



Ditchley Cultural Summit: *A Post Script*

Mutual Interest in Each Other's Performing Arts

Beyond a general expression of interest and concern with each other's performing arts, the European and Chinese contributions clarified some different points of view, which were interesting. Colleagues from China were alert to a cultural deficit with regard to Europe. It was felt that Chinese audiences had a wider exposure to European culture than Europeans did to Chinese culture – a common view was expressed that the European interest in China might be market driven. Colleagues from Europe wanted to see what they described as a less restrictive Chinese market, with more transparency and argued that the visibility of Chinese culture within European performing arts house was more pronounced than had been implied.

The Cultural and the Commercial

The relationship between these two categories and the way that they structure the life of cultural institutions, both in Europe and China, was thoroughly discussed. Areas explored included: the recognition that the models of subsidy in Europe were being redefined and shrunk, the need to develop new models of sponsorship in China, the relationship between popular and elite tastes, and, above all, the need to attend to the market (demand) as well as 'supply'. It would be fair to say that there was no consensus on these issues either within or between the two cohorts. There was, however, a general recognition that the performing arts now has to compete for people's leisure time – who have an ever increasing range of options.

The Case for China-Europe Collaboration

On the general desirability of collaboration there was common assent. It provides opportunities to share imaginative resources, costs, and marketing strategies. It also allows Europe and China to learn about each other's working practices and for China to have informal access to skills and competences that are needed for China to enter the next stage of its professionalization. Above all, collaboration may lead to new kinds of innovative work that cannot easily be pigeonholed as either Chinese or European but can speak of and to our newly globalized world.

The Performing Arts in a Digital Age

There were widely differing views whether new technology should be viewed as a threat or as an opportunity by the performing arts, in both Europe and China. What was commonly agreed is that digital resources could not be ignored – in fact they were already actively present in some performing art practice.

Necessary Competences in 21st Century Performing Arts

Exchange programmes are valuable but must not be confused with the development of the necessary competences – whether of marketing and branding or of technical skills. One road to the future might lead down the path that identifies and elaborates what a programme of professional development might look like. It was felt, although not universally by Chinese colleagues, that without such a programme – who ever supplies it – China's performing arts may suffer in the global marketplace.