Polifonia

Playing the soundtrack of our history:
new project digs into European's musical heritage

Polifonia, a new 3M€ project funded by the EU Horizon 2020 Programme will run for the next 40 months to recreate the connections between music, people, places and events from the sixteenth century to the modern day. These findings will be available to everyone as an interconnected global database on the web and will enhance our understanding of European musical heritage.

"Polifonia will develop artificial intelligent tools to navigate through tons of sounds and plurilingual texts", explains Valentina Presutti, project coordinator of Polifonia and Professor of Computer Science at the University of Bologna, "*to understand how music changed and reacted to the social and political environment over the past six centuries"*.

Louis P. Grijp, late professor at Utrecht University and researcher in musicology of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), has found evidence that traditional Dutch music from the late seventeenth century was influenced by French opera from the same period. Surprisingly, the two countries were at war in that period showing that musical connections between people can be established despite apparent walls and boundaries. How many analogous cases could there be? Are there similarities as to their cultural, political, or artistic context? Currently, it is hard to answer questions like these because musicologists work mainly on distributed, disconnected catalogues.

Polifonia will create a vast resource, accessible through a web portal by everyone (e.g., scholars, artists, music lovers, people working in the creative sector) to uncover these phenomena, systematically. With the same discovery mechanism, we will better understand the evolution of musical genres, how they have propagated in time and space and the relationships between music and society, such as the soundtrack of revolutions, emancipation, wars or even pandemics. Music industry, to name one, will finally have a chance to exploit their huge catalogues at full potential: unexpected links between apparently unrelated music will reveal novel ways for classifying music beyond the usual labels (genre, artist, year).

The Polifonia consortium is an interdisciplinary team of passionate researchers and music lovers (see below the list of partners): computer scientists, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, historians of music, linguists, musical heritage archivists, cataloguers and administrators, and creative professionals.

PARTNERS

Beneficiaries   Alma Mater Studiorium University of Bologna (IT, Coordinator), The Open University (UK), King's College London (UK), National University of Ireland Galway (IE), Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il Turismo (IT), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (FR), Conservatiore National des Arts et Metiers (FR), Stichting Nederlands Instituut Voorbeeld en Geluid (NL), Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (NL), Digital Paths srl (IT)

Funding Agency   European Commission

Early Adopters   Bibliothèque nationale de France (FR), Bologna Universiry Library (IT), Common Lab Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities (CLARIAH), European Research Infrastructure for Language Resources and Technology (CLARIN), Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities (DARIAH), Europeana Foundation, Officina Futuro Fondazione MAW (IT), National Institute of Organ Art (NL), Soprintendenza Archeologica Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Città Metropolitana di Bologna e le province di Modena, Reggio Emilia e Ferrara (IT), Associazione Culturale Shape (IT), Soprintendenza Archeologica, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Città metropolitana di Genova e le province di Imperia, La Spezia e Savona (IT), The Stables Theatre Ltd (UK)

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