



**The Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland**

**Statement of Strategic Intent  
2007-2009**

**APRIL 2007**

## **1. Introduction**

The Contemporary Music Centre (CMC) is Ireland's national archive and resource centre for new music, operating on an all-Ireland basis.

The Centre is used, nationally and internationally, by performers, composers, promoters, educators, students and members of the public interested in finding out more about music in Ireland.

Our mission is:

***'To nurture the composition and performance  
of new Irish music'***

We deliver on this mission by being the recognised authority throughout the island of Ireland for all people, national and international, who create, perform, learn or enjoy contemporary Irish music. We provide a wide range of services which make it easier and more effective for these clients to engage with the new music of this country.

In the context of this statement of strategic intent, we envisage revising our mission statement in the coming years.

## **2. What is the Contemporary Music Centre?**

The Contemporary Music Centre is a 'Music Information Centre' (MIC), one of a worldwide network of some 40 similar organisations within the International Association of Music Information Centres (IAMIC). Each Music Information Centre promotes and documents the music of its own country, focusing primarily on the music of our own time and in some cases encompassing music of all genres.

## **3. What music does CMC represent?**

In its current form and as originally constituted, CMC represents 'contemporary Irish music'. There is no universally accepted definition of the term 'contemporary music' but as a broad working definition CMC has always taken it to mean 'music in the classical or art music tradition written today and at any time in the previous 50 years'.

In practice, however, CMC operates a wider definition than this. While MICs in other countries enjoy established partnerships with national libraries and other music

organisations which allow them to maintain their focus on the newest music, in Ireland such structures do not exist. CMC has therefore always informally acquired any earlier 20th century material available to it, to ensure its preservation.

#### **4. Perceptions of CMC**

There are a number of difficulties for CMC when presenting itself. These derive from anomalies between what it is perceived to do and what it actually does. For instance, its working definition of 'contemporary' is today minus 50 years, yet CMC's collection includes music composed 51 and more years ago. Why is this? And why does the organisation focus on one particular area of contemporary music, ie contemporary classical, while admitting that this label offers little if any clarity of definition? Why does CMC exclude jazz and other music genres related to its primary area of work?

All of these questions lead to CMC spending more time saying what it is *not*, than what it is, while at the same time masking for the general public the true range of work that it undertakes. Hence a negative spiral has emerged that has set perceived parameters for the organisation which are now curtailing its vision and development in the future.

#### **5. A Broader Remit for CMC**

The Board of CMC has decided that the organisation should move to become a broad church for 'the music of Ireland'. This form of words is used advisedly because the more usual term 'Irish music' is generally taken to mean Irish traditional music. Yet this assumption is unique in relation to our country alone. The terms 'French music' or 'Norwegian music' carry no such connotations but convey the totality of music from that country, in all forms.

The Contemporary Music Centre therefore proposes to become an authority on 'the music of Ireland' and will give credibility to this authority by developing services and programmes that are needed by people who interface with our music in its broadest sense, be they composers, performers, promoters, students or audiences.

It is not CMC's intention or desire to encroach upon the territory of existing organizations. Where areas are already well served by other bodies or facilities, it will

propose a strategic partnership approach whereby active and mutually-advantageous networks are established to enhance access and service provision for the public.

Where gaps in provision are identified, it will engage in a needs analysis to investigate the feasibility of taking on that role.

This is a new positioning for the Contemporary Music Centre. It is a broadening of its current remit and it will be a challenge for the organisation to deliver on it. Moving into this position will take a number of years, but in this statement of strategic intent the seeds of a new positioning are being sown and the desire to evolve in the manner described is being flagged to funders and clients.

#### **6. What could the new CMC look like?**

- Historical music: As a first step, CMC could extend its boundaries backwards into the early 20th and 19th centuries and provide an accessible collection of historical music seamlessly connected to its existing contemporary collection. A partnership with the National Library of Ireland is envisaged and a digital online resource is proposed rather than a physical archive.
- Web portal: CMC's web site could be redesigned as a portal site to be the first port of call for any queries on the music of Ireland. From there visitors would access not only CMC's resources but could be directed to those of, for instance, the Irish Traditional Music Archive, First Music Contact, Music Network and others, all from one central Internet location.
- Recordings: a sister web site, reached through the new web portal, could be developed for recordings from Ireland across all forms of music. Recordings of the less commercial genres are very under-resourced, hampering the promotion of contemporary classical and other performers and composers. CMC is carrying out a feasibility study in 2007 to look into providing Internet downloads and/or recording new CDs across a broad range of contemporary and other genres.
- National Sound Archive: an increased focus on recordings could also lead to CMC becoming designated as the official National Sound Archive for music, a major gap in our national cultural provision at present.
- Digital online access: CMC's entire library collection should be digitised, that is, scanned and stored digitally so that it can be viewed and downloaded online, anywhere in the world, with appropriate copyright protection.

- Promotion: promotion is an essential component of all the above services and CMC envisages retaining its existing focus on living composers and their music but with a higher level of promotion for the leading figures. However CMC could broaden its scope to provide information and access to performing artists who are particularly committed to new music, jazz or other non-commercial genres and who currently have no collective visibility.

CMC is well focused on the services that it currently provides, which are available to a broad group of people with different needs. The possible new directions cited above will be drawn together on an operational level under the following four strategic areas:

- The provision of relevant, accessible information and advice;
- The provision of relevant, accessible supports for practitioners of Irish music;
- The promotion of Irish music and music practitioners;
- The availability of facilities and resources to meet clients' needs.

## 7. Next steps

The organisation will now begin to define more tightly what this new positioning is and how it could work. It will enter dialogue with arts organisations, libraries and other relevant bodies to identify gaps in current music provision while avoiding the duplication of services already well supplied by other organisations. It will research the range of services provided by its sister MICs in other countries and will seek the views of clients, funders and staff.

A research and development phase planned for 2007 and 2008 is now underway . While the majority of research will be carried out by CMC staff, funding has been awarded to appoint a consultant facilitator to guide the board and staff through the R & D phase. This includes a countrywide series of public consultation meetings in May 2007.

CMC regards the Arts Council as a key stakeholder in re-envisioning the organisation. Having now outlined the new concept to the Arts Council it envisages agreeing key stages in the transformation process across 2007-09 that will elucidate the future resource and staffing implications as they are researched with the new positioning directing what the organisation does from 2009 onwards.

## **8. Factors critical to success**

These will be crystallized in the R & D phase but will include:

- the perception of CMC by the Arts Council and by clients
- the new positioning of the organisation
- strategic partnerships with relevant organisations
- a possible name change and relaunch/rebranding exercise
- enhanced funding, both state and commercial
- skills of staff and willingness to engage in the process

## **9. Conclusion**

The year 2011 is CMC's 25th anniversary and the board intends publishing, by the end of 2008, a full Strategic Plan for the period 2009-11 which will see these major new objectives achieved by its anniversary year.