

**report on Tenso Professionals Meeting  
LIFE AFTER LIVE MUSIC  
Paris, 16-18 June 2011**



**Pre-conference survey**

In the month preceding the conference, European professional chamber choirs were asked to participate in a survey about their current recording practices.

**WHAT MOTIVATES CHOIRS TO MAKE RECORDINGS ?**

The main reason respondents make recordings is to document artistic achievement. While none of the respondents looked at recordings as a way to generate significant revenue, recordings are seen (in addition to documenting artistic achievement) as important tools to be used to reach new audiences, to sell as souvenirs at performances and to use as a gift or presentation. Another important recording goal was to document national composers or compositions. Recording is not as much a priority as live concerts, although most performances are recorded to fulfill archival requirements.

**SURVEY CONCLUSIONS**

The current recording and distribution practices of Tenso choirs seem to be quite conservative. Recordings are seen as important tools, mainly for PR, and not seen as a potential source of significant revenue. While these are the common views and are consistent across respondents, we did hear during the Friday afternoon panel *Do You Need a Middle Man* that there are chamber choirs and recording companies who are generating significant income through the recording and distribution of music. In addition, the discussions clearly indicate a desire by Tenso member choirs to generate more income from recordings and a desire for more widely distributed recordings through the Internet. Most Tenso choirs do not use the Internet as an effective means of distribution and there are concerns regarding Internet distribution relating to the potential loss of contextual information ( the “cd booklet”) and the potential loss of sound quality.

Full report at <http://www.tenso-vocal.eu/page45/page56/index.html>

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## PANEL 1 • CHANNELS

- Chantal Pattyn (BE) - netmanager Klara Radio [www.klara.be](http://www.klara.be)
- Laurence le Ny (FR) - Orange / Deezer.com [www.deezer.com](http://www.deezer.com)
- Yves Riesel (FR) - managing director Qobuz [www.qobuz.com](http://www.qobuz.com)
- *moderator : Egils Štāls - Latvijas Radio Koris*

Classical radio stations have to find a new position in a world where communication is dominated by the Internet. The Belgian (Flemish) radio station Klara is currently searching for ways to maintain their vision of the role of a classical radio station: (1) introduce people to new or relatively unknown music; (2) link to live, local events (national importance); and (3) put strong emphasis on marketing classical music in a popular way. In addition, the broadcast of live concerts is a big part of their ongoing activity. Radio stations are dealing with the new challenges created by the Internet. There is no longer a significant difference between streaming (via the Internet) and broadcasting (via the ether / cable). In addition, with so much material available 'on demand' the curatorial role for radio stations has become even more important.

In the opinion of many users and content providers who are knowledgeable and enjoy 'classical music', the past and (for the most part) current operating practices of iTunes and other Internet music providers have cheapened the classical music listening experience. Often there is no background information about the music or the performers, and the compression of sound files yields a low sound quality. Broadly speaking there seems to be two different philosophies on providing classical music to a wider audience :

- Internet providers that aim at a wide audience (such as Orange/Deezer.com and iTunes) and service a generic, not necessarily informed audience. Their role is to provide access to music, and to find a method of presenting music that is effective (profitable) across many different genres and types of music. They tend to concentrate on the best known and popular classical music, and have difficulty dealing with 'niche' markets and providers.
- Internet providers that aim at a smaller, knowledgeable audience with very specific wishes, such as Qobuz and Linn Records. For instance, Qobuz provides higher quality sound files and a PDF file with programme notes, in addition to an on-line magazine with a clear editorial function and focus. These companies have found that there is a lucrative marketing for quality classical recordings. They distribute sound files based on the type of music and are interested in providing high quality recordings of classical music to customers who want high quality recordings and who desire additional information about the music and the musicians.

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## PRESENTATION DIGITAL QUALITY STANDARDS

- Philip Hobbs, Linn Records (UK)

Philip Hobbs talked the audience through the various standards for sound files and their compression. iTunes and similar audio services work with comparably low resolution files. Master quality format is very close to analogue sound quality and it is virtually impossible for the human ear to perceive any difference. Current restrictions on digital formats center around band-width and the quality of audio equipment ; but in the near future, we will see more flexible audio systems and higher band width connections.

**\*\*link to presentation powerpoint or to page on Linn's website \*\*\***

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## PANEL 2 • DO YOU NEED A MIDDLE MAN?

- Philip Hobbs - Linn Records [www.linnrecords.com](http://www.linnrecords.com)
- Oriol Pérez i Treviño - Centre Robert Gerhard [www.auditori.com](http://www.auditori.com)
- John Bickley - The Sixteen Productions [www.sixteen.org.uk](http://www.sixteen.org.uk)
- *moderator* : Irene Witmer - *Nederlands Kamerkoor*

Linn Records - where Hobbs is executive producer - offers master quality files as digital downloads, next to 'ordinary' cd's and vinyl records. This is a niche market - but still a lucrative one made up of classical music collectors and enthusiasts who can afford to invest in high quality audio equipment. While Linn provides standard MP3 and CD quality downloads, 87% of their sales are of the studio master quality files. They feel that higher quality of sound creates an immersive experience where the music is no longer background sound. Linn Records relies heavily on frequent and meaningful communication with customers. They have a loyal following, with very specific interests and are not limited to a geographical area. The customers are often "high maintenance" and want to be involved in active conversations with the producers and performers. Linn provides the (multiple) channels that an individual ensemble would have trouble creating and maintaining for their own recordings. Linn Records feels that it has a role as middle man between performers and audience.

Oriol Pérez put up a case for bringing out lesser known music (in the case of the Centre Roberto Gerhard, music of Catalan composers) in high quality recordings. Productions are initiated in order to document cultural heritage but they can also result in highly successful productions. There is certainly a place for government support for musical recordings to preserve and make accessible cultural heritage. Pérez stated that "if the material is not available to the people, it does not constitute part of a cultural heritage." A government-supported institute also has a curatorial role in the Internet age, not only in creating an archive (Internet in itself can provide that) but also in bringing productions to the audience, supporting new composers, etc. According to Oriol, someone still has to produce the content (so yes, we need a middle man).

John Bickley of Sixteen Productions talked about the amazing success of the self-produced records of The Sixteen, and provided an inspiring example how an ensemble can still generate revenues from their recording activities. For most choirs, a CD is basic marketing tool, but The Sixteen managed to turn it into significant source of income and has found that there is still a strong demand for a physical CD recordings. For example, each year The Sixteen tours 30 cathedrals in the UK. A recording of the programme is made before the tour and normally sales of physical CDs exceed £ 2000 for each venue/concert. Physical CDs make up the majority of their recording sales with 20% (a number that is growing) of their recording revenue coming from Internet sales. When the Sixteen started their own CD label in 2000, it was considered to be a huge risk. They feel their success is based on:

- a good back catalogue (they bought the rights back from the record labels);
- a recording is not produced until the finances are covered;
- a successful e-marketing strategy;
- a new recording is usually linked to a concert series and a large part of their sales occur at concerts.

With approximately three new releases every year, The Sixteen uses three financing models for their CD productions:

- raise funds for a specific project through donations;
- find 10 investors who receive a percentage of the income until they get back their investment;
- use the income generated from the sales of previous recordings.

The major part of the released recordings contain early music, but with these, the Sixteen are also able to finance recordings of contemporary music. It is an interesting fact that the most successful music labels in the UK are the choral labels (Gardiner, Tallis Scholars & The Sixteen).

### PANEL 3 • ECONOMICS

- Jacques Toubon - former French Minister of Culture France, Délégué de la France pour la fiscalité des biens et services culturels
- Jean-Vic Chapus - Vox Pop Magazine [www.voxpopmag.com](http://www.voxpopmag.com)
- *moderator: Bernhard Hess - Rias Kammerchor*

The previous panels addressed the question whether there still is a (serious) market for classical recordings. The main subjects of the third panel:

- can recording activities (still) generate significant revenues ?
- what are the risks and chances of Internet distribution ?

Former Ministre of Culture Jacques Toubon heads a committee advising the French government on intellectual property rights on Internet activities. Governments are concerned that the legal aspects of the distribution (both nationally and internationally) of protected works via the Internet have not been properly thought out, and that there is no effective legislation that protect the creative artists and other invested parties.

Mr Toubon briefly outlined the history behind the current situation - traditionally, different systems for artists rights have been in place in different countries. For instance, in France and most of Europe, the system is based on legislation; in Anglo-Saxon countries the system is based on contracts between artists and distributors. The current territorial systems (based on coding of the sold material in a defined geographical area) is not be maintainable given the current state of digital technology. The Internet is basically driven by the "end-user": the power lies with the consumer. The rules of the EU single market cannot be applied to the Internet, which is a global market. For the artists, there are opportunities, risks and challenges: artists should redefine the conditions for sales of intellectual property, and not leave those decisions in the hands of global distributors. This will require a serious investment from the part of the artists.

Journalist Jean-Vic Chapus stressed that both the physical release and the digital release of music will have a future, and in fact they can be complimentary. Examples, especially from the pop music, show that the digital release of new recordings can positively influence the sales of the physical media (CDs). Sales at concerts (records, and merchandise) become an increasingly important revenue source for performing artists. Internet sales, when coupled with social media, offer artists the chance to build a direct relation with the consumers - a relation that can be far more intensive and long lasting than via a distributor such as a record label. Physical releases have the additional advantage of becoming luxury goods: design, booklets, bonus downloads, etc.

In the general discussion, some interesting facts were presented: The role of search engines and ISP's (Internet Service Providers) in giving access to music will become more and more important. Currently 30% of iTunes revenue goes to iTunes, and 70% goes to the producers - of which only a very small percentage goes to the artists. According to Mr. Toubon we have to develop a new economic model where Internet sales are taxed and a significant percentage of revenues goes back to the artists. For example, revenues from the movie industry are taxed to fund new movies, with the aim to promote cultural diversity. The revenues for the performers will be much harder to arrange in a new economic model, if we want to avoid a "soviet solution" where artists are civil servants and paid - and controlled - by the state.

Mr. Chapus stressed that even in the new digital world there is still an important role for producers and cultural media specialists. Their role is to promote and give access to the artistic content, and this role will become more and more essential when more and more music is available "out there"..

#### PANEL 4 • WEB 2.0

- Gregory Parry - Instant Encore
- Guillaume Florin - We Do Music
- *moderator: Nicolas Droin - choeur de chambre accentus*

[www.instantencore.com](http://www.instantencore.com)

[www.wedomusic.net](http://www.wedomusic.net)

Greg Parry gives a quick introduction to InstantEncore, an US-based company that provides Internet services for English speaking cultural organizations – mainly in the form of custom mobile applications and in the area of API (applications program interface). Current trends show that by 2013 the majority of Internet access will be through mobile devices such as cell phones. Instantencore offers a scaled fee system which makes their services available to individual artists as well as large organizations such as the New York Philharmonic. They are the fourth largest provider of custom mobile applications and they only deal with classical music. The value of an API lies in the fact that individuals and organizations can manage all their social media from one screen, saving time and money. As audiences nowadays expect to get feedback, just having a web site is not enough in itself, and being present on the social media does not work unless the organization provides new content at least every two weeks. The big issue is how to get attention in the ocean of tweets, facebook postings etc. and how to manage that effectively in an individual organization.

Guillaume Florin has worked with artists, both beginning and arrived, to get their “products” (recordings, concerts, merchandise) to the audiences. According to Florin, the artists (performers) need to change their mindset: think of ways to involve the audience from the very start of the process. “The more you give, the more you will receive”. For unknown groups, the opportunities that the Internet offer are amazing: direct contact with consumers will result in far more downloads than a record label can provide. Also, community funding - actively involving future consumers - gives opportunities to new artists. He feels concerts have become increasingly important as an occasion to meet your audience (and to sell records). “You cannot lie there”. A new release is an important tool to sell other things - such as concert tickets.

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