

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

Annual Meeting 2018

**Greetings from the Association Européenne des Conservatoires
(AEC)**

Eirik Birkeland

President, AEC

President, Executive Director, colleagues, dear friends.

Thank you very much for the generous invitation to attend the NASM Congress. It is a great honor and pleasure, on behalf of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen AEC, to greet the NASM and this distinguished Assembly.

In the last years of his life the Swedish director, writer, and producer, Ingmar Bergman and his youngest daughter, the author Linn Ullman, were planning to make a book documenting his aging. However, the project was postponed for a long time and when they finally started up, Bergman had become so old and weakened, that the dialogue between father and daughter got somewhat fragmented and unpredictable. One night, while they were sitting with the tape recorder between them, in his house on the quiet and remote island of Fårø in the Baltic Sea, Bergman says:

I fully believe in God. God is where the music is. I think the great composers tell us about their experiences of God. Bach is an unchanging factor for me.

She asks: But (father,) you had doubts before?

He answers: Not about Bach

I suppose doubt might also be found in this assembly, - *but not about Bach*. His enormous production, - a treasure of the most refined artistic expression, of competence and skills, leaves no room for doubt. But when it comes to how we, in the best possible way, not only will safeguard, but also disseminate and further develop the musical heritage from the old master and his successors, challenging questions need to be asked, and good answers may sometimes be hard to find. There might be reasons for having doubts, - also in our daily work.

AEC's new main project *AEC SMS - Strengthening Music in Society* is about Bach and our European Musical heritage; it is about renewal and facilitation of access to cultural offerings and cultural education for all, and it is about our contribution to economic growth through the creation of new jobs and new business models in the creative sector. The questions are many, and doubts and dilemmas are indeed present in the process. The 4-year project is financed by the European Commission and makes it possible for the AEC to continue to support and encourage Higher Music Educational Institutions to adapt to change, to embrace innovation and open up new fields of activities.

Strengthening Music in Society is also about strengthening and further developing the work within our institutions, even taking a closer look at our institutions' knowledgebase. A central topic is how knowledge, and various/different categories of it, feeds into the teaching and learning process.

In some European countries, governments have imposed upon the universities to provide Research-based or Research & Development-based education. But the knowledgebase in Higher Music Education Institutions is not primarily about research-based knowledge, but rather about experience-based and tacit knowledge derived from artistic practice.

As institutional leaders we know that it is challenging to develop a culture for shared reflective and collaborative practices within our institutions. One reason for this might be the limited transparency around one-to-one teaching practices, another, the invisible "glass walls" we often experience between artistic and scientific staff in the daily work at our institutions.

Maybe the first move should be, preferably in a polite way(!), to open the doors to the teaching rooms, - into the century long tradition of one-to-one teaching for identification of qualities as well as challenges in these rich and diverse teaching practices. Thereafter it is for us, in a careful way, to develop structures, working plans, arenas and projects for collaborative practices involving students as well as different categories of teachers.

The SMS project's Platform for Learning and Teaching is addressing these and other challenges, and has recently held a promising conference in Oslo, involving both students, artistic- and scientific staff from many institutions in shared projects. We are hoping that also American institutions will find opportunity to make connections with Europe in this work.

At this year's AEC Congress in Graz Austria, a *Global strand* was opened which seeks to offer a broader global perspective both on current trends beyond Europe in relation to Music and its surrounding Society, and on non-European perspectives on Europe in relation to this crucial topic. The NASM President's contribution to this was warmly appreciated by the participants.

Dear friends, I am very much looking forward to listening to stimulating presentations and good discussions at this Congress and I am hoping for opportunities to share thoughts and experiences with you, - and not only about Bach!

I wish you all a stimulating, inspiring and valuable NASM Congress here in Washington!

Thank you!