

## ECMTA Notes

**From the Chairman of the European Chamber Music Teachers' Association**

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For the first ECMTA column in the June/July issue of Ensemble Magazine, I gave an overview of three member projects which I felt would give an idea of the diversity and innovation which are characteristic of our individual and institutional members. Although they were all projects launched many years before our umbrella association existed, they all demonstrate the kind of spirit and thinking which led such inspiring musicians and educators to join together in 2007 to create the ECMTA. Their desire to both develop and defend the central role of chamber music learning and playing in our schools and society is the point of departure; the conviction that one way to do this is to work together – sharing ideas, networking, advising, encouraging and supporting each other - is the guiding principle.

In this issue I would thus like to give some impressions of what happens when these actors come together for an ECMTA meeting, and relate the very intense, enriching exchanges and activities which take place when chamber music teachers come together. The mission of the association is to promote chamber music practice and education through all possible means and at all levels from the youngest to the oldest, and the annual meetings represent this action in microcosm. Two recent examples will do: the 2009 annual meeting at the Hochschule für Musik in Mannheim and the 2010 annual meeting at the S. Moniuszko Academy for Music in Gdansk. The meeting in Mannheim was organized by ECMTA board member Michael Flaksman with the full support of the Hochschule's director Rudolf Meister and the very talented chamber music and cello students from the school; the Gdansk meeting was organized by ECMTA board member Anna Prabucka-Firlej, with the enthusiastic support of the Academy director Bogdan Kulakowski and over a dozen student ensembles from both the Academy and the Music secondary school.

Both meetings followed a similar format, which has been used with some variations since the founding meeting in Jyväskylä in 2007: meetings and round-tables alternate with masterclasses and concerts so that theory and practice are constantly complementing and enriching each other. Earlier meetings had also been organized in parallel with international student festivals, such as that which took place in Vilnius in 2008, and this allowed many schools to present their ensembles in a fully international atmosphere. Nevertheless, and even though all members are encouraged to continue bringing student ensembles to meetings, the masterclasses are now generally organized with students of the host institution, and concerts are presented either by these same student groups, by faculty, or by students and faculty together. In Mannheim, for example, 6 professors gave 9 masterclasses to students of the Hochschule; in Gdansk, 9 professors from as many different countries gave a total of 24 masterclasses in three days. Many of the professors are Chairman of the chamber music department in their home institutions, and thanks to their generous contributions, the students of the host institution received a highly charged exposure to different ideas and approaches to chamber music problems. Other teachers, while not teaching themselves, move about freely observing each other, and later exchange comments on their work. I myself was able to observe in these meetings wonderful masterclasses with Stefan Metz, Marc Danel, Dalia Balsyte, Robert Irvine, Petras Kunca, Filippo Faes, Marje Lohuaru, and Roberto Galletto.

The meetings and round-tables are generally organized according to themes, but there is always a session entirely devoted to the presentation of ECMTA member projects. This has included short talks by members about the publication of books on chamber music pedagogy, new repertoire for various combinations of instruments, young composers presenting their own works, the organization of festivals, outreach programs, competitions, workshops, and

masterclasses. Other presentations are reports on the chamber music activities of member's institutions, their projects and curriculum innovations. In this way, members gain access to a tremendous amount of highly synthesized information about pedagogical/artistic activities all across Europe. Recent reports included the activities of the Chamber Music Association of Moscow, the chamber music department of the Lithuanian Academy of Music, the role of chamber music instruction in Polish music schools, the works of three French composers writing works for musically and non-musically trained children in collaboration with professional musicians for the ProQuartet association, the works of Cypriot composer Phanos Dymiotis including saxophone, the music of Cuirlionis, the inception and implementation of EU-IT international projects in Castelfranco-Veneto, the incredibly diverse activities - publications, competitions, festivals, teacher training - of the "We Play Music With Friends" Foundation in Riga, and the innovative creation of a new music ensemble in Glasgow through a combination of residencies, grants, recordings, and tours.

(Note: the list of topics presented and the presenters is always available in the ECMTA website archives)

The Round-table discussions are generally an opportunity to bring in experts from outside the association to speak about specific issues and to provoke debate and discussion. The topic in Mannheim was "Chamber Music as a Response to the Needs of the Community – Pedagogical and Professional Opportunities for Teachers and Students." The panelists, which included representatives of *Live Music Now*, *Musique et santé*, the Woodhouse Center, the Vogler String Quartet, the festival *Ecouter/Voir*, the City of Mannheim and its Musikschule, all related experiences and projects that demonstrated the interest of adapting chamber music practice to the special needs of the community, both for musicians, the public, and institutions. The fascinating and passionate presentations made it clear that this process of reflection and adaptation has long term implications for the career development of artists, for the place of music in society, as well as for the financing, artistic choices, and future social environment of chamber music activity. The Round-table in Gdansk concerned the rather sticky problem of organizing festivals with students: "Festivals and Pedagogy, Striking the Right Balance." Marje Lohuaru, of the Estonian Academy of Music spoke about the long and successful experience of the International Festival of Student Chamber Music, Stefan Metz exposed the innovative structure of the Orlando Festival which interweaves young students, amateurs, young professionals, and experienced artists, and Marc Danel of the Danel Quartet, after paying homage to the excellent model provided by Professor Metz, talked about the kinds of opportunities that should be offered to advanced students in order to prepare for professional life.

Each host institution has provided musical moments and concerts of a very high quality, in each case attesting to the commitment and creativity of our colleagues across Europe. It is a special opportunity to hear entire chamber music classes performing the broadest possible range of repertoire in a single weekend, and the presence of so many ECMTA members represents an interesting opportunity for the students as well: the recent meeting in Gdansk fell just the weekend before final performance exams, and the ECMTA concerts and masterclasses provided student groups with a trial run that helped focus and push through to a higher level. The concerts in Mannheim provided an opportunity to bring former students, present students, and faculty together for performances that demonstrated the continuity of the musical community in and outside of the school.

The ECMTA is growing, in both size and diversity. Since the meeting in Mannheim, new members have joined ECMTA from Italy, Latvia, France, Germany, and Finland, and the next annual meeting has been set to take place at the Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome, April 1-3 2011. With this diversity comes increased access to the ideas and projects of the leaders of chamber music pedagogy in Europe, and increased possibilities to defend the indispensable contribution of chamber music training to the musical life of both musicians of all levels of activity and to society in general.

Note : There will also be a more informal “gathering” during the Ascoli Piceno Festival in Italy, September 24-28, during which members are invited to participate in an open-stage concert. Concerts will be free to members, several workshops will be organized with invited guests, and tourist activities will be proposed in the magnificent surroundings of the festival. Lodging is excellent and inexpensive.

**Evan Rothstein, Chairman ECMTA**

Mark the dates:

September 24-28 ECMTA gathering at the Ascoli Piceno Festival in Italy :  
<http://www.ascolipicenofestival.com/>

April 1-3 2011 ECMTA annual meeting at the Accademia Santa Cecilia in Rome  
[www.ecmta.eu](http://www.ecmta.eu)