

VOICE CONFERENCE: REACH OUT!
European Choral Association / Europa Cantat
Keynote opening speech by Brendan Jan Walsh

I. INTRODUCE – ATTENTION → I DO

Once upon a time, a little boy who had never met his grandfather, was told he was a lot like him; a proud man, musician, a challenging man, conductor of a national choir, an opinionated man, media figure. He had made many friends, amongst whom famous composers such as Igor Stravinsky, but also quite a few enemies.

One day, the boy was invited to the television studios and during a tour of the building, he was guided through the digitalized archives where he asked if it was possible to look up his grandfather's name... And indeed, there he was, Jan Van Bouwel. For the first time in his life, the boy saw his grandfather as a moving image, conducting a choir.

I was proud of him, proud to be his grandson. Likewise, I hope he would feel the same about his family.

Does it matter? You have probably never heard of him as I have probably never heard of your grandparents. But the idea of a (grand)parent being proud is something we can all relate to, somehow... it is part of who we are.

Activity

- *Who are you? I want to know. Would you do me the favor of singing a note or a motif that expresses what you are.*
- *1, 2, 3, 4. [noise]*

Who am I?

I am a boy who grew up in a musical family. As far as my memories go back, there was always music. I spent my childhood playing (not the violin as I gave that instrument back to my mother after three weeks saying that I did not like the high sound) and singing. I joined the Antwerp Cathedral Choir, which is where I first realized that my grandfather had left quite an impression on the choral world in Belgium as my conductor seemed in awe. Not of me, but of my background. I didn't bother me and I very much enjoyed the international tours for 'pueri cantores' festivals to Rome, Montreal and Salzburg. Good old days. My favorite choral memory was singing next to the girl's choir in Honegger's Le Roi David.

I also started learning the cello, mainly because I liked the teacher. But the instrument grew on me and when I decided to not become a pilot, journalist or

lawyer but a musician, my darling mother showed that she too was related to my grandfather and blatantly forbade me to go to conservatoire. Why? Because she had suffered significantly of the fact that people after his death got back at him through her, whilst she was studying violin at conservatoire. At least, that is how it felt for her.

Anyway, I would not be a proud member of my family if I did not find a way around it and thanks to the magnificent cellist Anna Shuttleworth, I discovered I could take cello as a main subject at some universities in the UK. In Huddersfield I studied Music and German, keeping both my mother and my in the meantime quite critical mind satisfied.

After my Bachelor studies with a focus on cello and conducting, I went to conservatoire in Utrecht and hated it. As opposed to the UK where my creativity was constantly triggered and tested, I suddenly was expected to put blinkers on (like a horse), to follow the path that the teacher knew to be the best for all of his students. At the time I did not have the confidence to oppose such methods, to say that there must also be other ways, which we could try to develop.

Wallowing in doubts I had the luck of meeting the late Christopher Hogwood. We became friends and he was the person to launch me to in the direction of management. Admittedly, my first reaction was: "Hey! I'm not a failed musician yet, thank you very much!". But after being introduced to a number of his business-oriented acquaintances, I did start to see the possibilities of it contributing to my childhood dream: to make the world more beautiful, to speak to anybody without the need of words.

The rest you can read in my biography. In short, after an amazing time at the business school ESCP Europe, I got the chance to work for companies such as L'Oréal, Société Générale, IBM and Lausanne Consulting, learning how the corporate world works and always with the idea of wanting to transfer this knowledge to the cultural sector. That's exactly what I'm doing now and I'm loving it, even though the introduction of some of these ideas and theories into artistic practice do meet a fair amount of resistance from mainly the more conservative gatekeepers. I welcome the discussion. Friction tests stability and sparks innovation.

I wonder what my grandfather thinks of all this.

Beyond my professional career, about which you will never hear me complain, there are two initiatives that have conquered my heart. The first is the Nieuwendammer Shantykoor in Amsterdam; a group of 30-odd big old-ish men, dressed like sailors who enjoy singing sailor songs, accompanied by a couple of beers during (and after) the break. They are a true amateur choir where most members have never had any musical training whatsoever. They have strong lungs, some have a good voice, but all have a good heart. It is amazing to see how they take care of each other when one of them is in trouble (again). This camaraderie is contagious and it makes them a very popular choir in all senses of the word. They are irregularly on national

television and we were even invited/selected to sing for the crowning of the Dutch king. Conducting them is one of the finest and most enjoyable challenges I have ever encountered. We make people smile.

A smile. Probably the most valuable activity of mankind. If it weren't for the market economy, I would work for smiles. With Syrious Mission, a charity that gives music workshops to Syrian refugee children in Jordan, that is the only currency I accept.

You only really realize what a luxurious life we lead when you work in the surroundings of the refugee camps. They have left everything behind, house, toys, friends and family, some of which they will never see again. All children we work with react differently to the devastating war in Syria. Some live in a different world, some are very aggressive, others don't show any emotion. Through music we try to give them something to hold on to, to accept the past, to express themselves in the present and to dream of a future. Do you know that most of the boys say when asked what they want to be when they grow up? I don't want to be anything. I want to go back to my country and fight for it...

We teach them to write their own song. We teach children in the Netherlands the same. They then sing for each other. They don't speak each other's language, but they understand. Each voice matters, each song is a present. Listening and singing together makes the world a more beautiful place.

Let me try the same with you today whilst offering some insight into a few management ideas for the cultural sector.

II. CONNECT – INTEREST → I DARE

Activity

- *Nice to have you all here. A bunch of strong individuals. But who are we? Let's find out...*
- *[noise, noise, intonation, colour]*

The theme of this VOICE conference is 'reaching out'.

As I know that I often talk a lot, I try to be able to summarize ideas in one word. With reaching out, I say: COMMUNICATION.

In my experience, many artists are very bad at communicating. It is a strange observation for somebody who calls music a universal language! But I think I have come to understand where the problem lies. Many artists are extremely ego-centric. The world revolves around them and maybe also their fellow musicians. But is that the true importance of music, to make it sound? I believe it reaches out a lot further than that. Music exists when it is heard and felt. Music is made for others. Music is sharing.

The business world has already understood that communication is the basis of success in our consumerist market economy. If you want somebody to listen to you, to buy into you, then you need to grab their attention, gain their

interest, tickle their desire and invite them to take action. AIDA. Not the opera, but the acronym.

I hope I got your attention when starting to tell a story and inviting you to actively become part of this group by singing.

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I intend to interest you by offering you a few ideas and concepts that could help you develop your projects, organization and career.

In fact, I wish for you that you find the perfect partner (or partners) you so desire. How do you match Arts to Business and Consumers? Well, it's really a bit like dating.

With the rise of Internet, the dating process has become increasingly effective through the use of profiling, screening and other sophisticated techniques. There is nothing that stops us from adopting those techniques in our quest to reach out to that other 95% of the European population.

It is of course impossible to date the entire world and I'm not sure if there is somebody out there for everybody, but I do believe that 99% of people can find their match, if they make the effort. The same counts for singing.

So what are the steps?

A. Analyse resources and competences

Who are you, what makes you so special?

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As an artist, your competences are, for example, that you:

- Understand insecurity and ambiguity
- Can cooperate in many ways
- Know how to create something together
- Have a multiple approaches to leadership
- Demonstrate strength and courage take risks
- Constantly fight fear
- Are expert listener, writer, speaker, observer, knowledge sharer
- Dream, fantasize and turn it into practice
- Can tell convincing stories
- Are barometers of change.
- See future trends
- Create involvement
- Are curious and ask surprising questions
- Build bridges
- Manage to create inspiring working environments
- Know where to find sources of inspiration
- Can create something original in a short space of time
- Are used to working with deadlines
- Have explicit values and beliefs

- Are expert talent developers
- Allow multiple opinions
- Are empathy
- Have energy, flexibility and belief in their own skills
- Can create a neutral / safe learning environment

=*PPP*=

B. Analyse demand

What does your targeted counterpart want, need, desire? What is it for them? Whether it is a person, an organisation or a business, you ALWAYS need to make the effort of being interested in who they are. Imagine it the other way round... how do you react when somebody – out of the blue – asks you for money or a favourable treatment? Remember AIDA, it really helps!

C. Find your match

What is a match? What makes you a good couple? In musical terms: you want to be in sync and harmony with each other.

=*PPP*=

III. MATCH – DESIRE/DECISION → AND I DARE YOU

Finding and deciding on your target audience.

My specialization in Generation Y.

A. WHO IS GENERATION Y?

Generation Y was born between 1978 and 2000. They are the largest generation of youth in history and are also known as the millennials or the Trophy generation, as they are used to receiving rewards for their activities, regardless of the actual achievement.

We know from many studies and experts (*just google: "Who is generation Y"*) that they have grown up naturally collaborative, talented, open-minded, flexible and they thrive 24/7 on social media; all characteristics that are well-suited to the new economy. Generation Y demands that the workplace reflects their values and personal growth; they want work that is meaningful whilst allowing them to put family first.

For the sake of this talk, let us imagine a girl called Jenny as an average Western representative of generation Y.

B. SO WHO IS JENNY?

Jenny is 27 years old. She enjoyed higher education. She has travelled internationally and has friends globally (who she hasn't necessarily met in real life yet). She works hard but tries to save time for personal development,

friends and family. Work-life balance is very important to her and she would prefer a job that gives her enough time out of the office, rather than lots of money but no life. She is online a lot, craving for news from around the world concerning friends as well as global current affairs. Jenny grew up in a positive learning environment in which she got many compliments. She has become an outwardly confident young woman with very high expectations of herself, a feeling that is fed through the profiles of her peers on the social media. The apparent success of her friends adds extra pressure to her need to achieve. It leaves her feeling insecure and she is afraid to miss out.

C. Learning from Jenny and her Generation Y

14 tips (or lessons) to involve JENNY based on 5 examples from the classical music world.

1. [Rheingold on the Rhine \(NL/D\)](#)

In July of 2013, the Rhineland saw a ship of 135 meters long transporting a precious cargo; the hold contained a complete musical theatre! Rheingold on the Rhine was an international production of the opera Das Rheingold by Richard Wagner and the symphonic show The Wagner Experience. On board: ninety orchestral musicians of the Utrecht Student Concert, a full cast and crew and 500 guests. 7600 visitors spread over 17 performances have enjoyed this incredible production that was organised by a 7-headed committee of generation Y students from Utrecht. Impressively the tickets for the opera cost between €30 and €150 of which all tickets for the opera were sold out! (www.rheingold2013.com)

1. LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION
2. INTEGRATE HER INTO THE ORGANISATION
3. ALLOW FOR GLOBAL COLLABORATION

2. [Concertgebouw Entrée Late Night Café \(NL\)](#)

At the Entrée Late Nights a mix of musical genres and art forms meet in the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, as do Clara's young lovers. Earlier in the evening, more than 3000 active members of Entrée can go to a themed concert of the AAA-series for a very low price. Entrée is organised by a committee of Jenny's peers. (www.concertvrienden.nl/entree - in Dutch)

4. FOCUS ON HER INTERESTS
5. BUILD A COMMUNITY
6. WATCH TRENDS

3. Classical Music Rave (NL)

The Classical Music Rave is exactly what it says it is. It combines all elements of a great all-night dance party including deejays, live musicians, surprise acts, whopping sound & light in stunning venues, sex, drugs and... classical music. Of course, an audience of young, enthusiastic and sometimes even fanatic music lovers make the night complete. The rave was conceived at a brainstorm with 20 of Jenny's friends in Amsterdam and will soon have its first international edition in Brazil. (www.classicalmusicrave.com)

- 7. BE INDEPENDENT
- 8. KEEP IT INFORMAL
- 9. CREATE BOTTOM-UP

4. Ynight (CH)

The classical innovation community classYcal is determined to help bring innovation to the field of classical music and exactly what triggers Jenny's entrepreneurial mind! Electronica mixed with instrumental sounds, colorful 2- and 3D animations visualizing more- and lesser known pieces and adding depth to the experience, classical stars who perform short, compact acts in clubs, surrounded by DJ-sets and visuals... a lot is moving and shaking in the young classical scene and slowly but surely a new sub culture with sex appeal emerges. ([Ynight fb fanpage](#))

- 10. INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY
- 11. APPLY VISUALS
- 12. DARE TO MIX

5. NONCLASSICAL (UK)

A new music scene is emerging in London... Over the last few years 'classical club-nights' have become an increasingly visible feature of the city's nightlife. This has been fuelled by the next generation of classical performers, composers and promoters who are redefining the rule and breaking out of the constraints of the traditional concert hall. At the forefront of this new movement is Nonclassical, a club-night and record label founded by composer Gabriel Prokofiev in 2004. (www.nonclassical.co.uk)

- 13. KNOW THE AUDIENCE
- 14. ALWAYS QUALITY, EVERYWHERE

DO YOU WANT A DATE WITH JENNY?

Royalty, even the pope, abdicates sooner than most of the gatekeepers of classical music. Maybe it's time you do too. The initiative is yours to take. You'll continue to have influence and legacy, but please show your trust in the

new generation. They are out there and they are developing their own projects anyway. So invite them to your parties or visit them unannounced. Jenny and her friends are not so difficult to find. There are many ways to reach out and invite her for a date. You can do that both online and offline.

Online Jenny is active on the social media, exchanging information and happy to work in an open source environment. Jenny will share with you if you share with her.

Offline you can find her at work or studying. Go to parties, receptions, clubs and similar events to the ones described in this article. Chances are very high you will find her there! Or organize an event at a special location for her and her friends through which you can demonstrate your interest to build a future together.

SO DON'T TELL HER WHAT TO DO... Let Jenny and her friends to organize the event themselves. Always be sure to communicate on an equal level and never cease to seduce. Guide, but let them lead! Connecting Cora to Jenny, really, it's a bit like dating!

IV. CREATE – ACTION → DO YOU?

Musicians create worlds. When you step through the gate of silence, you enter a dimension where the rules and regulations of our society don't count. What you hear is for your mind only. You create your own listening laws. What you think is your imagination. Your imagination can change the world we live in.

I believe it is the responsibility of music professionals to challenge the world, to create new ones for everybody on earth. But why on earth do most of us, although we possess such incredible powers, remain in the safe haven of the established classical music world?

Are we not highly trained critical minds? Do we not know how to cope with fear and nerves? Is music not for everybody? Can we not turn any street corner into a beautiful place? Should we not pass on the gift of music to those who need it the most? Must we not be a beacon of hope for every generation?

There are examples of musicians who have created moments that are framed in our collective memories. Think of the coded music of Shostakovich, Woodstock, Rostropovich at the fall of the Berlin wall or more recently the Syrian pianist in Yarmouk refugee camp. But they are exceptions.

If we, the music sector (art sector) realize our great strength, then we can change the world. Let us not be captives of the market economy. Let us do what we do best. Understand the complex physics and dynamics of this world and create new possibilities. We are composers, interpreters and promoters

of ideas, ideologies and dreams. Music is emotion through structure. Music is the oldest living language. Music is hope.
Wake up, sleeping revolutionaries!

I want the world to be more beautiful. Do you?
I dare and I dare you to do so too.
Let's do it, together!

Activity

- *Brendan sets pulse*
- *Audience builds groove*
- *Audience chants:*
 - *I DO, I DARE, AND I DARE YOU, DO YOU?*
 - *I DO, I DARE, AND I DARE YOU, DO YOU?*
- *Audience chants with suggested melody line.*
- *Brendan sings improvised verse.*

The lyrics are yours to choose, but do write them, sing them, give them to those around you... And let us give our grandchildren something to be proud of too!

THANK YOU.