

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC
ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday, November 20, 2011**

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

**Jeremy Cox
AEC Chief Executive**

Mr President, Members of the Association, Colleagues and—I'm happy already to be able to say of a growing number of you—Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure and a considerable honour to be with you for your 87th Annual Meeting and to bring greetings to you from the European Association of Conservatoires, the AEC. In particular, I am delighted to convey the good wishes of our President, Pascale De Groote, and of our whole Council. The warm relationship that exists between our two associations means a great deal to us and we are very conscious of the ways in which we have benefited from the wider perspectives, experience and wisdom that colleagues from NASM have brought to our endeavours over recent years. Since both Pascale and I are in our first year of office, I am sure this is a resource on which we shall both continue to be very grateful to draw.

Shortly after I started as AEC Chief Executive last January, your Executive Director, Sam Hope, was kind enough to write to me welcoming me into my new post and offering whatever assistance I might feel I needed. This was a gesture which I very much appreciated and it was good across the following months to be able to conclude with Sam some updating to the Memorandum of Agreement between our two associations which, we both believe, strengthens still further the ways in which we can work together and benefit one another.

More recently—indeed, just over a week ago—it was our privilege to welcome your President and his wife to the AEC's Annual Congress in Valencia, Spain. Don, we were so pleased that you and Kyung-ae were able to be with us and we are very grateful for your well-chosen words at our opening ceremony, as well as for your good company at many points throughout the Congress. The fact that this 'return fixture' happens so soon afterwards is a nice way to reinforce the deep friendships that underlie the best kinds of cooperation, of which I believe ours to be an outstanding example.

I see that one of the themes of your Annual Meeting is 'Advocacy and Community'; for us in Valencia, the theme of the Congress was the closely-related one of 'The Musician in Society'. In my view, these issues are equally important as—and complementary to—questions concerning the ongoing review of what should be the components of our Core Music Curriculum—another theme, indeed the principal one, of this Meeting. Relevance, whether it be that of the curriculum to our students' evolving needs or that of the musical arts that they and we practise in the eyes of society at large, is something that we should constantly examine and revivify.

As funding for the arts—and Classical music perhaps particularly amongst them—comes under increasing pressure in a landscape where there often seem insufficient resources even for what might be regarded as life's basic essentials, the challenge to us rises correspondingly. We need to show ourselves to be realists in a world of austerity, but also passionate advocates for human endeavours which we know to be far more than mere luxuries to be enjoyed in times of plenty. As we all understand, but may not yet be articulating adequately, when financial divisions begin to threaten social cohesion, the value to society that the arts can contribute may well prove to

be a crucial part of the package of long-term solutions that we are so strenuously seeking to identify and implement.

All of this presents us with a dilemma: how do we make these arguments in a language of utilitarian benefit that will be widely understood while still remaining true to our belief in the intrinsic value of music? It is with this in mind that, for its Annual Congress in 2012 in St. Petersburg, the AEC will be pursuing its strategic theme of sustainability with an examination of the sustainability of artistic integrity amidst the pressures to engage with the commercial, marketing and financially-driven aspects of what we have come to describe as 'the creative industries'.

As the President of the International Music Council, Frans de Ruiter, said at the World Forum on Music in Estonia in September, our challenge is not to pitch our case to those who understand us but, in his phrase, 'to those who do not understand us yet'. To do this, we must adapt to some of the language and thought-processes of our interlocutors, but not to the extent of dampening the fire of our own convictions or of marginalising the core values that drive us.

This is a challenge which confronts music and its advocates at the global level and for which the solutions will be global, not regional. Europe and North America both have an important role to play in the debate but we, too, need to listen to our colleagues in other parts of the world where Classical music is growing in significance—not forgetting those where music takes very different forms but has profound lessons for us in terms of its centrality to the societies and cultures in which it functions.

I am determined that our European Association of Conservatoires should maintain and develop its outward-turned stance on these matters. With this in mind, I and colleagues this year finalised the revised version of the Association's Credo. This document, newly adopted by the AEC membership at its General Assembly in Valencia, now articulates ten principles of belief of which the last two read as follows:

9. Concerning the value of a strongly-rooted but outward-facing European musical heritage:

...that, while the unique aspects of the musical heritage of Europe should be honoured, sustained, and transmitted, both to cultures outside the region and to future generations, musical traditions and approaches from outside the European historical mainstream, whether geographically, culturally or chronologically, should be practised, studied and celebrated with equal commitment within higher music education in Europe

10. Concerning the need for that heritage to be constantly evolving:

...that it is a strength for the future that we should continue to integrate new musical genres and traditions as these emerge within the European cultural space, recognising that safeguarding a European musical heritage means championing the same spirit of innovation, adaptation, assimilation—and even subversion—which drove the creation of much of that heritage

For me these principles underline why it is so important, and so valuable, that the AEC and NASM maintain and grow their joint interactions, debates and initiatives. I am so grateful to be able to share these thoughts with you, and I wish you success in your discussions over these next few days and in your work across the coming year.

Thank you.