

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

98<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

November 18 – 22, 2022

**Greetings from the Association Européenne des Conservatoires,  
Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)**

**Jeffrey Sharkey, Principal, Royal Conservatory of Scotland**

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On behalf of the Association of European Conservatoires, I bring warm greetings from our membership to yours here in St. Louis. This is special for me personally, as a former member of NASM in my roles here in the United States at Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM) and The Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. I have not been with you for a good number of years, and it is a pleasure to return. I was delighted to spend time with NASM's President, Michael Wilder, at our recent AEC Congress in Lyon at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse (CNSMD). Michael and I sat in on some MusiQuE training—our version of accreditation a bit like NASM's. We also had a lovely dinner at a Lyonnaise restaurant. We had a very enthusiastic *maître d'hôtel* who pointed to different parts of his body to show what we could order—we listened carefully for the word “*tête*” to make sure we did not accidentally order it! I will say a bit more about AEC in a moment.

As we've moved from COVID shut downs to high inflation, insecurity, wars, refugees and a feeling of sometimes constant insecurity, our very art has been under more peril from neglect than before. If parents cannot afford to heat their homes, will they afford lessons? (Perhaps more of problem in Europe than the U.S.—but we all face rising costs.) If music becomes the preserve of the middle and upper classes alone, then how will our discussions about inclusive schools of music be able to be effective?

So first, I want to thank you for all that you are doing, have been doing, and will be doing to help keep music alive, developing, speaking for communities, and convening society back together. In many of our countries, political talk focused on health and economic recovery, but not healing society, not bringing us back together after years of isolation. It is not easy to lead music institutions all the time—and that is all the more true when the challenges come from multiple directions at the same time.

After thanking you, I want to challenge all of us to think about the role of music training for the 21st century.

I gave a talk a few years ago about how conservatories and music schools nearly wrecked the art of music. It was a little controversial. I've yet to be invited back. My point was that music

evolved more freely in some ways before conservatoires and music departments were invented. They came on board for utilitarian reasons—Paris came first, London soon after, mine in Scotland was one of the early ones in 1847—to create military bands and train for orchestras. Every great city in America needed an orchestra and a conservatoire to feed it. Now utility is important—we want to train for jobs, have graduates find employment. But we began to divide up the whole person, with much focus on faithful and accurate recreation. Composers were on one side, performers on the other. Art music on one side, popular or folk on the other. Applied studies on one side, academic on the other. Performance on one, teaching and pedagogy on the other. Whose music got played, how it was played, and for whom it was played, was decided by a few.

If we want more inclusive schools of music, we need to give agency back to our whole community. Research is not only the preserve of musicologists, performers can and should compose and improvise, and composers should perform, and all should acquire the skills they need to teach and inspire others. The idea of being a producer is something well understood in the drama and film world, in the popular music world—but less so by Western art music students. All musicians need the skills to have an artistic concept that encompasses programming to venues, to audience engagement, and to marketing. A freeing concept—you can take matters into your own hands and express yourself in ways unheard of by past generations, and balance a portfolio career that keeps you learning for your whole life. But the ecosystem of support needs to be in place, the breadth of training that breaks down the silos I mentioned earlier needs to be in support, and the student voice needs to be there in planning future curricula. I met a student here yesterday who was almost incognito, attending a session where mental health for students was discussed. Why not have more students as part of the congress here so we can develop ideas together—we do so at AEC and I would encourage it to be done here.

Today's definition of success is much more holistic and healthy than generations past. Jet-setting solo performances are not sustainably green and are now seen as less satisfying than making an artistic difference where you live. Orchestras want different collectives of musicians that can communicate and teach as well as they can play. The professions are evolving to need the whole person and the whole musician—so our education must work to help lead the way in partnership with professional organizations.

My experience in Scotland, grappling with diminishing funding resources while seeking to be innovative within all of our performing art forms, has had some positives. Relative poverty compared to some has made us more creative, made us value the spend of every pound, and ensured that we remain close to our communities rather than drifting apart in ivory tower isolation.

I am optimistic that the kinds of conversations we are having in AEC and you are having here at NASM will keep us innovating and make our institutions more inclusive and relevant to all of our communities. I know that AEC will reach out to NASM for collaboration on our next major project: ARTEMIS—Empowering Artists as Makers in Society (<https://aec-music.eu/project/empowering-artists-as-makers-in-society/>). ARTEMIS has six strands: 1) international cooperation and mobility; 2) lifelong learning; 3) advocacy; 4) going green (sustainability) and digitisation—capitalizing on what we learned during the pandemic; 5) curriculum design and innovation around some of the themes I described; and 6) diversity, inclusion and gender equality. I look forward to AEC working with NASM on some of these areas and I wish you all great success for your work here and back at your home institutions.

Thank you.