

MUSIC GENERATION: THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY IN ENABLING AND SHAPING NATIONAL INFRA- STRUCTURE FOR MUSIC EDUCATION IN IRELAND

PATRICIA FLYNN

Introduction

Music Generation is the title of one of the most significant national initiatives in music education in Ireland. It seeks to put in place a countrywide infrastructure for instrumental and vocal music education. It has long been awaited. Over the last 30 years numerous reports and initiatives have highlighted the geographic inequity of the lack of access to high quality and affordable music tuition outside major urban centers.(1) In the ensuing years many ambitious plans and proposals have been made, including those commissioned by Government.(2) Funding to realize these plans however was always elusive. It is significant that they are now made possible not by a national government-led initiative, but as the result of philanthropy. This essay examines the context in which a philanthropic gift by the Irish rock group *U2* and the philanthropic organization *The Ireland Funds* has enabled the development of a much needed national system of vocal and instrumental music education. Furthermore, it explores how philanthropy has shaped the development of this new national infrastructure and influenced the guiding principles.

Context

The Separation of Practical and General Music Education - Music Education in Ireland has long been characterized by a disjoint between general and specialist music education. The first is provided countrywide through a well developed state educational and examination system; the second, which includes

vocal and instrumental education, is underdeveloped and, outside major urban centers, has largely been the remit of private enterprise or voluntary provision. This divide has historical antecedents. As far back as 1930 music education was categorized as 'technical education' and therefore could be provided by technical schools concerned with practical education. A wish to encourage the countywide system of Vocational Education Committees (YECs) to provide this education is evident in the extension of the 1930 Vocational Education Act by the then Minister of Education, Richard Mulcahy, to include 'Playing of musical instruments, vocal music education, the formation and training of choirs, and orchestras, theory of music and appreciation of music'.(3) YEC funded municipal schools of music opened in Cork and Dublin focusing largely on the practical aspect of music education and including solo and ensemble tuition. These later became part of the Cork and Dublin Institutes of Technology (IT) in 1974 and 1992. In effect becoming institutes of further and higher education with the distinction of also providing vocal and instrumental tuition to children and young people. In each case they maintained a strong focus on music performance.(4)

Geographical Access and Genre Diversity - The desired geographical spread of a practical education in music however did not quickly emerge. Ita Beusang records that during the 1950s there were 6 schools of music, 5 in Dublin and 1 in Cork. (5) Two were VEC funded municipal colleges of music, 2 were private academies of music and 1 was the army school of music. During the 1960s a municipal music school also opened in Limerick and VEC music schemes were slowly established in a number of counties including County Cork, Dublin, Waterford and Westmeath and this continued in other counties. However, provision was still limited to major population centers. Outside

of these, this type of practical musical education was largely provided by private schools of music and individual private teachers. Access to such education was variable. In many regions of Ireland there was excellent provision but this was sporadic and dependent on geography, available local expertise, ability to pay and cultural expectations. Depending on the region a student could quickly exhaust local expertise and find that to progress they need to travel to major urban centers or that no local tuition was available at all. In such a disparate system it is difficult to assure consistent quality of regional provision. The call for regional schools of music and some form of peripatetic system of instrumental and vocal education was consistently voiced in all reports. The report of the Piano Review Group (1996) for instance noted that above a line drawn from Ennis to Dublin there were no publicly funded music schools.(6)

Schools of music are one model of practical music education and with some exceptions tended to be based on conservatoire teaching methodologies with an emphasis on repertoire from the western canon and performance examinations. The band movement and *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* (CCE), funded in 1951, provided other models of music education. At their outset these were more informal, intergenerational and community based forms of music education. Founded around what McCarthy describes as master-teacher-performers and local communities of music-makers, both created a country-wide network of branches.(7) CCE successfully encouraged and supported local communities to provide access to tuition for those interested in traditional music and organized a regional system of music competitions known as *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*. This competitive element helped to recognize achievement and set standards and repertoire. While there is still a strong community element, traditional music teaching has

become more professionalized and standardized in recent years with its own system of examinations and teacher certification organized by CCE. It is one example of the effectiveness of locally provided, community organized music tuition within a national structure. Its country-wide branches have increased access to performance music education throughout Ireland. Where branches exist, it provides those with an interest in traditional Irish music with a practical music education in a variety of instruments and involves them in the cultural practices associated with the music. However, the vibrancy of each branch is dependent on local commitment, often voluntary, and some areas fare better than others.

Developments in Second Level School System - An entirely separate system of music education developed in the secondary school system. From the beginning this had a more academic musicological orientation rather than a practical one. It focused on the study of music works of the European art tradition, theory and elementary harmony and counterpoint. In the 1969 syllabus later revised in 1989, students could perform on an instrument for their exam but prepared for this separately though outside private tuition and there was limited scope for music genres outside western art music. Alternatively students could submit a written project on a chosen area of music study. This was in an effort to broaden the appeal of music to those who did not study an instrument to a high level or could not afford to take private lessons. However, until a change in the curriculum in 1999, music at second level continued to be viewed as a minority elitist subject, not available to all and privileging the values of one cultural group. Its primary purpose appeared to be to prepare the small number of students wishing to undertake music degree programs at the university level. In terms of access, the reality was that music was not provided in all schools, had a very small

uptake by male students and was perceived as a difficult subject in which to achieve high grades. Its narrow curriculum focus, lacking any connection with music as experienced by students outside education, was also an alienating factor.

A radical reform of the music curriculum at second level addressed many of these shortcomings with a remarkable increase in students taking music. In 1998, 1,037 students sat the Leaving Certificate Music Examination. The new syllabus was first examined in 1999 and this number more than doubled to 2,893.(8) It continued to steadily increase to 4,857 in 2009.(9) this was a consequence of including school based group performance as an option, making it more achievable for the majority. A broadening of the scope of the syllabus, catering for a more diverse range of music interests, genres, prior experience and career paths was also significant. The new syllabus sought to improve the accessibility of music for students beyond those who took individual private music lessons. It sought also to be inclusive of a range of music practices and genres including those from popular culture and encompass the music of contemporary Irish composers such as Raymon Deane, Gerald Barry and John Buckley as well as traditional Irish music. The syllabus is structured around three essential areas of activity in which all students engage in: performing/composing/listening. At ordinary level students take one area as 50% of the exam and the others as 25%; at higher level students add a higher elective in one area such as an extended performance program, a portfolio of compositions or to prepare a special study topic in listening. The majority of students select performance as the major component and present in a range of genres that include rock, classical, traditional, jazz and popular and in a variety of practices within these, including solo and ensemble performances as well as music technology.(10) While generally seen as a

success the new syllabus has posed some challenges. Although teachers are music specialists, normally with a music degree, the nature of the syllabus requires a good deal of flexibility and multi-genre expertise from teachers. The performance element can be done in school with the teacher facilitating for example, recorder groups, rock bands and choral and other vocal groups. In reality many students still take private lessons. The more diverse syllabus also has consequences for a student's level of preparedness for some music courses in higher education. However, on the whole the curriculum is perceived to be a success, especially in achieving wider access to music education.

A Blueprint for Music Education - As Ireland became a more pluralistic society, other developments in Irish arts infrastructure attempted to address the emerging issues of geographic access, diversity in genre, socioeconomic access and cultural inclusion. New arts resource organizations were established; the most significant for music education was *Music Network*. It was founded in 1986 to broaden access to live classical, traditional and jazz music in Ireland, particularly in regions that had little previous access. It began with a touring concert program still a vibrant part of their work today. Their mission statement is "to give everybody in Ireland access to musical activity of the highest level regardless of location or circumstance".(11) Little wonder then that in addition to programming, touring and ensemble development this multi genre organization developed a strong advocacy, research and development in music education. It is this organization that established the blueprint for a national system of local music education services.

Music Network was commissioned by the then Minister of Arts, Sport and Tourism with the co-operation of the Department of Education and Science to produce a feasibility study to examine

how a national system of publicly supported local 'schools of music' might be provided in Ireland. Their response was a strongly researched feasibility report recommending a model for a system of music education that was locally provided within a tuition a national structure.(12) In this they took account of the many earlier reports that had identified the lack of a comprehensive, locally available and affordable music education service, and highlighted the poor comparison with provision in other European countries. A stark finding from a study carried out by the European Music School Union in 1999 shows that as little as 0.2% of children and young people under 25 in Ireland access publicly supported vocal and instrumental tuition.(13) They correctly diagnosed the difficulty of music education as falling between education and arts remits and recommended national partnership between the agencies involved. Also at the heart of their proposals was partnership between local statutory agencies and education, arts and community interests. Chiefly these included VECs, Local Authorities and Local Education Centers. In their plans they placed particular emphasis on the need for locally available vocal and instrumental education but they also envisaged a curriculum element within general education. In effect attempting to reconnect performance music education and general 'classroom' music education. They envisage' *national system of Local Music Education Services, publicly supported, socially inclusive, cross genre, community focused, and of high quality to complement the teaching and learning of music in the classroom*'.(14) This report, however, again fell between agencies and it was the continuous advocacy work by *Music Network* and others that ensured a pilot project in Dublin City and Donegal funded by the Department of Education and Science. This was followed by a *Music Network* commissioned evaluation that showed that the model '*provided a workable and replicable framework for the development of music education services ... on a wider scale throughout Ireland*'.(15)

Philanthropy Shaping National Infrastructure

The Principles of Philanthropy - This is the context within which *Music Generation* was established in 2010 with a philanthropic gift of 7 million from *U2* and *The Ireland Funds* for the start-up phase of a system to help children and young people access vocal and instrumental tuition in their own area throughout Ireland. Prior to the agreement the donors gained a commitment by the Department of Education and Skills to continue the program beyond the 5 years of philanthropic funding. *Music Generation* builds on the research and model proposed by *Music Network*. However, what has developed has a distinctive character. Although a national infrastructure, it is enabled by private philanthropic funding and is shaped by the values and principles of philanthropy.

While philanthropy is not yet well developed in Ireland, this is not the first time national infrastructure has been achieved through philanthropic giving. In the context of country-wide infrastructure one thinks in particular of the system of Carnegie libraries, supported by the Scottish-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie and built throughout Ireland, and indeed many other countries, between 1823 and 1929. While over a century divides the Carnegie libraries and *Music Generation* there are many similarities in the philosophy that informed them; in particular in the structuring of a donation in such a way as to strengthen the impact and promote sustainability. In an interview reported in the *New York Times* April 15th 1900 and titled "Andrew Carnegie's Principles of Philanthropy" the reporter describes his donations as not charitable giving in the usual sense. He reports Carnegie's belief that "It is almost useless to give promiscuously and that it is little short of a crime." The reporter goes on to assert that, "He wants to help those who will help themselves ... For this purpose he will give his millions,

but he exacts of the community what he would exact of the individual- that once in possession of its library it must carry the work forward."(16)

In modern parlance Carnegie believed in 'seed' and 'matched' funding. He undertook to build and equip a library, provided the relevant local authorities donated the land and committed a confirmed budget for its operation and maintenance. In this way securing the longevity of the project beyond one of funding. A similar philosophy underpins the work of *Music Generation*. Their strategic plan outlines their intention to seed fund up to 12 locally based Music Education Partnerships (MEPs) throughout Ireland for a period of 3 years, based on matched funding by the MEP of up to 200,000.(17) MEPs are local or regional groups that work together to create a plan for a high quality music education service in their locality. The lead partner must be a statutory agency, often the VEC or Local Authority Arts Office. To apply for funding, an area or region is required to first establish and register a Music Education Partnership. They then work with local partners to develop a detailed plan for vocal and instrumental music education in their area, identifying how 50% matched funding will be achieved, including in-kind and monetary sources. Funding calls are competitive and in order to establish music services on a rolling basis, 3 MEPs are awarded funding in each round.

Strategic concern for the long-term sustainability of the service is inherent in 2 elements of this process: partnership and matched funding. As only one MEP is registered for each area or region, the type of local work undertaken to establish an MEP connects all involved and ensures strong foundations for the service. The role of statutory agencies is a critical element. Rather than the development of music education as an individual stand-alone and

perhaps vulnerable service it will be embedded within established systems so that it must continue beyond the enthusiasm of one individual. The design of each music service is based on the partners understanding of local need, available expertise and potential development. A strength here is that every service will be different in response to the local context. However, each will be shaped by the necessity of sourcing 50% of the funding locally. This can be through monetary funding allocated from statutory agencies, local philanthropy, income generated in fees or concerts of any other source. It can also be in-kind support such as buildings, light and heating, time, expertise or other types of resources, but these can only be 20% of the matched funding. This funding model ensures local ownership and management of the MEP. It also ensures that it will be financially realistic for the Department of Education and Skills to continue to fund MEPs on this basis as they come to the end of their 3 year start up phase. MEPs can only request funding to the extent that they can match this from their own sources. This local and national partnership in funding a public service is a novel approach that goes beyond the definition of publicly supported organizations as government funded initiatives. It is these types of outcomes that could not be achieved through funding alone. It is through strategic rather than the 'emotive' giving of one-off grants that philanthropy achieves its goals and attempts to shape the future of such national infrastructure.

Other ways in which funding was used to shape this new service is the donors emphasis on the funding being used to create new provision, thus addressing the lack of provision noted in many reports that create barriers to participation, especially for young people. Just as the donors did not want the funding used as a one-off grant, only 'as good as the money lasted', they did not wish it to simply support existing provision to replace its

funding. To this end they stipulated that the funding should be used exclusively to provide instrumental and vocal education and that this service should be for children and young people under 18. In order to maximize this impact of the funding they focused on where there was most need and on what was missing. While Ireland has a publicly supported national system for general music education in primary and post primary schools there is currently no national infrastructure for performance music education. The generation of such a system would leave a lasting legacy, which is the intended role of philanthropy.

Conclusion

This essay sought to provide an insight into the context and forces that have shaped an emerging system aimed at generating and sustaining local music education services. It is telling that Carnegie's generosity continues to have an impact 112 years later. As he hoped, it was 'taken forward by the receivers'. I wonder if Carnegie would recognize the digital hubs that are now our current libraries where you can access the internet, browse and borrow not only books but audio books, cds, videos and even original artworks. Carnegie's support for libraries has had an impact well beyond the original donation. Who knows what instrumental and vocal music education will be like in Ireland 100 years from now. Currently, 6 new Music Education Partnerships have been funded in counties Louth, Sligo, Mayo, Wicklow, Laois and Cork City, with up to 6 more to be established before 2015. Through a strategic and planned process that ensures commitment and partnership on a national and local level the work is being taken forward to achieve what is intended to be a lasting and diverse legacy for music and young people in Ireland.

NOTES

1. See for example Sheil, F.(2008) Heneghan, F. (2001) or The PIANO Review Group (1996) or Herron, Donald (1985)
2. See Music Network (2003)
3. Saorstát Eireann (1930/1949), Vocational Education Act 1930 (extension of Technical order) no 74, 1949
4. ITS currently providing performance oriented music education also now include Waterford and Dundalk
5. Beausang, I. (2002)
6. The PIANO Review Group, (1996)
7. McCarthy 1999
8. DES, chief Examiners report, Leaving Certificate Music (1999) p. 3
9. State Examinations Commission, Chief Examiners Report, Leaving Certificate Music (2007, Department of Education and Science), p. 5
10. Ibid
11. See Music Network (2000), p. 3
12. See Music Network (2003)
13. Cited in Music Network 2003, p. 9; the comparable countries were Sweden 12.2%, Denmark 9%, Slovenia 3.4% and Finland 3%
14. Ibid, p. 3
15. See KTCL, (2009), p. 53
16. See New York Times, April 15th, 1900
17. See Music Generation (2010)

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