MCAST, Johann Strauss School of Music and Malta Philharmonic Orchestra Academy to collaborate

On Wednesday, 26 October MCAST, the Johann Strauss School of Music and the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra Academy signed a collaborative agreement which will provide a boost to the educational pathway for young musicians so that they may have the opportunity to become professional musicians.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed at MCAST Main Campus in the presence of Esatul Barondi, Minister for Education and Employment and Dr Owen Busuttil, Minister for Justice, Culture, and Local Government.

The collaboration between the parties will continue to strengthen and develop the provision of music education on the Maltese Islands. Both the Johann Strauss School of Music and Philharmonic Orchestra Academy are keen to ensure a sense of continuity from the early years of music making to the professional world in music performance, music education and technical fields.

The three entities will liaise with each other so that all parties will contribute to Malta’s economy and job creation.

This sector was also identified by the Malta 2035 National Vision for Malta 2040 as one of the 11 sectors to contribute to the social, economic and cultural aspects of the sector.

Following government’s endorsement of the Chamber’s Economic Vision for Malta 2040 and the implementation of the EU’s Horizon Europe and under the Malta National Strategy, the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra Academy has an entity that will promote investment in this sector.

The newly established Education Malta will primarily harness this economic potential and provide a structure to promote investment and support to stakeholders in this sector,” said Anton Borg, president of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra Academy.

This collaborative arrangement, he added, will support to strengthen between government and the private sector in a way that best capitalises on the strengths of each. Education Malta shall witness the Chamber strengthening its position in a sector in which it is ripe with opportunities.

Agreement between these three entities, is the first step towards a harmonised common framework for Malta’s young musicians. A pathway to establish will be to attract foreign musicians on their long career towards becoming professional musicians.

Dr Silvio De Bianco, President of the Board of Governors welcomed this initiative and stated: “MCAST is proud to contribute by providing professional opportunities for Malta’s young musicians. We believe that the emerging musicians who come into our programme deserve the very best heterosexual and young musicians. We are showing our unwavering dedication to artist development and believe that the programme will continue to grow from strength to strength in the future.”

Sigmund Mifsud, MPO executive chairman stated: “Through our joint collaborations we are offering students in Malta the opportunity to attend MPO orchestral rehearsals and a selection of MPO concerts for free, as well as to perform at the MPO’s annual spring concert. We are also providing them with an opportunity to have a hands-on experience working in the professional music world as interns with our admittance and logistics teams, which are fundamental aspects needed for the future career of any professional cultural organisation. At the MPO we believe that it is crucial for Malta’s young musicians to be able to experience the environment of the professional musical world. For this we have a unique opportunity of the level of musicianship that they are aspiring towards, and for them to witness the dedication and professionalism that is required in order to achieve these standards. It is our hope that this collaborative pathway will provide students with the encouragement, motivation and inspiration needed for them to become Malta’s future professional musicians.”

Mary Ann Cauchi, Centrum administrator, Johann Strauss School of Music, stated: “Johann Strauss School of Music is the place to be if you want to learn music but first and foremost it is an education-institution. It is the school’s duty to educate society at large from a young age and create educational opportunities and film in a big step in helping society to grow in music and art.”

Open Access and Dissemination of Research

Research work propels the human race forward. That is the driving force that has led to ongoing research in the areas of science, technology, arts, and all fields of study. It is hard to underestimate the importance of conducting research. However, what proportion of this knowledge is actually accessible to most researchers? Most researchers opt to consult academic journals and monographs but how much of this material is available to the public? A small number of people are not researchers but who may be interested in a particular research topic. Such people have to use hefty expenditure resources, while academic research, monographs are significantly expensive. The coverage rate for a journal’s access can be widely accessible whereas there are so many financial barriers.

Nowadays, researchers are encouraged to deposit their research papers via an Access (OA) journal. These do not fall into the same category as journals. Such journals can be freely accessed online and the research published can be re-used. This is because open access publishing grants (OA) license for instance allows others to distribute, reuse and build upon research published in a commercial research, as long as the authors of the original work are correctly credited. Using OA makes the quality of publishing since articles that are accepted will still go through a peer-review process.

Some journals use the art of compose charges (APC) to cover the costs of publication, editing and peer-reviewing. Funding agencies and institutions have motivated for such APCs through their research budget. Open Access is not just a choice that the researcher makes while thinking about the publishing options. EU research programmes such as Horizon 2020 and the 7th Framework programme have mandated that funding available over seven years (2014 to 2020), require that all financed research output be deposited in Open Access. APCs need to be included when considering for research. Beneficiaries of such funds are mandated to deposit a copy of the research in a repository of choice and ensure that the publication is made available in OA within six months from publication for the scientist and for public use within the arts, the humanities and social sciences. Such measures guarantee that fundamentally made freely accessible online and potentially disseminated globally.

As a fundamental belief in the dissemination of knowledge and research, the University of Malta Library offers academics the possibility to upload their research papers in an Institutional Repositories – OAR@UM. This increases the visibility of the research carried out, and academic and enhances the Library’s collections. OAR@UM is the web institutional repository on the Maltese Islands. The University of Malta Library is OAR@UM’s coordinator and can upload their material, as long as they have an approval form signed by an academic from the respective field of study.

Uploading academic works on OAR@UM provides +2/4 access. Furthermore, since all works uploaded are harvested by Google and Google Scholar, by enhancing dissemination as well as discoverability and divulging the work to an international audience. This increases the chances of research collaborations with different entities, local and/or international. Having more readers may lead to further recognitions. Studies show that research articles published in Open Access are cited by other authors more frequently than comparable articles which have restricted access. In a study published in 2010 by Harzing at the University of Lincoln’s (Malta’s repository to Mediterranean Open Access) it was shown that OA can increase citations from 25% to over 200%.

As of September, there are over 50,000 items on OAR@UM rang- ing from articles to book chapters, audio recordings, epiphanies and dissertations. These items over 15,000 different topics and subjects. Such a volume of resources offers OAR@UM the unique opportunity to be visible thanks to search engines like Google that retrieve material from the repository in any relevant search.

To this effect, the University of Malta Library received a number of requests from researchers from countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Nigeria and Holland to access dissertations, which meta data is showing online but which are restricted to University patrons. OAR@UM is also open to com- pliant, OpenXE aims to support the implementation of Open Access in Europe. It provides the means to promote and realize the widespread adoption of the Open Access Policy, as set out by the ERC Scientific Council. OAR@UM and the Open Access pilot launched by the University of Malta, The Malta Philharmonic Orchestra Academy and the Malta Council for Science and Technology.

OAR@UM will also advise on the development of the formulation of policies in the area of international educational activities.