



World Music Charter

This Charter is a statement of ethical and deontological commitment to the promotion of World Music for the benefit of each of its signers and, more generally, to all involved in its creation and diffusion.

This text is the product of a series of working meetings organised by Zone Franche in 1999. The resulting text was adopted by the general assembly of Zone Franche – World Music Network-in Paris, France on the 14th of May 2001.

Preamble

World music has been very well received by the public. From rural expanses to urban megalopolises, concurrent with globalisation and its vast diversity of expression, it has been responsible for joining heritage and the roots of memory to the present. Above borders that have become increasingly abstract and uncrossable, the artists and human beings who belong to this cultural field are participating in an opening of the future.

This music has come across time and place and is the result of the same sort of complex memory fusion process that for example gave birth to jazz. It is the kind of source where creators and contemporary artists can find inspiration.

This music plays an eminent role in the comprehension of the other, in the struggle against sectarianism, xenophobia, intolerance and racism. Whether the music be high-art or popular, ethnic or hybrid, sacred or profane, transmitted orally or on paper, interpreted or improvised by professionals or amateurs, it is helping those who listen to it locate their place in the world. For this reason it is contributing to a sense of world rather than national citizenship.

Objectives

The Charter aims to strengthen the profession of those whose work contributes to the conception, production and diffusion of world music. This is a field that is not always a homogenous and coherent one. In this way, the difficulties encountered in the music's production and diffusion, in conjunction with those met by the artists, can in certain cases, lead to unnecessary setbacks. In particular when the artists come from nations with low gross national wealth standards and in which they have neither societal status nor social protection.

This music is a music that travels. The artists who play it are by vocation itinerant, between borders, who work according to modes differing from one country to another. Accordingly their degree of compensation, and even the idea itself of compensation will vary greatly by locale. Sometimes the musicians are paid legally and individually, including deduction of social benefits and taxes, other times they are paid collectively and off the books.

The signers of the Charter wish to respect deontological principles and professional standards no matter where they work; most often such guidelines come from common sense and from elementary moral principles. However, the signers also believe that it is good to work towards the harmonisation and unification of work regulations in order to have working modes more equivalent in every climate.

In this way, the signers will in most cases use contracts or written agreements that would give their professional relations a legal base and would also serve to solidify guarantees of work, something not always implicit in verbal agreements.

The signers will also act concertedly to achieve the softening of administrative rules that currently regulate artist movement and international exchanges. They do so in aim to develop those exchanges, which respond to the demands of the artists and the public.

Professional application of the Charter

Every professional, who through their work, produces, diffuses and promotes world music on stage as well as by disc, radio, audiovisual, multimedia, or internet means is eligible to sign this charter.

It has been initiated by the world music network Zone Franche and applies to all network members. But in a more general way the charter also welcomes any professional that would like to join the cause.

The charter could, for example, serve as a reference for other national or international organisations who support the development of world music.

Support of artistic creation

The signers support artistic creation, even when it entails “artistic risks.” They encourage their fellow artists to create new works. They support those artists who are beginning a career specifically by organising gatherings, residency programs, offering opening act slots, publishing albums and promoting individual discs or compilations. They encourage the expression of “minority” cultures which are, as yet, insufficiently well known to the public.

The professional media signers of the Charter strive to support world music productions and the diffusion of them via the written, spoken or multimedia channels in which they are involved.

Respect for the audience

The signers of the Charter shall be involved in the setting of performance policies to insure show quality vis-à-vis the audience, notably by working to improve live show conditions for both individual concerts and festivals. They will work towards improving the presentation of the works and artists with any and all appropriate materials possible (texts, pictures, sound, production values, etc.)

They privilege the offering of quality over quantity, yet within reason of the financial responsibilities of which they assume the responsibility.

Free movement of the artists

Much world music depends on the artist’s capacity to move freely from one country to another.

The signers of the Charter seek an evolution in existing laws, particularly regulations which are excessively restrictive, constraining and discriminatory. Changes are required in order to achieve a greater freedom of movement and ease of settling in for the artists in the country or countries of their choice.

They welcome all artists free of sex, race, origin, colour or religious discrimination. They undertake their actions in strict accordance with the laws of the nation in which they are working, and more importantly with the principles enunciated in the Declaration of Human Rights.

When the signers exercise the responsibility of being an employer they guarantee that the conditions of artist recruitment, employment and compensation conform to the laws of the country and with the international agreements under which they are working.

Conscious of world economic imbalance, they are particularly vigilant on behalf of the artists who come from low income countries and work in their respective fields towards an equal treatment of all.

In their national and international practices, they seek a harmonisation of any legislation that applies to their activities. This includes the protection of works of art and/or heritages and the respect of author and artist publishing rights.

The essential role of the performing arts

Constituting an epicentre of production and diffusion, world music performing arts are aware of the role they play among other professionals in the sector, such as those engaged in disc and media production, promotion and/or artist career development. The performing arts aim to promote, in particular, the links between dissimilar linguistic and cultural areas. They take care to note those artists who come from low income countries and for whom access to the international market is difficult.

Defence of enterprises

Also the signers will endeavour to aide those initiatives that create, reinforce and structure the production enterprises of shows and phonographic publishing as well as places of diffusion like concert halls and festivals. They are especially active in countries where the development of those enterprises meets the most difficulties. As an extension of the latter, they will also provide support for the development of artist's careers whose expression represents a regional and/or foreign minority.

Development of international exchanges

Assistants in the integration process of multicultural societies, the signers of this charter strive to contribute to the development of international exchanges notably through exportation based on balanced exchanges. In addition, they broaden the artistic spectrum, particularly when their contributions further the expression of their culture already present in France, francophone territories or Europe in general.