



AEC Annual Congress and General Assembly 2014

Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest

The Future of European Higher Music Education: upholding tradition, promoting diversity and encouraging innovation

This year's Congress addresses three issues of fundamental significance for leaders of higher music education institutions. For the conservatoires, music academies, music universities and Musikhochschulen of Europe, tradition, diversity and innovation are all important, and yet to some extent they each pull us in different directions. How to find a balanced and complementary relationship between them will be critical to securing a strong future for conservatoires and their training practices in the coming years.

Historically, it has been the European tradition of music training that has shaped many aspects of the structure and practices of institutions worldwide. Now, in a truly global landscape, where students have unparalleled freedom to choose where and how they study, diversity and innovation have an increasingly important role in influencing those choices. In this 'market' of higher music education, we are colleagues, but also competitors. It is important that we continue to sustain the spirit of cooperation and sharing good practice which has been a hallmark of the way AEC's members engage with each other through the meetings and other actions of the Association.

In recent years, an essential element of this cooperation has been the strand of project work running through AEC's activities. In 2004, the first 'Polifonia' project was launched. Since then, two further editions of 'Polifonia' have been coordinated by AEC and the third and last of these concludes in December. The congress is an excellent opportunity not only to share the latest outputs but also to celebrate a remarkable decade of collaborative and developmental work.

In January 2014 new EU programmes were introduced and the ERASMUS Networks, of which 'Polifonia' was an outstanding example, came to an end. AEC is committed to ensuring that the achievements of 'Polifonia' continue to be taken forward within the new structures and opportunities for project funding of ERASMUS+ and Creative Europe. There will be further news of these, and opportunities for discussion and input as to how AEC should engage with them, during the Congress.

We are delighted to announce that Enrique Barón Crespo, former President of the European Parliament and one of the key architects of the ERASMUS programme, will attend the Congress as keynote speaker. Sr. Barón Crespo is an enthusiastic supporter of music and currently holds the position of Chairman of the International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation. Moreover, when he held the Presidency of the European Parliament, it fell to him to address the first meeting of a democratically elected parliament in Hungary in 1990. He is uniquely qualified to speak on the question of how not just European higher music education but Europe itself must strive at this critical point in its history to balance tradition, diversity and innovation to their mutual enhancement.

Next to the AEC Elections and the usual report on the AEC activities, part of the AEC General Assembly 2014 will be dedicated to informing members about the establishment of an independent European subject-specific review body for higher music education institutions and programmes: MusiQuE (Music Quality Enhancement). The AEC Quality Enhancement Committee, with the help of the 'Polifonia' Working Group on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation, has been working since 2011 on bringing AEC to the point where it is ready to launch this body. This is a step which will have enormous significance for AEC and there will be important presentations about the new review body during the General Assembly as well as a procedure to appoint MusiQuE board members.

