well. You act in mutual respect, I find that very nice.”

[Piano teacher 2010]
Q: How can we introduce good practices in the Netherlands for working with elderly people suffering from dementia?
Music for Life Wigmore Hall in London
(managed by Wigmore Hall – Learning and Dementia UK, London, UK)

Interactive music workshops for people suffering from dementia and their care staff
Participatory music workshop:

making music together using improvisation; leading to shared authorship of the creative process as well as the creative product
Kim:

“... they don’t have any linguistic skills any more. But they are still there! And this project gives them the opportunity to show that they are still there. And that they want contact and interaction. That incredible deep human need, regardless in which stage (of dementia) someone is, the need to connect with someone and with other people. To be understood and recognized.”
Sue:

“Sometimes people (with dementia) are not really aware of the fact that what they are trying to say does not come through, but some are in that intermediate stage where they more or less give up because they know they try but it does not work. But if you, in one way or the other, give them back the power of communication and bring somebody out, you see an amazing return of consciousness and the possibility to keep control, to integrate others or to stop things.”
Kim:

“It gives me a complete new context for my being a musician. A complete new context and a whole range of new musical skills.”
Robert:

“This work to me means a way to connect my musicianship with a deeper and deeper consciousness of who I am in this world, and that is the result of interaction with extraordinary people (...) This work shows me continuously who I am, and through that mirror I assess what other things I do. It is very extraordinary that working with people whose version of reality is so vague is actually the ultimate check on reality.”
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