

## ECMTA Notes

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

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*"Instead of teaching, let us speak of learning"\*:*

*European Chamber Music Teachers' Association annual meeting at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome*

*\*Gunta Melbarde, Founder "We Play Music With Friends" Foundation, Riga*

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Sometimes it seems as if the activity of teachers and educational institutions are too exclusively focused on *what* to teach, how to present a complete and coherent curriculum and produce results. It was thus refreshing to note that the general theme, which emerged repeatedly in speeches and presentations at the last ECMTA annual meeting, can be said to have been "the art of apprenticeship". Although this was not an expressly formulated point of departure, each colleague seemed to approach this question from a different perspective, showing clearly how the most effective and enriching teaching – and performing – is intricately related to the ability to listen and to learn, from students, from the environment, and from audiences. This paradigm shift may not be universal, but it is certainly widely shared, and it is safe to say that it indicates future changes in chamber music education. It is possible that the increasing challenges for culture in Europe may be having the effect of leading our major chamber music teachers to think more deeply about their role in society and about the future of their students. Although there is rarely anything else positive about the current economic, political, and social difficulties, the presentations at the ECMTA meeting underline the fact that this kind of questioning and creativity has also led to many inspiring solutions.

For three days, April 1-3, about 40 participants from 14 countries were warmly welcomed for the 5<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the ECMTA by the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome. The festivities – and work – began on Friday afternoon with welcome speeches from Conservatorio director **Edda Silvestri**, professor and ECMTA member **Roberto Galletto**, and ECMTA Chairman **Evan Rothstein**, followed by a cocktail and a concert of chamber music students from the class of professor Galletto, who was also responsible for the coordination of the meeting. Like all ECMTA meetings, the weekend was filled with member presentations (9), thematic round tables (2), masterclasses (12), concerts (3), and a considerable amount of networking and socializing (the detailed program can be consulted under "previous events" at [www.ecmta.eu](http://www.ecmta.eu)). The general focus of the meeting was the sharing of experience not only in teaching methods but also of best practices in administration, project management, and career development. And yet, the tone was noticeably different from the preceding meetings, in part thanks to the presence of non-teaching guests who were specifically invited to give marketplace perspectives, as well as performers noted for their innovative approaches : Benoît Debuyst from the Festival de Wallonie, Michael Nieuwenhuizen from Muziekcentrum Nederlands, Paolo Bodini from MondoMusica-Cremona, and Silvia Mancini and Luca Lucibello of the Accademia degli archi/Archi Magazine, cellist Umberto Clerici, and Daniel Koschitski and Andrea Ritter from Spark – the classical band.

At the Members' forum, nine colleagues presented short talks about their schools, competitions, festivals or repertoire, including a focus on Russia, Finland, Lithuania, Italy, and England. It was interesting to note that while the offer of useful and interesting projects seems to increase, the principle concern of many colleagues is not only how to establish meaningful long-term contacts between their schools and the potential public, but how to motivate students themselves to participate actively. Various solutions would be presented throughout the weekend, but the question of the pertinence remained a constant concern. It could be said that it was generally accepted that it is no longer enough to ensure that student ensembles simply play well, they must also create and interact with new audiences and new ways of presenting their music. Importantly, several delegates expressed the fact that the

ECMTA meeting was for them as a place to talk about these challenges and to look for new ways of dealing with them.

The session concluded with a presentation of Sibelius's very beautiful early chamber music, much of which is still fairly unknown and only recently recorded: this was a good reminder of how much great repertoire still stops at national borders, which is another good reason for this kind of encounter.

The pedagogy round table showed how certain institutions in France, Lithuania, and Latvia recognize the importance of specific pedagogical training in chamber music instruction, not only for students but also as continuing education for conservatory teachers. The nature of this training is indicative of the larger trends: in each case, the conception of chamber music pedagogy and practice was a focus point for thinking about the inner working of musical practice and the outward relationship to the public. From a purely pedagogical point of view, it was **Gunta Melbarde** ("We Play Music With Friends" Foundation) who began her talk saying : "Instead of teaching, let us speak of learning," meaning that in the relationship between student and teacher, the student should be the teacher's most important source of information. But she immediately moved on to show how her foundation worked to raise the level of chamber music activity and create a larger sense of community among teachers and students of all generations. This idea was complemented by **Christophe Giovaninetti** (Quatuor Elysée), who described his chamber music pedagogy teaching at the Conservatoire national supérieur de Paris, where future instructors learn that fundamental information is to be put in relation to the inner feelings and desires of the young performer. **Petras Kunca** (Lithuanian Academy of Music) addressed the issue from an interdisciplinary perspective: while reminding us that chamber music pedagogy should draw on discoveries in cognitive research, group psychology, and behavioral science, Professor Kunca spoke passionately about the need for the teacher to recognize and involve himself in the group dynamic and social dimension that chamber music practice requires. **Gunta Sproge** (Latvian Academy of Music) then described the very concrete and extremely diverse projects instituted in Latvia to obtain the kind of results described by the three other colleagues.

This line of thinking went on to related dimensions with the marketplace/career development round table, which presented a varied selection of approaches to making chamber music work in contemporary society. These went from clear-headed market analysis of the public to initiatives in professional preparation in training to innovative ways of programming and communicating. **Mr Nieuwenhuizen** shared with delegates the concrete aspects of his work in Amsterdam, tracking current market trends, promoting best musical practices, increasing the visibility of Dutch musicians, and helping musicians learn to navigate the marketplace. Although most countries do not have a national structure devoted to such a useful mission, it was certainly stimulating for teachers to hear about the dynamic interchange between innovation coming from artists themselves and innovation which is required by structural changes in society. **Mr Debuyst**, who has recently been deeply involved in the creation of a new festival in Brussels involving numerous guest artists and students from the Royal Conservatory, spoke of the relative futility of simply arranging concerts for students to perform in. He declined four essential encounters necessary to make the experience valid: 1) students must meet with and engage the public 2) students must collaborate with professionals 3) students must meet and engage with music industry professionals 4) students must meet and engage with those in other disciplines. This approach resonated with the presentation of members of **Spark-the classical band**: asking the question, "How can we get more young people to come to our concerts?" the inevitable response was "They won't. We must go to them." This realization is not only in terms of locations, but also in the conception of programs: Spark thus tries to find the points of connection, the familiar patterns that cross from one repertoire to another, and manages to speak to new audiences through a combination of brilliant musicality, innovative arranging, fresh juxtapositions, creative instrumentation, cutting edge communication tools, and lively stage presence. **Richard**

**Ireland** (ChamberStudio, London) explained that in the present music marketplace, younger professional ensembles need more counseling and assistance in finding their place. The increasing number of highly-trained chamber ensembles at a time of reduced budgets puts pressure on musicians to create their own opportunities. This even has implications for the preparation of repertoire, since it is no longer possible for even a world-class ensemble to simply stick to a limited or fixed repertoire for most of a season. The constant need to vary repertoire, styles, and locations increases the need for long-term coaching, which is what ChamberStudio is meant to address. Already in its first season, the program has enrolled 30 ensembles (See Ensemble Magazine Issue ?). And finally, the cellist **Umberto Clerici** gave a performance of his own programming experiments, very much in tune with the approach presented by Spark, in which he recomposes “suites” of stylistically and historically diverse movements and pieces whose relationship is slowly revealed only upon listening. To do this, he is also looking for common points and shared patterns between apparently unrelated repertoires, in order to open doors – or ears – from one public to another. As all present seemed to agree, this is simply a reflection of the musical reality that we now live in, and it is perhaps time to take this into consideration within the framework of chamber music teaching as well.

In terms of more traditional chamber music pedagogy, at least 13 student ensembles took advantage of the masterclasses offered by ECMTA members and guests, and played in the three evening concerts including chamber music with strings, winds, voice, and piano. These were mostly students of the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia, but additions included students of Maja Nosowska (Chopin Conservatory, Warsaw). Masterclass instructors included ECMTA members Petr Prause (Royal Northern College of Music Manchester), Petras Kunca, Dalia Balsyte (Lithuanian Academy of Music), Alexander Bonduryansky (Moscow State Conservatory), Maxim Purizhinskiy (Moscow State Conservatory), Keijo Aho (Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki), Natalia Sakkos (Estonian Academy of Music, Tallinn), and Roberto Galletto. Special guests included Richard Ireland, Christophe Giovaninetti, and, as part of a collaboration with the Accademia degli archi/Archi Magazine, Umberto Clerici, and members of the Quartetto di Roma. Many students and ECMTA members sat in on each other's masterclasses, and there was a marvelous atmosphere of shared experience, mutual respect and appreciation which is characteristic of these meetings.

Dr Evan Rothstein, Chairman, ECMTA

Mark your calendars!!!

- Next Informal Gathering of ECMTA: Oct. 16-17, in association with the Dutch Classical Music Meeting, Amsterdam. <http://dcmm.mcn.nl>

- Next year's annual meeting: Estonian Academy of Music and Theater in Tallinn in April 2012. <http://www.ema.edu.ee/?lang=eng>

Information: [www.ecmta.eu](http://www.ecmta.eu)

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