

Prof. Mag.art. Dr.Phil. Franz Niermann

Ladies and Gentleman, dear Colleagues, distinguished Guests!

I congratulate the organizers of this conference and all of you on this great initiative to organize such an International Scientific Conference on Theory and Practice of Music Education, and already the fourth time. This really is something special, what you realize here in the cooperation of the colleagues from the Visegrad countries, unique and remarkable.

It is a great honor for me to speak to you on behalf of the European Association for Music in Schools and in representation of the current EAS President. I can assure you that colleagues and friends of the EAS are keeping track of this conference with interest and admiration, and that their thoughts are with you. In particular, I am pleased to meet again my dear colleague Milos Kodejska, who invited me to speak here. And that I get in contact again with Irena Medňanská, who was in charge as a board member for many, many years, in fact since the EAS exists at all, and has contributed decisively to the positive development of this association.

For me personally, this moment here in Prague is emotionally very touching. Ten years ago, in 2005, we've had the opportunity to organize here a particularly significant EAS Conference, already at that time under the leadership of Milos Kodejska. The topic of this conference was: "Everything Depends on a Good Start". And indeed it was a very special beginning. Here, 2005 in Prague, I was, together with a very new board, elected president, and thus began one of the most important parts of my professional life. Furthermore, a forward-looking and pioneering initiative of the EAS, the large-scale and successful EU-project "meNet – Music Education Network" was then, which hardly anyone knows, launched here in Prague.

In addition to the beautiful theme, "Everything Depends on a Good Start", and beyond the many interesting contributions to it, there was another level in 2005 in Prague, which was of historical significance not only for the EAS: the cooperation with both European and worldwide organizations. Let me mention here especially the presence of the EMC, the European Music Council, and of the AEC, the association of the highest educational institutions in the field of music all over Europe.

But especially I have to highlight the attendance of the President as well as the General Secretary of ISME, the International Society for Music Education. Here in Prague, we have declared a "Memorandum of Understanding" and thus constituted a close cooperation between EAS and ISME which was of great importance for further steps then for example in 2008, Bologna, 2010, Beijing, and so on. The fact that this cornerstone was laid here in Prague, is of such great historical importance, because 70 years before our 2005-conference the worldwide association of ISME was born right here, in 1935 in Prague. This was realized by building the "International Society for Music Education" under the leadership of Leo Kestenberg, from which later, in 1953, ISME was formally founded. 1935 – that is now 80 years ago. I find this – just in this place of your conference, just at this moment of the year 2015 – very moving.

The practice as well as the theory of music education include various areas: the music lessons in public schools, learning to make music in special music or art schools, initiatives for music education or concert pedagogy in virtually all concert halls and opera houses, activities around the label "community music", private offers for elementary music education, instrumental tuition and other forms to get in contact with music actively. In the best cases these diverse fields of practice become objects of scientific research. If research is dealing appropriately with practice and thereby contributes to forming and

developing theory, it is of high value for what is happening in practice of music education. Especially the music teachers and through them the learners benefit from research in music education.

However, do not stand research and science here in front of a fundamental dilemma? A basic prerequisite for good research is that it's free from external influences and interests. Impartiality and independence are fundamental prerequisites of serious and respectable research. Science has to be carried out in a good distance to the object of investigation. The mixing of interest and research is again and again a sensitive issue.

In the fields of education and again especially of music education, this problem presents itself in a tightened manner. Education is originally characterized by ethical impulses, is determined by values and intentions. Research and science in the field of education have to deal particularly carefully and responsibly with this dilemma between serious research and the ethical impulse and interest of education. The doctoral students in this room will properly know about it. This is not easy. And it requires definitely the communication and academic disputation among and between researchers on the one hand and practitioners on the other. It needs the fruitful encountering in the scientific community. Exactly like you are doing it right here on this International Scientific Conference on "Theory and Practice of Music Education".

The EAS gives space to these issues around the relationship of theory and practice. This takes place first and foremost at the annual EAS conferences, in the presentations and discussions. This is also an issue in the frame of particular projects like the mentioned "music education network, meNet" and its further development. And it finds space in focus groups as well as in particular books, edited as special EAS publications beyond the annual conference proceedings. Of particular importance in this sense are the initiatives of the EAS, to involve already the young colleagues, especially the students, in these issues. In the context of the annual conferences, the student forums and doctoral forums take place on a regular basis.

For some time, the EAS strives to put a particular research approach to the fore, which already carries inherently the dilemma between serious research and pedagogical intention in itself. This involves the question of whether and how far colleagues, active in the practice of music education, may at the same time act as researchers or can be directly involved in research processes. It's about research approaches around terms such as action research, participatory action research, practical action research, educational design research, design based research, development orientated research in education, practitioner research, and so on.

It is essentially about the question of how the reflection of the practice can be linked with scientific research methods by the practitioners themselves, so that it leads to reputable research and that on the other hand the process and the outcomes of the research actually avail practice.

In a special way, the EAS Conference two years ago has dealt with these issues. The topic of both the conference and the proceedings is "The Reflective Music Teacher".

If you let pass in review the various themes of the EAS Conferences, it is noticeable that general educational topics take precedence. Here some examples: „Developing the Personality ...“, „Moving from Teaching to Learning“, „Lifelong Development“, „Everything depends on a good start“, „The Reflective Music Teacher“, „Every Learner Counts“ etc. In contrast, there are rather few music or art-related topics,

such as "Aesthetic Education nowadays", "Craftsmanship & Artistry" or "Open Ears - Open Minds. Listening and Understanding Music". And it strikes me that at the conferences scientific presentations rather come from the field of general education and the music is mostly content of practical workshops.

Well, music education as a science thrives on its reference sciences, and it may be obvious that research in the field of educational science is particularly close. But couldn't we not also, and even more than we did so far, benefit from the sciences around music, so of music history, music analysis, music sociology, music psychology, ethnomusicology, etc.? I would be interested, how you think about this.

Anyway, I am pleased to be here today as your guest on your International Scientific Conference. I wish you, and all of us, a fruitful and successful conference.

Thank you for your attention!

Translation: MgA. Ena Stavanovic, Ph.D.