

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**

**101<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting**

**November 21–25, 2025**

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

**Executive Director Finn Schumacker**

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President Tayloe Harding, Executive Director Moynahan, distinguished guests, dear colleagues and friends,

Thank you sincerely for the invitation to attend the NASM Annual Meeting. It is a true privilege to be here, to celebrate our longstanding friendship, and to strengthen the ties between our organisations.

Just two weeks ago, the AEC Annual Congress took place in Salzburg, Austria, under the title *The Sound of Future Music Education: Well-being, Innovation and Leadership*. We were honoured to welcome President Tayloe Harding as our distinguished guest. President Harding, thank you once again for joining us in Salzburg, enriching our discussions, and sharing your valuable insights.

At the Congress, Deborah Kelleher was elected AEC President for another three-year term. I am pleased to convey her warmest regards to the participants of this year's Annual Meeting of NASM.

Times are shifting, also in Europe. The major societal agendas are being rewritten and our political leaders are setting new priorities—placing competitiveness, defence, and resilience at the top. In the music sector, we are not unfamiliar with the notion of competition. A good friend, a senior director in an international company, once told me: *“Successful companies are those that understand how to collaborate with their competitors.”* Although this mindset is not particularly fashionable at the moment, it raises an important question: *How can music and music education contribute and play a role in the future that is now unfolding?*

For us who are gathered in this room, I have no doubt that the answer is clear: Culture and education add meaning to our lives, strengthen our communities, and help us create compelling images of the future we wish to create.

How we fulfil this promise stood at the centre of this year's AEC Congress, where sessions revolved around three themes:

First theme: Well-being

The well-being of a society relies not only on material prosperity but also on physical and mental health. As the world changes, many, especially children and young people, worry not only about their own future but about the future of the planet.

I am encouraged to see how music education worldwide is adapting: embracing inclusion, diversity, and equity; fostering participation; creating communities that build resilience; and—perhaps most importantly—strengthening trust. Trust in the future, trust in our ability to shape good lives, and trust in the power of music to bring our breaths and heartbeats together.

Second theme: Innovation—creating a sustainable musical ecosystem

The AEC Council has made this theme one of its main priorities. We face a growing concern: children and young people increasingly consume music passively on devices rather than experiencing the joy of making or creating music together. We strongly believe that every child should be introduced to an active musical life as early as possible. Yet music education in many countries is under pressure and this trend must be reversed.

Among other needs, we require more music teachers. I am therefore very pleased that NASM and AEC is working together to explore solutions ensuring that all children have access to music lessons and the lifelong benefits that music provides.

Third theme: Leadership for the Future

One of the sessions on leadership was curated and led by EPASA, the European Performing Arts Student Association, a young organisation supported by the AEC. As experienced leaders, we sometimes fall into the habit of relying on tradition or familiar methods. But in a rapidly changing world, new perspectives are essential. It was truly inspiring to hear the next generation of artists and educators discuss future leadership values and how these will significantly influence tomorrow's musical landscape.

Throughout its long history, NASM has been a source of inspiration for the AEC. Your steadfast dedication to the next generation of artists has not only enriched American culture but has also served as a beacon for music educators worldwide. Your example reminds us all of the profound responsibility we bear—to guide our students toward not just musical excellence, but also the capacity to lead, to innovate, and to inspire.

On behalf of the AEC, I want to express our deep gratitude for the longstanding friendship and collaboration which exists between NASM and AEC. Our partnership reflects a shared conviction in the transformative power of music education and our common dedication to supporting the artists who will help create a more vibrant and connected world.

Thank you once again for the invitation. I look forward to the discussions ahead and wish you all inspiring and rewarding days.

Thank you.