



REPORT - JAZZ AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

By Kevin Le Gendre

EJN Members Seminar

El Molino, Carrer de Vila i Vilà, 99

Barcelona, 14 March 2025



1.1. Background

For jazz festivals and indeed all arts events the theme of social inclusion is increasingly difficult to ignore. A series of concerts or performances that present music, and possibly choreography, poetry and theatre, is deemed a success if the audience figures are good, especially in a social media age obsessed with numbers.

But to the answer of how many, one might ask the question of *who*? Where do the ticket holders come from? What are the circumstances in which they live, and what are the challenges they may face, financial, social or otherwise, that may prevent them from taking part in any cultural provision? These are important questions that need to be addressed by all arts organizations that see themselves as a potential force for greater community cohesion at a time of increasing division due to income disparities as well as the possible or actual closure of venues that give wide access to culture.



1.2. The Barcelona Seminar

The 2025 Barcelona Seminar was held at El Molino, a café-theatre in the city centre that was also the main venue for Jazz I Am (hosted by Taller De Músics), which included showcases of Spanish jazz artists as well as panels and interviews. In fact, what appeared to be the most interesting discussion was *Jazz in Catalonia: Plurality and Inclusion Challenges*, which was an apt scene setter for the EJM seminar insofar as the subject centred on the question of access to jazz, both for artists and audiences.

In addition to EJM staff and speakers the seminar had participants who were drawn from across the continent. They represented arts organizations and venues, and many were either producers or festival directors. After a brief introduction by the host-facilitator Alex Carr everybody settled down and the seminar began in earnest.



1.3. Seminar introduction

Francois Matarasso gave a fascinating and comprehensive overview of the history of cultural policy, particularly focusing on initiatives taken alongside the development of large-scale employment and urbanization. He thus began by identifying the start of cultural philanthropy in the 1850s, a time when the concept of cultural emancipation 'by workers for workers' was introduced before noting an important turning point almost a century later- the democratization of culture in the welfare state. This was crucial as the advent of 'social security' marked a major step forward in any nation that acknowledges a civic duty to protect its vulnerable members. Hence a desire to ensure that culture is available to all rather than a few is a logical attendant principle.

The 1970s saw the growth of cultural democracy in what was hoped would be a more equal and diverse society, but the implementation of such an idea proved to be anything but straightforward. Two different strands of action were nonetheless noted: 'Art For All', which is subject to a degree of professional control, namely policy makers who take decision for others, and 'Art By, With and For All', which has non-professional control and is largely determined by both performers and audiences.

Essentially organizations have to achieve both of these visions, but the very idea of social inclusion can be vague. Ironically, it is easier to identify *social exclusion* and seek to reduce it in order to be inclusive. But the arguments for inclusivity are manifold. In practical terms larger audiences generate more income, which aids the survival if not growth of any arts organization with substantial outreach ambitions.

Among the additional benefits is increased support for the community itself. And the other important argument for greater diversity is that it will foster more openness, creativity and a better atmosphere at events, which are all key criteria for both producers and funding bodies that have to take decisions on financial support.

In order to stimulate more thought on the underlying importance of social inclusion Francois then shared an historic statement with the participants: Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was published in 1948.

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the Arts.

These words could not have been more relevant to the seminar. The central idea of the *right* rather than the privilege or the opportunity substantially affects the outlook of decision makers and powerbrokers, or at least it should do insofar as they have a responsibility to ensure that the principle is implemented and upheld. This can involve a number of practical steps, above all how the governance of an organization is managed from the appointment of the board and advisory groups right through to the recruitment of staff and the programming of events. All decisions must be justified.



This part of the presentation was followed by an interesting idea: Co-creation.

Ultimately, this aims to produce art by involving both professionals and non-professionals so that there may be a degree of non-professional control.

While these were concrete, practical points Francois rounded off by making a few statements that would helpfully shape the way we think about social inclusion. He argued that creative music thrives in openness and should be made by open-hearted musicians who embrace the idea that improvisation has a degree of uncertainty. The success of the musical endeavour can be facilitated by the generosity of the artist as well as an adaptation to a specific cultural setting with an eye on social inclusion.

All things considered the goal of social inclusion in jazz is to enable everyone to discover, enjoy, create, share and protect the music, and in the process, one should value the contribution of all. The outlook is crucial. Powerbrokers should care for what people do, rather than focus on who they are or where they are from.

To bring about positive social change a number of key principles need to be implemented: Listening, honesty, respect, creativity, reciprocity and accountability.

In other words, organisations must be empathetic and attuned to their audiences, be willing to embrace the point of view of a concertgoer who may not have a 'jazz profile' and also be ready to adjust their working praxis in order to meet their needs.



1.4. The Liceu Opera House and social inclusion

Launched in 2018 the community opera at the Gran Teatre Del Liceu is produced once every three years. It is a co-creation with local communities in order to reflect all aspects of identity, particularly language and cultural traditions. The opera brings these communities into contact with opera professionals who can provide training in the specific areas of musical composition and dramaturgy, musical and choral performance, set design and staging, and marketing and communication.

In her presentation Irene Calvis showed many aspects of the production of *La Gata Perduda*, from costumes to choirs (mixed-age groups) to set design and props. She finished by stating that the next community opera, held under the banner of **Amplify**, will aim to provide workshops on the use of new digital technology for artists, promoters and managers, and also seek to further engage audiences with this innovative platform.



1.5. Contributions from the members

There was a wide range of testimonies from EJM members that underlined the challenging nature of the task of making a jazz festival or cultural event socially inclusive, and how as a general rule it is important to work *with* a given community rather than on their behalf. If a consensus of sorts emerged from the many accounts that were shared it was precisely that listening to whoever one seeks to include rather than imposing a pre-set vision upon them is of the utmost importance.

Lisa Lofgren, Svensk Jazz, Sweden

The Jazzify! and Ny(A)modigheter projects were intended to develop new audiences, pending successful funding applications. The onus was on the promotion and discovery of live music in local areas rather than the environment of a jazz club where many people may not feel comfortable. Projects took place between 2013 and 2018 when a large number of refugees arrived in Sweden, which was met by a desire of organizations to include the new arrivals in community cultural life.

In practical terms this meant taking the music to a number of 'safe spaces' for refugees and into care homes for members of the community with mobility issues.

Above all the guiding principle is to 'facilitate not strictly manage' the audience.

Carlos Martins, Festa Do Jazz, Portugal

The idea of 'Sonic Inclusion' is a central pillar in the cultural policy of the festival, which has strong links with Lisbon's music schools and the city's many jazz students, who are given a major spotlight when they perform at Festa Do Jazz every year.

Monja Wiik, Kongsberg Jazzfestival, Norway

Since 2016 the festival has been reaching out to people with mental health issues and anxiety through a collaboration with Fontenhuset Kongsberg, which takes over an outdoor venue, Jazzboksen and uses it as a focal point for visitors with amateur bands. Everything is in F.K.'s hands, as they use 4-5 staff and around 40 members while the Kongsberg Festival, keen not to dictate, has just one representative involved.

Alexandra Carr, Cheltenham Jazz Festival/South Bank Centre, UK

The Cheltenham jazz festival presents the Jazz For Schools programme that encourages children and young people to discover and explore the world of jazz while the South Bank Centre, London reaches out to the opposite age group with its Windrush dances for Caribbean migrants who arrived in Britain in the late 1940s.



Aida Bakic, Circolo Controtempo, Italy

Circolo Controtempo has conceived The Creative Orchestra as a powerful symbol of diversity and inclusion. It consists of professional musicians, musicians with disabilities and/or mental disorders and non-professional musicians.

Socially beneficial, the initiative also develops specific skills (discipline/ respect for rules and commitments/interpersonal and teamwork skills/stress management, etc). This operation sees culture, and in particular the use of music therapy, as a valuable tool for the support, inclusion and integration of fragile individuals.

The goal is to further develop the Creative Orchestra, if funding is made available.

Evelien De Jaeger, Ha Concerts, Belgium

The venue collaborates with partner organizations that stage events within the various cultural communities in Ghent, including Maghrebian, Turkish, and Roma. Ha Concerts offers its expertise and team to support the curators in ensuring a successful event, with a focus on ownership and a lasting relationship with audiences.

These events are always almost sold out, because they are very community driven. However, it is hard to measure which audience comes back on days that are not curated by its own community. It is still a great challenge to mix the audiences.

Steen Mikkelsen, DSI Swinging Europe, Denmark

The CONTAINARTSOUND project revolves around a 20 foot container that was placed at six cultural institutions in Jylland for a month. Each cultural institution was tasked with filling the container with different forms of culture, and music was a common thread. By dint of its structure the container brought the artists and audience close together and therefore created a sense of belonging. Inside and outside the container, jazz, pop, folk, classical as well as songs from children's and youth choirs were played. The target groups were all ages and marketing was specifically directed at them. Very positively received by both partners and audience, the project is set to continue with a greater focus on schools with socially disadvantaged children.

Roger Lygre Solvang, Bergen Jazzforum, Norway

Bergen Jazzforum has been creating music and concerts for children for over 20 years through the Bajazz-project, including commissioned works and record releases. Bajazzfestivalen, a festival for children focusing on jazz and improvised music, has also existed since 2010. Due to both public and private funding for the concerts ticket prices are affordable, and free tickets are also available for people from low-income households, refugees and other communities with limited resources.

Over the years they have been working to include music from international cultures in our programming, an example is the commissioned work Miss Tati's Eyemb for Bajazzfestivalen 2020 and Modal Trafikk - Trommer er Best from Bajazzfestivalen 2024. But we still are



interested in learning more about different tools or approaches to reaching audiences diverse backgrounds or from marginalized communities.

Iró Graonidou, Clasijazz, Spain

Clasijazz is a cultural centre in Almeria, Spain, dedicated to music, arts and community development, with a special focus on jazz. Activities such as concerts, workshops, music and dance classes are supplemented by educational and social projects that promote inclusion, youth empowerment and diversity. The organisation is looking to expand its network of contacts and integrate new practices to continue offering high quality projects that benefit both jazz musicians and audiences.

Michelle Wilderom, North Sea Round Town, Netherlands

Last July North Sea Round Town kicked off its collaboration with neighbourhood organizations with a spectacular Biggest Chair Dance accompanied by live music. With as many as one thousand chairs, the event is an ideal opportunity to bring neighbourhood residents in the big city closer together through sports, games and music. The exciting chair dance attracted participants of all ages, cultures: children, friends, family and neighbours. The Chair Dance was musically accompanied by the Nazaten, a festive Surinamese & Dutch group known for its eclectic, danceable music, that included kaseko, jazz, Antillean waltzes, fado, klezmer, European brass band songs, mardi gras, calypso and more. Special contributions were also made by the Rotterdam Police Orchestra and special guests. The event was a wonderful way to start the summer vacation, with lots of fun, music and community spirit.

Koblan Bonaventure Amissah, Abusuan / Bari in Jazz festival, Italy

Social inclusion is a priority for both organizations because it obliges them to enter and engage with disadvantaged neighbourhoods, presenting activities to enable those who do not have the opportunity to discover other ways of seeing the world.

Marieke Meischke, Jazz Maastricht, Netherlands

Work is done with children, youth orchestras, elderly people homes and refugees living in various asylum centres in the South of the Netherlands, Limburg is a rather conservative, white area. They notice that there is a need for music workshops, and we offer to make connections among the people of various backgrounds and cultures.

Therefore, we wish to expand the current music improvisation workshops and look more closely at involving new participants, especially young, male refugees who seem to be lost in the asylum centres, without families and friends. Since 2020 Jazz Maastricht has offered the Improvisation Workshop Kobranie, suitable for all age groups, whether or not they have a musical background. Hand gestures, colours, words, signs and graphic symbols are used to create musical content. This does not only lead to artistic freedom and creativity, but also, and above all, to fun!



Günsu Yesilyaprak, Istanbul Jazz Festival, Turkey

Every year, the Istanbul Jazz Festival hosts refugees among its audience, fostering peaceful coexistence among the diverse communities found in Istanbul. Witnessing performances from their own cultures in an international setting encourages their integration into social life, promoting peaceful coexistence and greater cohesion.

Furthermore, Jazz bands from America, Europe, and Syria performed together, creating opportunities for refugees, festival goers, and locals to connect. In collaboration with UNHCR, the festival invited 300 Syrian refugees, fostering integration into Turkish society. With an audience of 40,000, the festival is a platform for dialogue and unity.

Agnieszka Kiepuszewska, Wytwórnia Foundation, Poland

As part of the Summer Jazz Academy in 2015, Wytwórnia Foundation organized eight weeks of summer workshops for individuals with limited access to culture, including children from orphanages and people with intellectual disabilities. Each session lasted three hours, was led by cultural professionals and gave participants had the opportunity to sing, dance and make music. In 2023, they invited the Współgłosy choir, and individuals with intellectual disabilities, to collaborate with the band Pixvae as part of the Summer Jazz Academy and Intl Jazz Platform. Pixvae led workshops for the choir, culminating in a joint concert. Due to its success, they invited Trondheim Voices a month later for a similar collaboration in Łódź, which was preceded by workshops.

Organisations that were new to social inclusion

“No, but we would like to start” is the common sentiment among these organisations, which included Jaz9Tus I-Jazz and Pescara jazz in Italy, the Lithuanian Jazz Federation, Athens Technoplois in Greece, Unterfahrt and Stadtgarten in Germany.

Some organizations such as Glasgow International Jazz Festival had already done several years of successful social inclusion projects pre-covid but were finding it difficult to resume. Artistic director Jill Rodger said she would look to other organisations for advice and hopes to launch social inclusion projects to mark the 40th edition of the festival in 2026. Dennis Borlein of Enjoy Jazz Germany runs projects with children from deprived areas and offers special ticket prices for these communities.



2.1 Group discussion

The participants were then divided into several groups and given the chance to reflect in greater depth on the issues raised during the first part of the day, and each designated a speaker to summarize their discussion. The results were very wide-ranging but there was nonetheless a degree of common ground between the contributors, and what one might call key words or emblematic terms were used to capture the mood in the room.

Groups spoke of the need to uphold ancestral customs and the oral tradition when engaging with communities who may be marginalized in society. Artistic directors should be aware of the need to allow stories to be told, and collaborations must be approached with humility as well as curiosity. Showing respect to others is crucial. All projects must be implemented with fairness, sustainability and accessibility.



2.2 Conclusions

Following the group statements Francois Matarasso wrapped up by reiterating key points, the most powerful of which was that the central purpose of all Social Inclusion initiatives is to *change the world*.

Indeed, by making cultural events welcoming and accessible to all there is a chance to positively impact attitudes towards 'minorities' in the mainstream and make progress towards a greater degree of equality. This struck a chord with the participants who had given many examples of festival initiatives that created social cohesion, whether it was amateur and professional musicians having breakfast together before they began rehearsals, or the 2018 Opera Prim using graffiti art as well as costumes created by non-professionals so that they were completely integral to what was an ambitious 'human-centric' project.

Essentially, people in disadvantaged circumstances are upholding a fundamental aspect of jazz insofar as they are improvising but they are doing so 'in survival mode'. While the policy of offering tickets at reduced prices, adopted by all organizations, acts as a kind of enabling force what is empowering is the desire to *listen* to a target group, be it refugees, or members of disadvantaged communities, and give them agency.

With that in mind Francois (and others) identified the need to protect heritage, to take folk music into institutions and to involve as many people as possible in cultural discussion rather than restricting it to academics.

The most effective form of social inclusion thus requires decision makers and power brokers to look around rather than take a top-down approach and gain an understanding of not so much those who need to be included but those who can make a contribution if they have a chance to do so.



SCHEDULE: Friday 14 March 2024

9.30 **Door opening and accreditations**

10:00 **Welcome**

EJN & Taller de Músics

10:10 **Introduction to the day**

Alex Carr, facilitator

10.20 **Culture and social inclusion: What have we done?**

François Matarasso (online)

10.45 **The Liceu Opera House and social inclusion**

Irene Calvis

11.15 **Break**

11.30 **Member Exchange 1**

Participants' experience of social inclusion in current projects

12.30 **Lunch**

13.30 **Member exchange 2**

Participants' experience of social inclusion in current projects

14.00 **Small groups discussion**

The EJN Social Inclusion Commitment

14.45 **Plenary discussion**

Alex Carr, with François Matarasso (online)

15.30 **Close**



Participants

Evelien De Jaeger	Ha Concerts	Belgium
Anders Boye Knudsen	JAZZ9TUS	Denmark
Steen Mikkelsen	DSI Swinging Europe	Denmark
François Matarasso	Speaker (online)	France
Katharina Ahrendt	Jazzclub Unterfahrt	Germany
Dennis Borlein	Enjoy Jazz	Germany
Ella O'Brien-Coker	Stadtgarten Köln	Germany
Antonis Zouganelis	Athens Jazz	Greece
Aida Bakic	Circolo Controtempo	Italy
Giulia Focardi	I-Jazz	Italy
Angelo Valori	Pescara Jazz Festival	Italy
Koblan Amissah	Abusuan / Bari in Jazz festival	Italy
Francesca Cerretani	Europe Jazz Network	Italy
Giambattista Tofoni	Europe Jazz Network	Italy
Stefano Zucchiatti	Europe Jazz Network	Italy
Dorotėja Būdaitė	Lithuanian Jazz Federation	Lithuania
Miriam Brenner	Music Meeting Festival	Netherlands
Marieke Meischke	Jazz Maastricht	Netherlands
Michelle Wilderom	North Sea Round Town	Netherlands
Roger Lygre Solvang	Bergen Jazzforum	Norway
Monja Wiik	Kongsberg Jazzfestival	Norway
Agnieszka Kiepuszewska	Wytwórnia Foundation	Poland
Carlos Martins	Festa Do Jazz	Portugal
Iró Graonidou	Clasijazz	Spain
Irene Calvis	Speaker / Liceu Opera House	Spain
Marina Fernández	PJE Plataforma Jazz España	Spain
Candela Carrera	Taller de Músics	Spain
Lisa Löfgren	Svensk Jazz	Sweden
Loredana Franza	Semente	Sweden
Günsu Yesilyaprak	İstanbul Jazz Festival	Turkey
Jill Rodger	Glasgow Jazz Festival	United Kingdom
Alexandria Carr	Facilitator & Cheltenham Festivals	United Kingdom



CREATIVE MUSIC LIVES IN

Its openness to open-hearted musicians
Its improvisation and musical uncertainty
Its generosity and adaptation
Its artistic, cultural and social inclusion

AN INCLUSIVE MUSIC ORGANISATION

Exists so that everyone can
discover, enjoy, create, share and protect jazz
Values the contribution of all to
its programmes, administration and management
Cares for what people do,
not who they are perceived by others to be
Strengthens people's capabilities
through creative learning
Contributes to positive social change
and a more just society

IT CAN BE RECOGNISED BY ITS

Listening	Honesty
Respect	Creativity
Reciprocity	Accountability