

Tomorrow's talent



Almost 1,000 students have taken part in musical exchanges organised by the European Federation of National Youth Orchestras through its MusXchange programme. President Renate Böck tells **Andrew Anderson** how it works

Since 1994 the European Federation of National Youth Orchestras (EFNYO) has been helping to develop the best young musical talent across the continent. How? Through cultural exchange programmes that not only give students the chance to study and learn in another country, but also allow best practices to be swapped and shared between the managers responsible for them. This is its MusXchange programme.

"From the very beginning we wanted to organise musician exchanges because we knew how helpful these are to a young musician's development," says EFNYO president Renate Böck. "We also knew we'd have to



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develop our exchange programme in new ways, diversifying to meet the evolving needs of young musicians."

Today, MusXchange is expressed through four separate strands: exchanges, training, internships and bilateral projects. The first of those, exchange, is the simplest to explain. Each year, dozens of young musicians from EFNYO ensembles get the chance to spend up to two weeks with another orchestra in the network. Since 2015, 141 young musicians aged 16-28 have taken part.

"I think I gained more self-confidence, a more professional approach to the orchestral score," commented one young participant from Romania, who had been placed with an orchestra in Italy. An Austrian student placed in France said, "it makes such a difference being able to immerse in a different culture and language."

As for training, since 2015 EFNYO has been organising 'MusXchange Bootcamps' that bring students from across the network together for four days of intensive work. Continues Böck: "At the Bootcamps musicians work with specific topics like audience development, outreach skills and how to work with different audiences. We also focus on entrepreneurial skills, which I am particularly passionate about.

"Musicians nowadays have to think about many things aside from simply their musical ability. They have to have a wider mindset and a wider skillset, and we must encourage them to develop these abilities. You cannot be a successful entrepreneur if you do not know how to pitch a project, how to find an audience, or how to approach an investor.

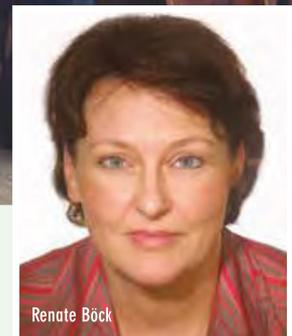
"Managers assist this process by having their own meetings on the same topics, and then offering feedback to the students. They need to see these ideas so they can support them."

For example, at the 2016 Bootcamp in London, students presented their own entrepreneurial ideas to a *Dragons' Den*-style panel made up of senior EFNYO leaders.

Böck is also keen to highlight her organisation's bilateral projects: "Our chamber music programme sees two orchestras (for the most recent project it was one from Austria and one from Romania) each send eight musicians to work and perform together. The students have seminars on how to moderate and curate concerts as well as engage and provoke the audience. They then perform various concerts in both countries; for example, daytime concerts with young audiences and



MusXchange participants from France, Austria and Serbia at Teatro della Pergola in Florence, Italy



Renate Böck

moderated evening concerts in more traditional settings."

The final MusXchange strand is for musicians who are coming to the end of their time with a youth orchestra: "We have an agreement with members of the Orchestra Network for Europe, which allows us to place our most advanced students on two or three week internships

with professional orchestras. So far, four students have been placed on Internships, and I'm hopeful this number will rise over the coming years."

What about the managers and educators: how does EFNYO benefit them? "Our exchange is daily, we are always in touch with one another. This gives us a deep insight in each other's situation. We also organise manager site visits that allow our members to learn new skills. They might have a site visit focussed on marketing, PR, auditions or evaluation techniques."

And, she continues, this skill sharing now extends beyond the confines of Europe. "We don't want to be stuck with certain types of members, and we all benefit when we take ideas from other countries. We already work with the National Youth Orchestra of Canada and with the Young Israel Philharmonic. We are also in contact with the National Youth Orchestra of the United States and increasingly we receive enquiries from South America."

However, while the organisation is reaching more people than ever before, its future is in jeopardy after its latest European Commission funding bid for MusXchange was rejected. "Our application for 2017-20 was not approved, and it will be very difficult for us to run the project without guaranteed funding. We can always reapply next year, but we know we won't have funding for 2017-18. Yes, we are very concerned about the consequences of this, but we have to make a plan to cope with it."

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MusXchange students from Scotland and The Netherlands

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