

Rethinking Music Performance In European Higher Education Music Institutions – Portugal case

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Portuguese higher music education is still influenced by the traditional conservatory model. Such influence has glossed over the importance of fostering creativity, critical thinking and a culture of enquiry from the earliest stages of learning. The lack of attention to these issues has impeded other career paths in musical performance for students and teachers. In this article we present a national perspective concerning new directions for music performance education based on the identification of the requirements for an artistic career.

A selection of 17 Stakeholders were interviewed: music producers and studio directors (2); teachers of related educational programmes (2); students of music performance (3); alumni (4); course directors (3); and Professional performers (2). The questions addressed the key challenges facing the contemporary music industry: training preparations; curriculum evaluation; aspects of instrumental guidance; demands of music performance career; and requirements of a sustainable artistic proposal. From a thematic analysis, two main themes emerged: individual requirements and institutional requirements. The first consists of a set of demands students should face in order to develop a career path as an artist. The second is related to a set of possible improvements in Portuguese HEIs. Results suggest Portuguese institutions should offer a flexible curriculum, creating balanced connections between theory and practice in order to support students' transitions. Other demands include: mentoring; psychophysiological wellbeing, artistic creation, diversified education, project based learning, guidance on technological issues and collaborative music making. In addition, the results also suggest that students should develop technological literacy, knowledge of music industries, entrepreneurship and self-promotion, networking, management skills, a diverse and flexible profile, a contemporary and artistic approach, critical thinking and self-reflection and a deep connection with music production. The results obtained may inform the current discussion on the role of music higher education institutions in Portugal and their possible improvements.