

ORIENTAL MUSIC ACADEMY OF MANNHEIM



CULTURAL SOCIAL **CREATIVITY** LOCAL
EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE BOTTOM-UP
YOUTH **ARTS** MINORITIES **COMMUNITY**

1. Context

The city of Mannheim, in Germany, has always been regarded as a model of diversity and peaceful coexistence, as its history is inextricably linked with immigration. When Elector Frederick IV granted the city its first privileges in 1607, it was written in four languages, with the aim of attracting immigrants. The successful integration of other cultures and religions quickly gained international recognition as the “Mannheimer Experiment”.

Today, people from around 170 nations live in Mannheim. 39.4% of the population has migrant backgrounds (around 100 000 people). Consequently, Mannheim has the highest cultural diversity of all medium-sized German cities.

Promoting diversity in Mannheim is seen as a task for society at large, as shown with “Mannheim Declaration on Living Together in Diversity”. To date, it has been signed by around 270 secular and religious institutions, initiatives and companies, who commit themselves to recognizing the equal rights of different identities and ways of life, to promoting equal opportunities and to fighting discrimination. The current mission-statement development by the City of Mannheim (“Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development”) includes nine of seventeen sustainability development goals (SDGs) that relate to inclusion, migration and equal opportunities.

2. Mannheim and culture

Mannheim has a long tradition as a city of migrants and music (It is a UNESCO City of Music since 2014). Music, in all its ethnic and sociocultural diversity, has been an integral part of society here for centuries. In addition, civic initiatives are an important driving force in the city’s development (35% of its inhabitants are engaged in voluntary work), and are actively supported and funded by the City of Mannheim.

The City of Mannheim has defined “8 strategic goals”, five of which are fulfilled in an exemplary way by the OMM. It improves equality in education, is an example of tolerance in action, and strengthens the creativity of individuals as well as society as a whole.

The City also follows the principles of “Good Urban Governance”, as formulated by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which focuses on the idea of giving citizens more freedom to be co-creators of their city’s society.

“SMALL, VIBRANT, AUTHENTIC CELLS ARE IMPORTANT FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT. IF A CITY IS CLEVER, IT SUPPORTS THESE SMALL CELLS THAT SHAPE THE FABRIC OF THE CITY.”
(MEHMET UNGAN)

3. Goals and project implementation

1.1. Main aim and specific goals

The Oriental Music Academy of Mannheim aims to provide accessible, musically creative educational offers for children and teenagers from immigrant families. It also aims to bring together to the public manifold traditions of Eastern European, Middle Eastern, North African and Indian music, increasing their visibility on the public stage and their importance as world heritage.

1.2. Development of the project

Main actions carried out

The Oriental Music Academy of Mannheim (OMM) was initiated by the sociologist and musician Mehmet Ungan. As a trained social worker, Mehmet used to work in a facility for young people with learning difficulties in Mannheim, where he saw in music a form of communication and interaction:

His decision to found OMM was sparked off by walks through the district of Jungbusch, always carrying a musical instrument with him, and where he met an unusually high number of Bulgarian children and teenagers who did not speak any German, didn’t go to school, and spent their time aimlessly on the



streets. He then started to make music for and with the youngsters to communicate despite their inability to speak the same language. Ungan was thrilled by the interest and musical talent he encountered. In order to give them a place, a refuge, where they could meet and make music, he rented rooms at his own expense, bought instruments, and managed to attract musicians, all of them immigrants, whom he taught for free. Afterwards, enough people donated money, which enabled the rent to be paid from month to month. For two years, the project was always on the brink of financial collapse. The successive addition of institutional funding finally put the OMM project on a more sustainable path.

Overall, OMM activities are based on three pillars:

- Sociocultural project work, including oriental music lessons, dance lessons (especially classic Indian dance) and instrument making. The work of the different groups is continuously taken out into the rest of the city, e.g. through cooperation with schools and mosques or through performances in neighbourhood and street festivals. Currently, the fourth generation of children and teenagers is attending classes at the OMM.
- Concerts with OMM artists as well as renowned guests from all over the world, who bring alive the manifold traditions of Eastern European, Middle Eastern, North African and Indian music. Since its foundation in 2008, the OMM has organised over 100 concerts in Mannheim.
- Classes/courses and workshops for ambitious and/or professional musicians from all over the world who are interested in Oriental instruments and playing techniques, but don't have the time to pursue a full-time course

“MUSIC ENCOURAGES ATTENTION. IT SUPPORTS THE SHIFT FROM UNCONSCIOUS, BLOCKED PATTERNS TO A FUNDAMENTALLY OPEN ATTITUDE.” (MEHMET UNGAN)

To date, the OMM has cooperated with over 20 local institutions, usually in the form of joint concerts, including renowned traditional cultural institutions such as the Reiss-Engelhorn Museum, the Zeughaus and the Alte Feuerwache. Other cooperation partners include, or have included, the Popakademie, the University of Music and Performing Arts Mannheim, the municipal School of Music, the Jungbuschschule, two mosques and the City church.

On the other side, partners at the political level include:

- The Cultural Office of the City of Mannheim (funding partner since the first year after its foundation)
- The Integration Officer of the City of Mannheim (from Integration funds)
- The UNESCO City of Music network
- The state of Baden-Württemberg (funding since 2013 through the “Innovationsfund Kunst”, and up to 2019 through the Baden-Württemberg Foundation as part of the funding programme “Vielfalt gefällt – Ort des Miteinanders”).
- BAMF Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (support from integration projects, 2-3 years funding, currently up to 2019)

Overall, the 2017 budget amounted to EUR 147 300, divided between EUR 15 000 from own revenue and 131 800 from subsidies.

MAKING AND SHARING THEIR OWN MUSIC ENABLES IMMIGRANTS TO INTEGRATE MORE EASILY INTO THEIR NEW SOCIETY, AS IT REINFORCES THEIR FEELING OF HAVING A CULTURAL HERITAGE, WHICH IS VALUED ALL OVER THE WORLD AND CAN BENEFIT INDIVIDUALS AS WELL AS THE SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

4. Impacts

1.1. Direct impacts

Impacts on the local government

Throughout this project, the city of Mannheim positioned itself artistically as an important European centre of Oriental music. It also developed its capacity to work with private partners and civil-society, and made a clear commitment to civic engagement through the provision of institutional funding.

Impact on culture and on local cultural actors

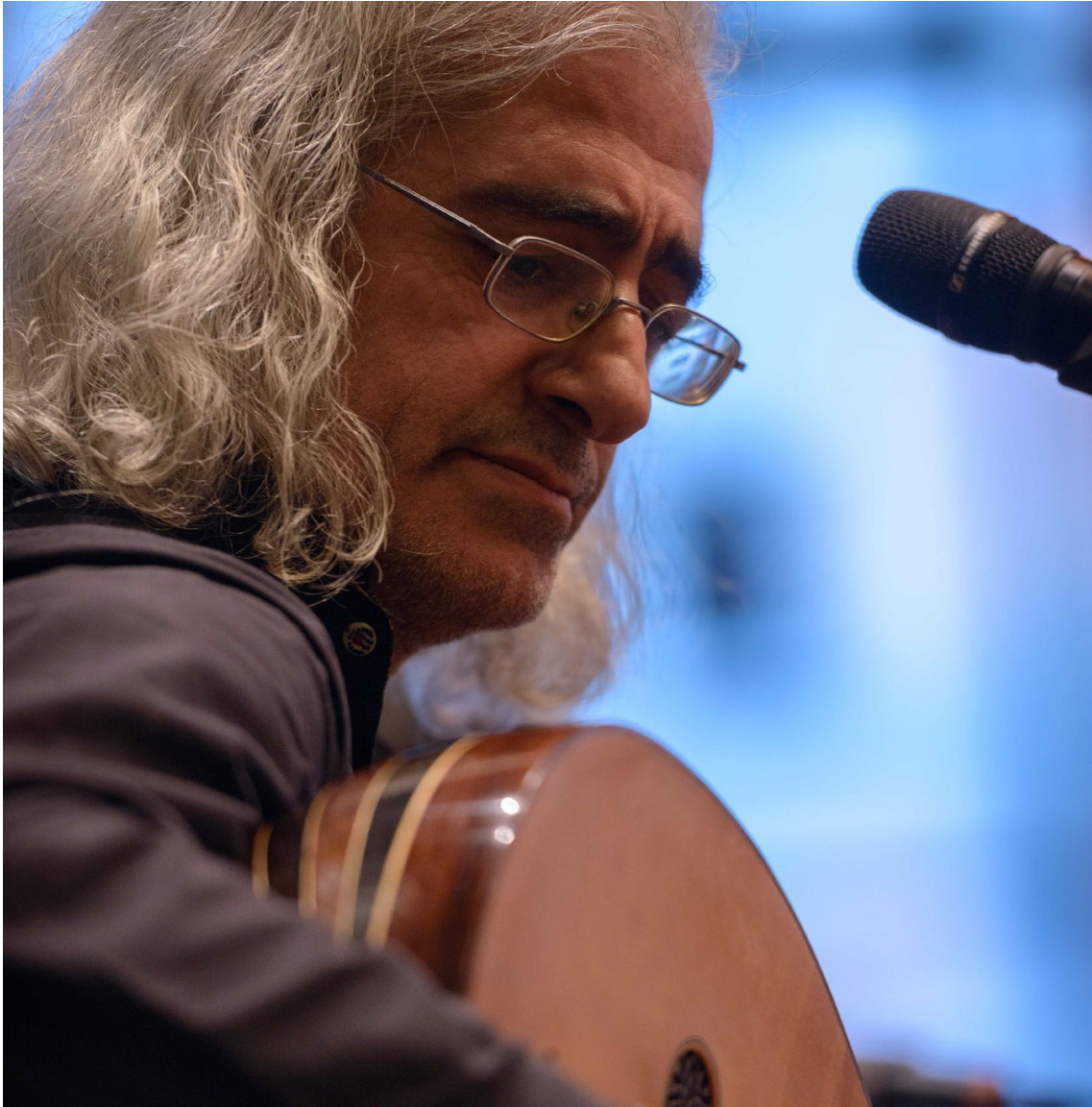
As traditional cultural institutions with complicated and inflexible structures, such as the German city theatre scene, are struggling to meet the rapidly changing demands of an increasingly diversified urban society, project structures like the Oriental Music Academy of Mannheim –flexible, open and easily accessible – manage to respond to specific challenges (e.g. unsupervised young people in the streets). It offers migrants an opportunity to benefit from what civil society has to offer, and to reflect the outcome of these offers back into society, resulting in mutual reinforcement and empowerment.

In addition, a completely new music scene has emerged in Mannheim, well known nationally and internationally. Intercultural encounters and musical crossover projects with the long-established jazz and pop scene in Mannheim have become more and more frequent. Oriental music has become universally popular, and can now be studied in Mannheim at the Popakademie – which is already one of the most important educational institutions for popular music in Germany. OMM artists have performed, among other events, at “Enjoy Jazz”, the biggest jazz festival in Germany.

Impact on the territory and population

OMM activities enhances immigrants’ self-esteem and gives them the confidence to become actively involved in their new society, through offering incentives for integration on a daily basis.

The establishment of the study programme “World Music” at the Popakademie also enhanced the city’s already high-quality educational landscape.



1.2. Evaluation

Like all institutionally funded cultural projects, the OMM will be evaluated in 2019 according to the guidelines for promoting artistic activities in the City of Mannheim, under the supervision of the Cultural Office of the City. The evaluation is based on these key points:

- The "8 strategic goals" of the City of Mannheim;
- The objectives of the Cultural Office (derived from the "8 strategic goals" and from the city council's key data and multi-year target values; the city council is regularly informed about progress in meeting these objectives);
- The 17 SDGs in line with the declaration of the United Nations "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (as described above in 3.3.)

THE 2019 ASSESSMENT OF THE OMM WILL SERVE AS THE BASIS FOR THE CITY COUNCIL'S DECISION TO PROVIDE FURTHER FUNDING FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

1.3. Key factors

Two factors have been key to the OMM success:

- Civic engagement from individuals and communities themselves, which often react faster and in a more targeted, hands-on and informed way to a specific local situation than a comparatively large and thereby inflexible institution.
- A modern, open, sustainably involved city administration, which could leverage the potential of this civic engagement by offering ongoing structural assistance and financial support. This helped to establish small initiatives committed to working directly with immigrants, and has successfully helped these initiatives to network and become integrated in the fabric of the city.

1.4. Continuity

The Cultural Office of the City of Mannheim has supported the OMM since 2009. Initially, this was done through project funding (EUR 2000 in 2009, EUR 9 000 in 2010), funding of concerts in the local area, as well as a Germany-wide tour by young, intercultural music ensembles from the OMM. Since 2011 the OMM has received EUR 20 000 development funding. Finally, in 2015, the OMM was included in the institutional funding of the Cultural Office, guaranteed until 2019 (EUR 30,000). In addition, the Cultural Office has provided the OMM with structural assistance on several occasions.

Through funding from the city and the state, the "World Music" study programme was established in 2015 under the auspices of the OMM at the Popakademie. To this day, Mehmet Ungan and other musicians of the OMM work there as teachers and lecturers. The study programme (Bachelor and Master) has spots for 12 students focused on Oriental and African music

5. Further information

Mannheim was a candidate for the third "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 – May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2016, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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