



**CULMINATING EXPERIENCE**

**- REFLECTIVE REPORT -**

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### **Introduction.**

In a digital era such as we know it, information and the sharing of it has become a major player in social interaction. More than ever, the access to knowledge by the push of a simple button has shaped our bottom-line understanding of an array of concepts that perhaps never before had awaken our interests to such an extent. In the last 20 years, it is fair to say that the digital medium has rapidly replaced our general ways of grasping an idea from a more linear way of assimilation to a more evolving one. We receive information from all directions and angles on a daily basis through our online networks. The minute we log on to our favorite digital newspaper edition, the minute we exchange links on social platforms, the minute we share valuable content with connected users, we are engaging in further cross-over of concepts.

One of the many out breaking ideas that derived from sensing these social changes came at the beginning of the 80's with a new conference format that was thought provoking and challenging for established professionals in various fields. Under the name of TED (meaning Technology, Entertainment and Design) these series of conferences that took off in the US were to unite both extremes of the knowledge gap,

in short time intervals that would provide an inspirational talk to encourage and motivate listeners to know more about a chosen subject.

When searching for the official definition we see that TED is described as follows on Wikipedia:

*“TED is a global set of conferences owned by the private non-profit Sapling Foundation, under the slogan "ideas worth spreading". TED was founded in 1984 as a one-off event. The annual conference began in 1990, in Monterey, California.”* – (Wikipedia)

Nonetheless, it lacks further detailed information of the event by not stating the importance of the online nature of these 'ideas worth spreading' and the fact that they cannot surpass in time the limit of 18min. Personally I think this is of most uttermost importance to the success of these talks, the fact that (call it attention span) people of all ages and social backgrounds may relate to them by it's short time consuming nature and be 'entertained' by them in a somewhat 'edutainment' form of communication.

Whilst TED stayed tuned both geographically and culturally to the US, a new form developed on demand by a global audience to have a TED voice in each local community throughout the world. These would be independently organized TED events that would instigate conversation and dialogue on subjects perhaps more relevant to their field of action.

TEDx events are explained on their website in the following way:

*“Created in the spirit of TED’s mission, “ideas worth spreading,” the TEDx program is designed to give communities, organizations and individuals the opportunity to stimulate dialogue through TED-like experiences at the local level. TEDx events are fully planned and coordinated independently, on a community-by-community basis.” -*  
[www.TEDx.com](http://www.TEDx.com)

TED and TEDx events alike have taken off in the last 10 years as digital audiovisual references in order to share ideas of all fields of investigation, through offline and online mediums worldwide. The videos of the conferences have been shared on social media all over the world, at times exceeding half a million views per video, drawing an international communal spirit towards all types of interests and creating a whole new wave of presentations, representing ideas of individuals and often of existing communities such as institutions and colleges.

Since Berklee College of Music hadn't hosted its own TEDx event, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to match the two brands in order to create a precedent for the college institution to gain brand awareness by having additional international exposure. After all, thousands of viewers who could be reached and inspired through TED talks could eventually be drawn into wanting to know more of the College and what it had to offer.

## **1. Summary of the project**

Last Saturday, 21st of June of 2014, the first ever TEDxBerkleeValencia took place in the Aula Magistral of the Palau de Les Arts in Valencia. It was an event organized by Faculty and Students of Berklee College of Music inside the TEDx global framework of conferences, and it brought together over 300 attendees for over 3 hours of show.

13 Speakers and 4 performers from 9 different countries covered what meant to them the theme 'Creative catalyst', from disciplines as varied as design and illustration, film composition, videogame composition, community work, contemporary dance, percussion, empowerment coaching and sound production. The event brought together a production team of more than 25 people between organizers, volunteers and technicians.

The general feedback, both from the institution and the Valencia audience, was very positive. They all agreed in that a vast array of perspectives and emotions were represented and that the mix of talks, dance, live music and TEDx videos contributed positively towards crafting a dynamic event that never seemed too long to digest.

It is worth mentioning that the support the project gathered from local businesses was extremely important for the success of the event. The show managed to get operational help from sponsors such as Valencia Toastmasters during the coaching process, ticketing help by Ticketea, artistic help for logo and feel from the designer Julián Lorenzo and also financial help for all our giveaway's from Protos Soluciones Educativas and Medical Exercise. Partnering with local businesses was key to it's success and helped greatly to increase the visibility of the show among their contacts.

## 2. Process

### *Licenses*

Obtaining the license to do a TEDx event undergoes some protocol established by the rules on the TED main website ([www.ted.com/rules](http://www.ted.com/rules)). Detailed information on the name of the TEDx event, intentions, subject, location, date and people behind the organization is demanded as an initial set up before a license is granted.

Usually a simple license to do a TEDx event has by default a maximum attendance of 100 people, so one of the first questions that we had to undertake as the organizing team was to have our license holder (Program Director Emilien Moyon), attend an official TED event in the US, so as to be able to increase our audience capability.

This would allow for an event of 400 people as we had initially planned, since just counting the Berklee Staff and Students we were already looking at an approximate of 150 people in itself, without counting any external attendance, so it was clear we needed this permit.

### *Theme*

Following these operational procedures, first brainstorming of potential guests was to happen in order to identify angles to which approach our main theme, chosen for our inaugural TEDx event. Knowing we wanted it to reflect all the different master programs and the general spirit of Berklee's love for the arts, we chose among a long list of names that one of 'Creative Catalyst'. What we meant by Creative Catalyst was the creative disruptions or tipping points that serve as a catalyst to change the rules of the game, in all disciplines, from art to science and beyond.

Identifying key contemporary players from sports, to music professionals, to film makers, to designers, etc. was part of our initial brainstorming of ideas to determine the character of the event, and reach a consensus of the type of happening were we gearing towards as a team that was coming from different backgrounds.

### *Creating the Team*

Due to the nature of the event, being a TEDx carrying the name of Berklee College of Music, the responsibility was large and therefore it was essential that at the core of the team was Dr. Emilien Moyon (director of the Music Business Program) who was to supervise all operations of the event. The appointed advisors and executors were to be fellow Berklee Student **Ludovico Vignaga**, **Louis Vallbona** and myself, undertaking the tasks of directing and supervising areas such as Artistic Direction, Marketing and Production.

In order to expand the team in all mentioned departments and make sure we had the best valuable help students could offer, we decided to have a series of interviews of those who shared interest and applied for them, to identify the right participants.

After demanding an initial curriculum and statement of intent we carried out 15min one-to-one conversations on how they would be the best candidates for our inaugural TEDx event in 2014.

Upon review we identified the rest of the team:

**Alejandra Menendez** as Marketing Manager and Content Supervisor

**Cristina Dominguez** as Marketing Manager and Video Content Production

**Alexandra Morancy** as Online Social Media Manager

**Gael Hedding** as General Production Director



**Aishwary Narolia** as Production Manager

**John Moses** as Artistic Direction Assistant

**Rozelle McBarnette** as Production Assistant and Volunteer coordinator

*Selecting Speakers (Internal ones)*

We wanted to identify possible speakers that were among the Berklee students and to do this we undertook a selection process that would best help us to identify our best talents in public speaking, combined with the most interesting themes they wanted to cover in relation to the main theme, 'Creative Catalyst'.

- *Step 1: Presentation and Invitation*

A first round of presentations were done in each Graduate Program to explain our project, what was it about and the date we were aiming for.

We took the chance to openly invite for any suggestions for speakers and if they were interested themselves in applying to be one of them.

- *Step 2: In-Campus Marketing*

In order to refresh people's awareness of the due-by-date of their application and create some hype we publicized on campus notifications of TEDxBerkleeValencia.

- *Step 3: 1st round of Interviews*

After submission we had a first declaration and clarification of proposed material for the show.

- *Step 4: Evaluation and Replies*

We evaluated the proposals in the Artistic Direction department and made sure to reply with critical feedback to ensure further development of their ideas.

- *Step 5: 2nd round of Interviews*

A second round of interviews is planned to happen to listen more in detail how they intend to structure their talk.

- *Step 6: Mini presentations in Library*

A presentation in the library was scheduled for the 27th of February to evaluate their strengths in public speaking and see if the talk was fit for the conference or not.

- *Step 7: Final Selection*

A final selection of the chosen candidates took place to start defining the speakers that would make it to the presentation, based on how advanced their talk was, the relevance of it and how comfortable were they doing public speaking. In order to make sure we were doing this right, we invited Aurélie Salvaire, who was curator for the TEDxBarcelonaWomen and who had vast experience in organizing TEDx events. Once all talks had concluded we made sure to evaluate and share opinions on talks that didn't step on each other and that could contribute greatly to the theme. A debrief ensured that 6 speakers from Berklee would represent the College.

### *Selecting Speakers (External ones)*

Plenty of sessions of brainstorming for possible external speakers happened since the very first day of the launch of the project. Determining which guest would fit with the

next one, always in relation to the main subject 'Creative Catalyst', has become a puzzle when having to make sure we cover the topic from as many fields of investigation as possible, always within a maximum number of 10 speakers on average (since 5 would come from Berklee).



### *Final Line-Up*

The final line-up consisted of 11 men and 6 women, from 9 different countries and various disciplines from music performers, film composers, videogame composers, coaches, illustrators, dancers, community workers and designers.

The list was as follows (in order of photo, top to bottom and left to right)

- Panos Panay (Berklee Alumni and founder of the ICE in Berklee Boston)
- Lucas Vidal (Berklee Alumni, Film Composer)
- Javier Mariscal (Illustrator, Designer)

- Tad Cook and Erick Crokenberg (Community workers, entrepreneurs)
- Stephen Webber (Berklee Faculty, musician, Dj)
- Ben Houge (Berklee Faculty, Videogame composer)
- Michael Sean Harris (Berklee Student, Musician)
- M.T. Aditya Srinivasan (Berklee Student, Performer, Composer)
- Belén Maya (Contemporary Flamenco Dancer)
- Clara Barberá (Berklee Faculty, Contemporary Dancer)
- Ganavya Doraiswamy (Berklee Fellow Student, Singer)
- Joao Bruno (Berklee Student, Pianist)
- Jodie Rogers (Empowerment Coach)
- Andrea Fraenzel (Berklee Student, Musician)
- Luiza Sales (Berklee Student, Singer)

### *Venues*

The venue in which the TEDx event was to happen was initially set to be at the Palau de les Arts, situated in front of the Berklee Campus.

We had clearance from the start to use one of their spaces due to common agreements between the Berklee Institution and the Institution in charge of the spaces at the Palau.

In retrospect, one of our mistakes was to take this as a given and not set up some second and third plan in case of this not being a valuable option.

Due to conflicting dates between our wish that the TEDx event would happen on the 21st of June (International Music Day) and the fact that the Palau hosted the Mediterranean Festival on that week, we were told to hold to our reservation as confirmation for that date could not come just as yet.

As time went by and our need to book and secure a place determined all the following steps in the production planning (i.e. contacting speakers, reserving equipment, etc.), we were forced to examine other possible spaces in Valencia and organize visits and negotiate conditions.

Following are the spaces we visited and the capacities they could offer, plus the prices we were told as of January 2014.

- ***Palau de Les Arts***

Space: Aula Magistral

Capacity: 378 people

Price: (Berklee Negotiation)

Pictures:



**Palau de La Música**

Space: Sala Rodrigo

Capacity: 423 people

Price: 5000 euros approx.. (excluding weekend)

Pictures:



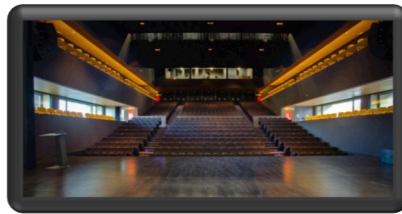
## **La Rambleta**

Space: Main Theatre

Capacity: 600 approx.

Price: 2000 euros (through contact)

Pictures:



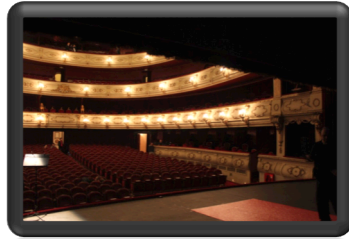
## ***Teatre Principal***

Space: Main Stage

Capacity: 400 downstairs (1000 approx. with balconies)

Price: No agreement as offered was made to participate within their festival.

Pictures:



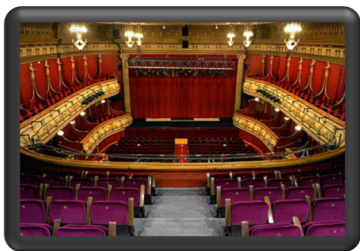
### *Teatre Olympia*

Space: Main Stage

Capacity: 500 approx.

Price: 2000 per day

Pictures:



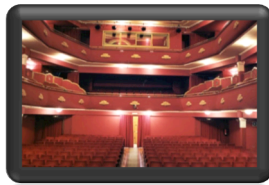
***Teatre Talia***

Space: Main Stage

Capacity: 400 approx.

Price: 1000 per day

Pictures:





### *Coaching Process*

The coaching process for internal and external speakers started simultaneously after our final event in the library, where we decided who was to represent our first event. We established a plan in time and assigned two coaches for each speaker, to ensure quality of speech and quality of delivery. This was to happen over a two month period before the event and the coaches were to be a combination of the inner organizational team and the professional coaching volunteers from Valencia toastmasters.

### *General Process Bullet points*

When listed in bullet points the process can be identified under 10 general steps:

- Choosing a theme.
- Securing the license for the TEDx event.
- Getting all the required information and completing the steps towards web domain and branding.
- Marketing the event on campus.
- Evaluating team members.
- Visiting venues and identifying spaces / Negotiating the Venues.
- Contacting External Speakers.
- Coaching Speakers.
- General Rehearsals
- Pre-production, Production and Post-Production of show.

### **3. Results**

#### *Pre-Production*

During pre-production we faced many aspects that could have been probably been better organized, had we had done a thorough detailed plan of communication.

One of the main issues had to do with the lack of a leading voice when explaining actions and giving orders to the technicians in the theatre venue. Given the nature of our team efforts in tackling many tasks without prior planning, the overall sense was that

#### *Overall Flow*

The overall flow resulted to be flawless and amazingly enough, managed to work without any difficulty other than one moment of video failure, that was resolved quickly in time by the production team

#### *Duration of show*

Much to our surprise, the event finished way earlier than expected in our initial program. The speed of the introductions and the overall ease to move from one set up to another proved us to be over pessimistic of the transitions. We had anticipated that we would take, on average, 2min approximately for every change over between speakers. Something that obviously wasn't the case and that luckily played in our favor. The results were positive both for us and the audience, with the advantage that it contributed to making the event not risk on boredom at any point.

### *Coffee Break*

Some aspects, which had to do less with the show itself, weren't entirely considered from the start. The coffee break was, to some people, a little long. Other feedback was that the catering was insufficient. In any case, these are things to be revised but managed to give a pause in the show, which improved the feeling of time not being too long.

### *Attendance*

Our main concern always was that for all the effort put into the execution of the show, the attendance would be weak. Accustomed to the difficulties in drawing Berklee students to shows outside the campus, we were worried about the outcome on the day of the event.

Even though the venue was sold out, we were faced with the fear we had anticipated. Some of the students had reserved seats but hadn't used them, resulting in some empty spaces. Luckily it wasn't a general thing but it does leave us to reflect on future methods to deal with this issue.

### *Post-Production*

Another important aspect was that we didn't anticipate the post-production tasks. As a result all volunteers left the space after the show and only the technicians and some of the organizational team were left to pick up all materials. This is something to consider for future productions as it is equally important to setting up, especially in terms of respect towards venue and technicians operating it.

#### **4. Next step**

On a collective level the next step following this intense experience is to think of how the continuity of this tradition will only get to improve. I believe that it is in the interest of Berklee College of Music that this show remains as part of the Valencia Campus for many years to come. As mentioned earlier, I believe it is a great attribute to the city and offers professional organizational skills for students with a real practical outcome.

On a personal level, this whole experience has served to identify my weak spots and thanks to the help of the team, I feel I have been able to work on them and strengthen my own confidence towards becoming the sort of professional that I aim to be. One that can be at ease with large productions involving a large number of team players and that can manage time and leadership skills comfortably. I still think there is a long way to go but at least the direction is clear. All these steps bring me closer to the belief that I will manage to undertake large responsibilities such as the production of a festival or similar, which has always been in my plans to do so

#### **5, Contribution**

I think the main contribution to the discipline and the profession in the entertainment industry was to prove in the Valencia community the value of Berklee College of Music and the asset it represents to the city. Not only in terms of musical excellence and of a passionate relationship to the arts but also as a portrait of an institution that challenges the audience to think of future solutions to problems that the industry is encountering.

Pairing up with such a large community of TEDx events in the world (more than

10.000 worldwide) Berklee College of Music has gained not only from being connected to these new ideas and tendencies but also to give back, through talks and performances, proposals that can inspire new paths for the creative world.

I believe this has been a huge contribution to the discipline and I'm excited to see the natural growth and evolution towards more and more ambitious challenges.

## **6. Impact on the student**

### *Time Management*

I can say that the impact upon my growth as a professional has been very beneficial in a vast number of aspects. Out of all the different ones I would first pinpoint the learning experience this has been in terms of high level organization. Learning how to combine agendas between assignments for the TEDx event, the mandatory courses and assignment of the Master, the tasks as a Graduate Assistant and my professional duties outside school with my company Royal Sonora has been nonetheless, very challenging. During several moments in the year, I felt I was losing track of the simultaneous duties and at times I felt overwhelmed. Yet, I believe one only truly learns through experience and that as the saying goes, necessity is the mother of invention. The added stress that I was inflicting upon myself by not organizing well my agenda only allowed for moments of total chaos or for, on the other hand, quick action to develop an organizational method. I struggled at times keeping order and until I eventually was able to take control, some moments of tension had already taken it's share.

### *Team Management*

A second impact that I think is worth mentioning is the factor of team management and leadership skills. From a very early stage in the process I identified that some of the experience I had acquired during my 12 years in a band was very useful in applying general motivation but it wasn't so relevant in terms of delivering orders with authority.

### *Leadership Skills*

One of the main areas of impact has been to learn that leading a team is far more difficult than it looks like and that it requires a lot of training. Different aspects of motivation, clarity of purpose and group psychology come into place. Like in any situation, it becomes easier with experience, but there are ways to prepare for that. I am inspired into looking further into group skills for future use when applied to business ideas that will require fluid communication skills and capacity to lead with earned merit.

- Maxwell Wright

