

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**  
**Annual Meeting 2013**

**Greetings from the**  
**European Association of Conservatoires (AEC)**

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Dear Mr. President, Members of the Association, dear Colleagues and dear Friends – Good morning!

It gives me great pleasure to be here at your annual meeting and to convey greetings from the European Association of Conservatoires, or AEC. Our President, Pascale De Groot, and Chief Executive, Jeremy Cox, in particular would like to convey their very warmest wishes for the success of this meeting. Originally it was AEC Vice-President Gretchen Amussen who was supposed to address you at this occasion but unforeseen travel difficulties have made it impossible for her to be here today, which is why she asked me to take her place. Some of you may remember that I addressed the Annual Meeting in 2010 shortly before I left my position as the AEC Chief Executive to accept my current post at the Royal Conservatoire in the Netherlands and I certainly didn't expect I would be standing here in front of you ever again. But considering the circumstances it will be an honor for me to share some remarks with you on behalf of our European colleagues, although I hope you will not see my presence here as a kind of "ghost from the past".

Let me start with thanking NASM President Mark Wait for his presence at the AEC 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and annual meeting in Palermo a few weeks ago. Mark, your wise remarks provided an inspirational start to our meeting, one in which we sought to take stock, measure our accomplishments, evaluate the challenges that lie ahead, and explore new ways to provide support and advocacy as strongly as possible for the community of conservatoires AEC represents.

From an institutional point of view, I believe that this support and advocacy is more important than ever. Although I enjoy my current post in which I am closer to music and music education just as I wanted, I also observe a context in which it will be critical for the future of our institutions to use and maintain our capacity for institutional and curricular innovation. This includes constantly asking ourselves the question "how do we know we are good at what we do?" It includes looking for new ways of curriculum design and delivery. It also includes, at least in my context, setting up strategic partnerships with other schools of music or organisations in the music profession to develop high quality education, because with expertise levels rising and financial resources diminishing we are no longer in the position to offer everything on our own. We need to do all this because we have the responsibility to continuously consider how we can improve the chances for our graduates in an employment market that is becoming increasingly competitive.

For this permanent search for improvement, one of the things I believe is absolutely crucial is to have strong associations. Associations that not only protect our interests and what's already there, but that can also give space and inspiration for innovative thinking on where to go next.

We also need associations to help us in terms of continuing professional development and to hold up a mirror to ourselves, either by doing reviews with a focus on improvement or through other means. In the European context we are part of a small network of institutions, which is currently experimenting with the exchange of external examiners from other countries for the assessment panels for our final recitals, so that we can start formulating an answer to the question of what we mean when we say that

we have the ambition to be informed by and aspire to international standards of performance with our students.

I believe we are in the fortunate position that we have strong associations in music at both sides of the Atlantic. NASM and AEC have worked side by side for over 15 years on vital issues for our sector, and I like to think that we continue to enrich each other mutually through conversations that center on our educational and artistic traditions, cultures, knowledge and experience. While NASM brings to the table its extensive knowledge in the field of accreditation, the immense cultural diversity represented by the AEC and the challenge of integrating this diversity into common frameworks constitutes one of our greatest strengths. So that when our associations come together and collaborate as we do, we are both revitalized and enhanced.

Today, with over 290 members in 58 countries, we can proudly say that AEC is a vital European player, prized for the quality of its activities and publications, and its ability to both reflect on current practice and to “imagine the future” in a broad intercultural context. And it has done so, in no small measure, thanks to the inspiration and support you have provided. Because if there is anything we have learned over these last years, it is that we exist and grow only inasmuch as we listen to each other and work together. A chamber symphony, if you will.

So if we say that we need strong associations, we will also need associations led by inspirational leaders. We need leadership that fully understands the characteristics of music within the broader context of higher education, that respects traditions and all that has been achieved, but at the same time has a vision of how things should be developed further. I know very few in which these qualities are so uniquely represented as in the person I got to know very well and learned to admire over the years, your remarkable executive director Samuel Hope.

Therefore let me, on behalf of all European colleagues, especially honour him today. Sam, for as long as most of us can remember, you have played a vital role for the AEC and become for us the most trusted and valued of friends. Since the signing of the first Memorandum of Understanding between NASM and AEC in 1998 to your participation in the latest Polifonia project working group on Quality Assurance and Accreditation, you have helped us steer through the complex waters of these subjects. You advised us on how to develop our own set of criteria and procedures for AEC reviews, sharing your expertise and experience, inviting European colleagues to observe NASM activities and attend the NASM annual meetings and workshops for visitors. And your help will still be crucial in a time when the AEC studies the feasibility of developing an independent agency to perform accreditations across Europe. You have provided guidance and inspiration and indeed it was you who helped instigate this now well-established tradition of bringing greetings at the annual meetings of both associations.

My European colleagues join in wishing you the very best for the new chapter which is opening in your life – and dearly hope that we will have many opportunities still to extend our warmest welcome to you and Judy.

Let me also congratulate NASM with the appointment of Karen Moynahan to be Sam’s successor. I have had the privilege to work with Karen at various occasions and there is no doubt in my mind that she will do a great job leading NASM into the future.

And to all of you here, dear colleagues and friends, may I wish you every continued success in your many endeavors, and may our two associations continue to gather and celebrate all that we share and all that we can grow together for many decades yet to come.

Thank you so much.