MERITA

Music cultural hERItage TAlent

BUSINESS MODEL

Report

Co-funded by
the European Union

LE DIMORE DEL QUARTETTO

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What is MERITA

Winner of the Creative Europe European Platforms 2021 call for proposals, **MERITA is a platform for musicians, historical houses and cultural venues, mentors and concert organisers, working both online and offline, to re-invigorate the tradition of classical music performance in Europe**. Co-financed by the European Union and led by the Italian cultural enterprise **Le Dimore del Quartetto**, MERITA works to increase the visibility and circulation of emerging European string quartets, while at the same time promoting cultural heritage sites across Europe.

MERITA offers a rich panel of online and onsite activities, such as training, artistic residencies, concerts performed by young selected artists, studies and research. Through its concert series, MERITA presents classical music as a meeting point for tradition and transformation and allows it to reach a variety of targets and to enhance venues that are in need of content and activities. Each string quartet creates an **original and unique musical project**, and performs these innovative concerts in a **variety of cultural venues, including historical houses and cultural sites**. Situating these concerts in heritage sites creates a dialogue between Europe's past and present, and points the way to a vital future for Europe's cultural heritage.

Quartetto Eos, Italy

The consortium brings together **17 organisations from 12 eligible countries**: Albania, Belgium, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, and Sweden
Each organisation offers a unique perspective on and approach to classical music in the modern world, linked by their commitment to supporting new musicians while enhancing this incredible resource, which is chamber music.

By connecting emerging talent with experts in impactful performance, MERITA aims to forge a vital and sustainable future for European classical music. In this context, the project also brings together tangible and intangible heritage in a circular economy of mutual enhancement, creating a dynamic system in which artistic excellence, cultural tradition and contemporary creativity reinforce each other. Together, the MERITA platform members create opportunities to redefine performance, reach wider audiences, and foster an artistic connection between tradition and innovation.

The continuity of the project is ensured by the second phase of the initiative, which is also co-funded by the European Union under the 2024 call for proposals "**European Platforms for the Promotion of Emerging Artists**".

The 4-year project will start in September 2025 and builds on and develops the innovative running MERITA project and will involve 56 chamber music ensembles, string quartets and piano trios (for a total of 202 artists).

They will be supported through a rich programme of activities with concrete results: concerts, training, showcases, artistic residencies, research, networking, events, innovative digital tools/services.
As for phase one, the impact pursued is a long-term transformation in the chamber music sector, fostering greater sustainability, inclusivity, and professionalisation, providing all-round support for emerging artists and becoming the reference platform for all the relevant stakeholders. Le Dimore del Quartetto is the single beneficiary and coordinates, during the project, 19 member organisations from 16 eligible countries, with three additional members joining during the project lifetime.

Chamber music, cultural heritage and audiences: a successful model

The MERITA model establishes **a solid international network** aimed at **generating opportunities for chamber music artists and organisations, cultural heritage and audiences, reinforcing their business opportunities**.

The MERITA concept represents the development of the innovative model created by Le Dimore del Quartetto since 2015, aimed at enhancing chamber music and the European cultural heritage, in a circular economy. Over the years, through its work, Le Dimore del Quartetto has identified the **deepest needs of artists and witnessed the transformations within the sector**. These include, for example, the difficulty of finding an agent at the beginning of a career, the lack of space and time to develop original projects, and the need to secure engagements beyond one's own country.
The model is now expanded: alongside musicians, there are industry professionals, concert organisations and festivals, as well as European representatives of tangible cultural heritage. This leads to the strengthening and expansion of the model already tested by Le Dimore del Quartetto.

The String Quartet - represented in the MERITA project by young talents - is not only the core ensemble of chamber music, but also a form of teamwork and a human experiment, where each instrument is equally important. Compactness and strength are crucial. Every interpretative choice is the result of a long and complex mediation between four individuals, four hearts and four voices. This all requires long periods of intensive study and life together. Particularly at the beginning of their careers, the ensembles need low-cost spaces where to work together for some days. Within MERITA projects, quartets have the opportunity to explore what truly interests them. Each ensemble is different, with its own specific interests, skills, and inclinations. Some are particularly communicative, others are tech-savvy, some love working with children, while others show strong empathy towards social vulnerability.
MERITA provides time, space, and support to explore these inclinations, expanding the group's scope of action and allowing them to develop a professional proposal capable of attracting new engagements. Beyond that, **MERITA** aims to equip them with a **methodology** for designing and presenting projects throughout their careers.

Historic Houses and cultural venues represent the history and the culture of the Italian and European territories. Especially when they are located in small towns, they represent the only touristic interest pole and the only landmark of the territory. The owners inherit the property together with the high costs of maintenance and they feel the responsibility to hand it down and to preserve its historic and the cultural heritage to the future generations. These cultural, artistic, architectonic treasures have availability of unused spaces and the necessity to be lived through sustainable activities. Matching this world with the chamber music's one means generating a **new musical demand** also for spaces not used to host musical events.

Concert societies, music institutions, and festivals benefit from new possibilities of dialogue and engagement with emerging ensembles, increasing innovation and collaboration in programming and consolidating a new approach to musical programs which are enriched and diverse. Music institutions, thanks to the special projects developed by the emerging quartets, can broaden and diversify their public, while nurturing young talent within the chamber music sector. The MERITA system allows music institutions to develop their relationships with relevant stakeholders, strengthening their role as essential partners in the chamber music sector, and establishing themselves as reliable sources of artistic excellence. The use of tools provided by MERITA enables them to enhance their activity, making it more sustainable and attractive. The opportunity to exchange ideas, along with the circulation not only of ensembles but also of ideas and best practices, improves the entire value chain and helps build a strong, structured network of professionals and institutions aligned around shared principles.

Matching these worlds, with their needs, generates opportunities to gather in unusual places and in often decentralized territories, bringing back to life spaces that are not fully exploited and drawing new audiences closer to chamber music.

177 MUSICIANS AND ARTISTS

140 VENUES

7 TRAININGS

253 days of residency

198 CONCERTS

44 cultural partnerships

more than 10000 spectators

32 DISSEMINATION EVENTS

32 countries reached

38 innovative projects

This idea gives rise to **a value-based ecosystem** in which all participants receive significantly more in return than the resources initially invested:quartets are enabled to present their original works outside their home country and get in touch with professional operators in their field; festivals and concert societies meet a qualified offer of young artists and their fresh ideas; houses, cultural sites and special venues open their spaces and activities to a well-structured cultural activity; audiences participate in high-quality concerts where they are given the possibility not only to listen to chamber music, but also to experience the emotions of the musicians and of the environment, living a truly engaging musical experience that is sometimes even interactive.

The MERITA project brings this sustainable and circular model to a broader scale, testing and disseminating its practices across 12 countries represented in the Platform. It promotes a sustainable business model that unites emerging chamber music artists and professional operators/societies, audiences, and cultural heritage, fostering among others the exchange of best practices for artists, environmental sustainability and awareness.

MERITA's strength lies in the mix of these main ingredients:

MUSIC | During the project the 38 selected quartets had the possibility to explore new ideas for classical music performance, addressing new audiences and therefore shaping the future of chamber music.

HERITAGE | Cultural heritage comes alive when experienced in a new manner. Historic houses and cultural sites, such as castles, abbeys, palaces and villas across Europe are the venues for MERITA artistic residencies and concerts, experiencing something new, becoming cultural hubs for their territories, making a dialogue between past, present and future possible, and also connecting with local communities.

AUDIENCES | MERITA wants to attract new audiences, allowing them to experience and discover chamber music and cultural heritage. MERITA also offers new experiences and ways of enjoying music, as well as the possibility to attend quality events, not limited to the broader urban areas.

SUSTAINABILITY | Sustainability is understood in several ways:

- Ensuring the long-term development of string quartets' talents by providing opportunities to enhance their careers
- Preserving the classical music tradition in Europe through innovative new projects
- Supporting cultural venues as they explore new possibilities for growth and adaptation
- But also environmental sustainability, as MERITA provides a specific training on Sustainable Events, an environmental management analysis for cultural venues, and a Carbon Footprint Tool for chamber music concerts (further details in Section N. 5). This virtuous practice also makes it easier to attract sponsors and partners. MERITA also allows a more coordinated organisation of concerts and artists travel.

Sustainability also means addressing the sector's gaps and needs: the MERITA project and its model develop from a careful needs analysis.
Generally speaking, there are structural difficulties, fragility and marginality of the cultural and creative ecosystem, such as high competitiveness and fragmented markets, and - from the side of artists and professionals - project-based careers, high degree of mobility, irregular and unpredictable income, precarious working conditions and a lack of legal structures to provide social protection and sustainable frameworks for their career development.
These fragilities - also exacerbated by the Covid19 pandemic - have been clearly described in some strategic documents at European Level (The Status and Working Conditions of Artists and Cultural and Creative Professionals, Report of the Omc Working Group of Member States' Experts, 2023, New European Agenda for Culture, European Commission, 2018; Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022).

As stated in the 2024 Annual Work Programme for the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme, "a continuous upskilling of the professionals of the sector will be key to competitiveness, notably through entrepreneurial and cross-cutting skills to encourage transformation and innovation".
The chamber music sector itself is experiencing some criticalities. First of all, in terms of "a severe lack of funding for the arts in comparison to the preceding decades (...) there is heightened competition for fewer opportunities; meanwhile, contracts are unregulated, leaving musicians open to exploitation and lower rates of pay (...). It seems likely that chamber musicians are particularly exposed to these risks, as they tend to be responsible for sourcing their own performance opportunities and negotiating their own fees (Evolving, Surviving, and Thriving: Working as a Chamber Musician in the 21st Century, Caroline Waddington-Jones, in The Chamber Musician in the Twenty-First Century, MDPI, 2022).

Empowering the chamber music sector

Chamber music represents a precious European cultural tradition. History, as well as stories and anecdotes, underline how much chamber music is related to European culture. A tradition held in high regard in both Asia and the United States, yet uniquely rooted in Europe, an asset that must be safeguarded and enhanced.

Live music is an art that we can listen to today, as it could have been performed hundreds of years ago. A privilege that is perpetuated thanks to the passion of musicians who dedicate their lives to enable us to listen to Mozart and Beethoven as their contemporaries could. An invisible but powerful chain that links humanity through time. Live music needs people more than ever before for the magic to be endlessly repeated: the artists, composers and musicians who study it and pick up the torch from the greatest masters; of the audience that devotes time dedicated to listening in order to grasp the message renewed each time. An irreplicable miracle without the human factor, there is no high fidelity or artificial intelligence that is capable of creating and transmitting the imperfect emotion of a live concert, where artists lay themselves bare, delivering themselves to the audience. String Quartet and chamber music have encountered opportunities to affirm the primary role of this extraordinary formation, high and at the same time agile and contemporary.

Thanks to the increasingly dense and participative MERITA community, thanks to the musicians and the cultural sites, and thanks to all the stakeholders and partners who are sharing this vision, Le Dimore del Quartetto and the whole partnership is fulfilling its mission to, bringing structuring effects into the chamber music sector.

This main goal is reached through these different model's assets:

TRAINING

The sustainability of the chamber music environment means providing the youngest generations of artists with innovative abilities and capacities, enabling them to navigate in a complex landscape.
Therefore, it is crucial to deliver an **innovative training and capacity building programme**, which is what the MERITA platform is doing. In the realm of classical music, evolution and outreach have become pivotal pursuits, aiming to bridge gaps between tradition and contemporary audiences.

Launched in September 2023, this pioneering initiative focuses on the ability of quartets to create **original projects** that enhance the individual and deep soul of each ensemble, capturing the attention of **new and diverse audiences**. The cornerstone of this initiative lies in a series of online training modules: seven meticulously curated topics align with string quartets' interests, training organisations' expertise, and the desires of concert organisations (see paragraph 6 "Special Features").

Ranging from exploring intersections between music and other arts to dismantling classical music norms by organising performances in unconventional spaces, these modules promise a transformative learning experience.
What sets this initiative apart is its multifaceted approach. It dives deep into crucial areas, including fostering interactions between professional musicians and fragile communities, transcending the concert experience by transforming venues into multimedia theaters, and nurturing chamber music's connection with younger audiences. The success of these training modules is largely due to the collaborative effort behind the creation of the training materials. Each training organisation, selected based on its expertise, developed the materials, which were then edited by the MERITA team and uploaded to the platform, ensuring a rich and diverse knowledge base.

Transitioning from virtual to real-world application, the initiative hosts **on-site training** sessions featuring five-day **artistic residencies** combined with rehearsal concerts, taking place between October 2023 and April 2024. Each quartet takes part in one residency, for a total of up to 38 residencies. A dedicated mentor accompanies participants during these residencies, guiding them through the creative process. The crescendo of each residency culminates in a disruptive rehearsal concert, for a total of 38 concerts. These serve as a showcase for the quartets' new skills, representing the culmination of their training necessary for their professional careers. The MERITA Platform's Training and Capacity Building initiative embarks on a **transformative mission**, nurturing innovation, diversity, and outreach within the realm of classical music.
With its multi-layered approach and collaborative spirit, it is set to redefine the trajectory of string quartets, empowering them to create resonating experiences that transcend boundaries. As the initiative unfolds, it not only promises to elevate quartets' capabilities but also redefines the very essence of classical music outreach in the contemporary landscape.

CROSSBORDER CIRCULATION AND MOBILITY OF EMERGING CHAMBER MUSIC TALENTS

The circulation of the artists and their artistic productions, at European and international level is at heart of the MERITA concept. This is related both to the production and organisation of the concerts and to the showcase guaranteed by the platform. **The new artistic productions created by the emerging artists in the framework of project activities circulate in the real world and in the digital one**. The real-world circulation happens both in cultural heritage gems, often hidden and peripheral, and in institutional halls: the diversity of concert opportunities creates a solid experience for artists' future careers. The choice of small locations highlights **how agile chamber music can be**, reaching even the most remote areas by connecting them to larger cities. It also allows artists to experiment within MERITA, from traditional concert halls to rural festivals. This core aspect of circulation will be further enhanced with specific tools during the second phase of the MERITA project.

This led to the organisation of **198 concerts** (42 more than the 156 originally planned), **253 days of artistic residency**, and **over 10,000 concert attendees**.

The showcase opportunities provided by the digital platform are made possible, first and foremost, through the visibility given to the **portfolios of 38 quartets**, accompanied by **a podcast series** in which they share their residency experiences and explore their artistic growth within MERITA. In addition, the 38 original artistic projects developed by these emerging talents during their residencies are published in a dedicated section of the platform.
Thanks to the circulation and visibility strategies implemented by MERITA, **a true driver of professionalisation**, emerging artists benefit from an innovative platform that promotes their music and **supports their recognition beyond national borders**.
This leads to a lasting transformation in their careers, with improved working conditions and fair pay for each performance, greater artistic development, and increased visibility,all of which contribute to meaningful professional growth.

NETWORKING OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Alongside the two previously described assets, a third one – networking – plays a transversal role, enhancing the other elements of the project.
Networking is understood as an activity aimed at enabling the project's target groups to meet, exchange ideas, and connect with key stakeholders outside the partnership. This is guaranteed both via informal on-line channels and through specific networking meetings. Three **networking meetings** were organised in collaboration with relevant platform members. The first was dedicated to string quartets, in partnership with the String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam (February 2024). The second targeted historic house owners and was organised with the support of European Historic Houses (October 2024). The third meeting (February 2025), aimed at cultural site managers, was co-organised with Europa Nostra. These networking events served as multiplier events designed to raise awareness of the project, its results, and future perspectives. They also aimed to engage and activate various stakeholders who, in different roles, are part of the chamber music ecosystem.
In the networking domain, are also included other activities, such as the **mapping of professionals** crucial for the chamber music industry and for the emerging artists careers, such as - just to mention a few categories - artist managers, audio-video operators, photographers, accountants, luthiers.
It is worth underlining also the role played by the **MERITA Blog**, in spreading original contents directly coming from the artists and from the Platform members (**www.meritaplatform.eu/news/**).
In terms of social networks and other communication actions, **more than 600 social media actions** were performed from the beginning of the project (Instagram - Facebook - LinkedIn), **100 articles appeared in international newspapers** from the beginning of the project and **42 newsletters** were spread by Le Dimore del Quartetto about the project. Moreover, the MERITA system acted as a vital organism, generating additional results beyond those originally planned. For example, in the wake of the activities, **43 new international partnerships** were activated through the project and **37 side-events** took place, initiatives created to spread MERITA among national and local stakeholders (dissemination events, masterclasses and networking events).

The Platform

At the heart of the MERITA project lies its **digital platform**, which acts as both a functional infrastructure and a symbolic expression of the project's multidimensional character. Conceived as **a bridge between the physical and digital spheres**, the platform not only facilitates the operational coordination of activities, but also **embodies the vision of MERITA**: a circular, inclusive, and sustainable system of cultural exchange, learning, and development.
It represents **a vibrant, evolving ecosystem designed to connect and support the various communities** involved in the project, emerging string quartets, concert organisers, cultural heritage venues, trainers, and broader audiences.

The platform is structured into **two main areas**: a public-facing section and a members-only area. Each serves specific purposes and audiences, but together they create a cohesive digital space that amplifies the project's reach, impact, and potential for long-term sustainability and long term development.

The **public area** is designed to **increase the visibility** of the musicians and the historic locations involved, while offering content and resources that make MERITA accessible and meaningful to a wide range of audiences, from general public to music professionals and cultural stakeholders. Visitors can explore detailed profiles of the participating quartets and cultural venues, access podcasts and blog posts offering deeper insights into the artistic and cultural dimensions of the project, and consult an updated calendar of concerts and events. **This space serves as a living archive of the project's outputs** and a window into the innovative and transnational spirit of MERITA. It includes a rich blog section with various posts covering news, stories, concerts, training activities, and a podcast series featuring each quartet.
The **members-only area**, on the other hand, serves as **a dynamic working space** for the core stakeholders of the project. Reserved for the 38 participating quartets, concert organisers, and the professionals involved in training and mentoring, this section of the platform **offers access to a rich set of tools and resources** aimed at fostering professional development, collaboration, and sustainable practice.
Seven online training modules, developed by expert institutions and tailored to the specific needs of the string quartets, provide a structured and diverse learning path. In parallel, concert organisers have access to **38 detailed project proposals** developed during the residencies. Each proposal is accompanied by a video summary, a written overview, and a podcast, facilitating the identification and programming of innovative performances.

A particularly impactful feature of the members' area is the **CO_2 Calculator**, a tool developed through in-depth research and in close collaboration with concert organisers and historic house owners. This tool enables members to **evaluate the environmental impact of their events** and take concrete steps towards more sustainable production models. The inclusion of this instrument represents MERITA's tangible contribution to raising awareness and driving action on environmental sustainability within the cultural sector.

Beyond these functionalities, the members' area acts as a **hub for community building and knowledge sharing**. It includes **a mapping of professionals** across Europe who can support the production of concerts and artistic events, thereby simplifying organisational processes and strengthening local and transnational networks. This space symbolises the emergence of a true community of practice, **a digital agora** where ideas, methods, and values circulate freely, contributing to the refinement and expansion of the circular model at the core of MERITA.

From a technical perspective, the platform has been built with scalability and longevity in mind. Its back-end architecture is designed to support future development and accommodate the growth of the community over time. It is not a static product but **an evolving digital environment** that will continue to support collaboration, training, and dissemination activities throughout and beyond the project's lifecycle.

In addition to its educational and community-building purposes, the platform is a **central instrument for communication and dissemination**. All project activities converge around the platform, which supports a comprehensive communication strategy aimed at expanding engagement, enhancing visibility, and increasing accessibility.

The platform elevates MERITA's brand presence and positions it as a reference point in the chamber music and cultural heritage sectors.

It **informs**, **educates**, and **connects** members, musicians, and audiences; it amplifies the visibility of emerging artists and of the heritage venues that host them; and it builds awareness around the European dimension of the project.

Moreover, the platform plays **a crucial role in disseminating project outcomes**, research findings, and best practices, while creating new opportunities for knowledge exchange and transnational collaboration. It serves as a gateway for the development of new networks and partnerships, within and beyond Europe, and strengthens the link between the project and the broader objectives of the Creative Europe programme.

As a whole, the **MERITA platform** is more than just a tool, it is **an enabler of the project's systemic vision**. It supports the circulation of talent and ideas, facilitates professionalisation and visibility, encourages sustainable practices, and fosters deep connections among diverse stakeholders.

By integrating digital and physical dimensions, MERITA not only innovates within the classical music sector, but also establishes **a sustainable**, **inclusive**, **and interconnected model** that responds to the needs and aspirations of the cultural ecosystem in Europe today.

Environmental issues and sustainability of the model

The MERITA concept pays special attention to environmental sustainability. The project provided different activities in this regard: a specific training on sustainable events, an environmental management analysis for cultural venues, and a Carbon Footprint Tool for chamber music concerts. These activities were implemented with the collaboration of the subcontractor Punto3.
First of all, the selected quartets received **specific training on sustainable event management**. The training, organised in two modules, covered several topics, ranging from how to design and organise sustainable events, including a theoretical overview of climate change and EU environmental policies, to practical strategies for reducing an event's carbon footprint.

Methodologically, the course combined practical exercises with real-time discussions, structured brainstorming, and analysis of best practices. An **environmental management analysis** was conducted on MERITA's cultural heritage sites and historic houses. A dedicated survey explored the crucial field of sustainable management of heritage sites across Europe, with the specific aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the current state of the art and identifying the average level of environmental management practices implemented. In addition, the survey provided site owners and managers with a user-friendly yet effective tool to perform a rapid environmental self-assessment, highlighting the most critical aspects and areas in need of improvement.

In addition, five cultural sites (selected by Le Dimore del Quartetto and the platform membersEuropean Historic Houses and Europa Nostra) underwent an **on-site audit**, which consisted of a verification checklist with methods and audit criteria divided by environmental themes; an online pre-assessment; and a sampling inspection. The report for each site presents the key findings of the on-site visit, including a general evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in environmental management, along with recommendations for improvement.

A major output of the MERITA project's environmental commitment is the **MERITA CO2 Calculator**, a web app designed to help concert organisers integrate sustainability principles into their event planning. The main objectives of the Calculator are to support event organisers in developing a credible climate strategy by assessing the CO2 emissions of a chamber music event, guiding them towards CO2-reducing best practices, and contributing to increased environmental sustainability and awareness within the sector.
The Calculator evaluates six environmental categories: transport (people), energy (accommodation), waste, materials (excluding food), energy (building electricity), and transport (freight).

Special features

The MERITA Platform launched a pioneering **Training and Capacity Building programme** to support 38 emerging string quartets in developing innovative projects that engage diverse audiences. Since September 2023, musicians have accessed **seven specialised online modules**, covering interdisciplinary exploration, unconventional performances, and audience outreach. Following the online training, they had the opportunity to develop their own projects during artistic residencies (October 2023 - April 2024), refining their skills under the mentorship of professional trainers. Each residency culminated in a public rehearsal concert ("test concert"). By fostering creativity, inclusion, and professional growth, MERITA is redefining classical music's outreach and impact in today's world. This section provides an in-depth exploration of the key topics addressed by the project, starting with the subjects and themes covered in the training for the 38 selected string quartets.

Music and other arts

Training held by B&M Theocharakis Foundation

The aim of this training is to learn how to combine music with other forms of art, such as painting, architecture, cinema, theatre, poetry and literature: various approaches have been explored, from historical and thematic links to local relevance and creative methods.

The training was attended by five quartets, and led to the development of different projects that blended a variety of art forms. For example, the ADAM Quartet combined music and poetry, embodying verbal and non verbal experiences through melody and sound; with Cuarteto Iberia, the story of Don Quixote was told by bridging literature, theatre and singing, and obviously the sound of instruments; finally, Chaos String Quartet offered an immersive interpretation of 20th-century works, blending dance and spoken word to enhance audience connection. The projects conceived by the quartets resulted in a multi-sensory experience and an immersive journey that transformed chamber music into a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

How to organise and perform a concert in unusual forms and spaces - breaking the spell around classical music

Training held by Julian Cochran Foundation

The training aimed to make classical music more accessible and innovative by designing and adapting performances to unconventional spaces. Six quartets created projects that brought music to varied settings, exploring new expressive forms. This fostered a close, interactive connection with audiences, breaking traditional boundaries. For example, Quatuor Wassily's "Concert à la carte" invited the audience to choose the music pieces from a "menu". The Akela Quartet used melody as a form of meditation, responding to the heightened sense of isolation that permeates our society, especially after the pandemic, and seeking to address the increasingly stressful world we live in through the power of breath, presence, and deep connection.

This new, experimental way to perform music led the audience to embark on a truly transformative musical journey.

Disabilities, interaction between professional musicians and fragile communities

Training held by String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam

The training focused on inclusion, showing how music can unite people and reach diverse audiences, especially those with disabilities. Six quartets developed projects that embraced a participatory approach to chamber music, aiming to make the experience more accessible to those with fewer opportunities to enjoy it. Through sensory stimulation, they involved audiences who are often excluded from traditional formats.
For example, the Atenea Quartet used music for connecting people beyond visual interactions, focusing on the experience of the visually impaired community; meanwhile, Quartetto Indaco explored mental health through music, spoken word, and visual arts, sharing composers' stories of struggle and resilience to inspire solidarity and hope.
In this way, the musicians adapted the concert to the needs and sensitivities of diverse audiences, pushing the boundaries of traditional concert formats and making music a truly universal form of art.

Beyond a concert experience – string quartets turning concert hall into (multimedia) theater

Training held by Kolarac Foundation

The training aims to equip string quartet members with tools to reimagine how classical music is presented, moving beyond traditional concert formats. By integrating elements like theatrical direction, scenography, lighting, costumes, and storytelling, musicians can transform concerts into immersive experiences. Six quartets collaborated with theater professionals to explore new creative possibilities, bringing music closer to theater and multimedia. Alinde Quartett invited the audience to become light designers, using torches to interact with the music. Quartetto Goldberg blended music with images and poetry to create one-of-a-kind performances. Finally, Malion Quartett transformed the concert into a full theatrical experience, with musicians acting as venue workers who rehearse and express emotions after hours.
These projects allowed classical concerts to become truly kaleidoscopic musical performances, blending different art forms and elements, and stimulating all the senses, as well as the heart and mind.

Chamber music for young audiences

Training held by ProQuartet - Centre Européen de Musique de Chambre

This training helps create engaging, high-quality music shows for children by focusing on their learning and curiosity. Six quartets developed projects blending classical and contemporary music, making chamber music more accessible to young audiences, encouraging interaction while maintaining artistic excellence. New Cretan Quartet represented the intimate world of ensemble rehearsals, where group dynamics were humorously underlined, while Quartetto Adorno played iconic pieces intertwining them with letters penned by their composers, thus delving into a broad spectrum of sentiments and emotions, including love, joy, fear, and anxiety.
Finally, String Quartet Meraki's musicians danced on stage, whirling with their instruments. Through these experimentations, classical concerts are transformed into captivating musical journeys that can also engage even the youngest audiences.

Music as Intercultural Dialogue

Training held by QENDRA Event

The training sees the string quartet as a metaphor for democracy, dialogue, and inclusion - a conversation among four equal voices. Quartets become powerful storytellers of European cultural values, promoting intercultural dialogue and citizenship. Their repertoire reflects and celebrates human diversity and creativity.

The six quartets involved in the training developed projects that celebrate diversity and cooperation, European cultural values, and musical heritage, connecting audiences with a wide range of musical traditions across the continent.

Erinys Quartet, for example, explored how composers from four different cultures and eras tell stories through music, blending performance, background presentation, and audience engagement. Fabrik Quartet combined contemporary music, video, and spoken word to explore themes of migration and cultural identity, featuring works by young diasporic composers.

These projects evoke the essence of a modern Europe: a continent that remains always vibrant with the chords of cultural richness, integration and global connectivity.

Music, Space and Place

Training held by experimentadesign

The training explored how performance spaces can shape the classical music experience and foster community connection. Three quartets created projects that broke traditional concert boundaries, using architecture and design to engage audiences through immersive, interactive settings, and transforming the room into art galleries.

Protean Quartet, for example, explored the interplay between sound and silence, questioning silence's role in music and its impact on space. Using lights, they created a multisensory concert experience that evoked emotions and reflections on the musicians' role.

These projects explored the space as a fundamental part of the concert experience, adapting the performance to each space where the musicians played, and thus making each concert a unique experience.

Conclusion

In a complex and constantly evolving ecosystem such as chamber music and European cultural heritage, quality stands as the guiding principle and essential standard shaping every action of the MERITA project.

Quality is a cross-cutting value: in the **selection of musicians**, in the **curation of programmes**, in the **choice of partners**, and in the **design of training pathways**. Only by upholding a high and shared standard can we be truly **bold**, **experimental**, and **innovative**, without diluting the richness of tradition or falling into fragmentation.

Our commitment goes beyond reaching new audiences, it is equally about **deepening the connection** with those who have long cherished this music, inviting the public to embark on an evolutionary and meaningful journey. That is why every project, concert, and training activity is developed with the support of **high-level professionals**, capable of both preserving and advancing artistic excellence.

Only by safeguarding quality can we **transform**, **connect different worlds**, and shape a future in which chamber music continues to speak to the present with the same strength and beauty that have carried it through the centuries.

Annexes

1) MERITA Manifesto, curated by Europa Nostra

The Manifesto expresses the shared values, vision, mission and objectives of MERITA, carried out by all partners involved. It serves to declare a common commitment to specific principles and actions in the field of culture, heritage and chamber music, and it will include a call to action to institutions, citizens, policymakers, and other stakeholders (from all over Europe) to support and contribute to the realization of the manifesto.

2) European Historic Houses Article on the Entrepreneurial management of historic houses, curated by European Historic Houses

The article - addressed to historic houses owners - focuses on how to manage historic houses from an entrepreneurial perspective. Historic houses are part of the identity of a territory and its local community: the research will stress the importance of networking with local organisations, companies and groups, so as to pool resources and energies. This could also be valuable when looking for funding and could set the basis for developing shared projects.

MERITA

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