

PRESS ARTICLE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Turning Points: Music – Youth – Diversity

More than 100 representatives of the European and international music life met at the end of April in Malmö, Sweden, to attend the EMC Annual Conference. The Swedish Music Council provided a welcoming frame for the event.

Many European societies are currently facing 'turning points'; migration and global political changes in the past years have influenced the societies substantially. The ideal of a multicultural living together turns out not to be realistic; instead we complain about parallel societies and a lack of integration. The loss of a clear vision of society leads to uncertainty and provokes sometimes radical reactions even in these European countries which had been a model before for peaceful inclusion of different cultural backgrounds – be it film director Theo van Gogh's death in the Netherlands, cartoons printed in a Danish newspaper or riots in the French *Banlieues* and the helplessness of German teachers in multiethnic schools. How can we intensify an intercultural dialogue that equally involves all partners? With what means can we address especially young people with migrant backgrounds and include them into society? These questions were discussed at the EMC 2006 Annual Conference in Malmö.

Threats to cultural diversity

Richard Letts started his keynote for the EMC conference with a global overview on the subject of musical diversity. He pointed out that the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), suggesting the liberalisation of service markets, means a big threat to musical diversity worldwide. Letts refers to the 'UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression' as a counterbalance: once in force, the convention would provide tools to signatory parties to protect diverse cultural activities and traditions in their countries. The European Union voted for the approval of the convention with one voice. Therefore, it is even more astonishing that the EU itself has developed proposals to liberalise the cultural market, which are in contradiction to the UNESCO convention. Roland Sandberg, director of the Swedish Music Information Centre, explained that the proposals of the Directorates General 'Competition' and 'Internal Market' concerning authors' rights would threaten cultural diversity in Europe. However, globalisation changes not only markets but also societies through huge migration processes. People with different backgrounds enrich the cultural landscape of different countries with their respective traditions.

In the sense of a multicultural approach, it is essential to protect and promote this extremely rich diversity. The EMC conference provided a platform for best practices illustrating the richness of a society with various cultural influences.

School concerts and masterclasses for intercultural dialog

The model projects presented by EMC members demonstrated how music projects can involve young people with migrant backgrounds in European society. In the Norwegian 'School Concert Concept' for example, musicians work for one day with school classes in socially deprived areas. The day ends with a public concert, in which musicians and children together present the results of the work in a playful and improvisatorial way. The children are both audience and performers. Another project 'Roots and Routes', takes place in eight different European cities (Amsterdam, Barcelona, Budapest, Florence, Cologne, Larissa, Lille and Lisbon): talented young people with various 'roots' come together in workshops and masterclasses to find new 'routes' to stages, internships and training. The power of cultural projects of this kind lies in creating a community and living in it. Many youngsters are often deprived of this essential experience – they are outsiders in the societies in which they are living.

"In the project 'Rhythm is it!' for the first time, I didn't feel strange anymore" tells Dragana Domacinovic from Bosnia-Herzegovina. She lives in Germany and has taken part in dance projects of the Berlin Philharmonics several times, one of which is documented in the film 'Rhythm is it!'. Besides the film-show, two concerts formed the appealing framework of the conference. The young jazz players of the Oscar-Johannsson-Quintet and the presentation of the Norwegian School Concert Concept performed at the inspiring concert on Friday evening. At the second concert, multi-instrumentalist Ale Möller and his musicians from Africa, Mexico, Canada, Greece and Sweden provided an unforgettable evening with traditional musics combined in an untraditional way.

Musical and Cultural Diversity in Europe is to be protected. Culture cannot only be seen as a trade good and thus, cannot underlie the same trade regulations. A broad spectrum of different cultures within Europe can contribute essentially "not to feel strange"; it can support a peaceful living together, exactly in the sense of the preamble to the UNESCO Constitution: "peace must [...] be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind".