



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

PRESENTATION BY LEE HIGGINS, PRESIDENT, ISME AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 33RD ISME WORLD CONFERENCE

It is an honour for me to welcome you all to the 33rd ISME World Conference.

Over the last few days ISME delegates from over 60 countries have arrived into Baku. Illuminated by the Flame Towers, this beautiful city welcomes us. Its people and their cultures are ready to introduce the riches of the city and ensure you have an unforgettable experience.

Our conference is a celebration of music education in the context of the unfamiliar. It's location has given the ISME membership an opportunity to say "yes".

To say:

Beli

Evet

Da

Oui

Si

Shi

Hai

"Yes" to music education in its many forms;

"Yes" to being part of an organisation that champions diversity, difference, and challenge;

"Yes" to supporting music education in regions of the world that are unknown to us; and

“Yes” to welcoming new colleagues to the ISME family where local and national practices can be enriched, deepened, and better understood through interacting with contexts beyond the familiar.

But with the decision of saying “yes” there comes a certain responsibility. This responsibility can be hard - demanding energy and resources sometimes not available to us. Saying “yes” might not always be feasible. However, if our hearts are open to its possibility, if we embrace the concept as a ‘way of being’ and activity action the idea in our professional lives then who knows how music education - in all of its guises - might develop and grow.

After meeting, many of you yesterday and now looking out at this audience I am so proud to see a group of music educators that have said “yes” – yes to coming to Baku and supporting our colleagues in the Turkic Region and yes to embracing the unfamiliar.

Of course, our presence is not all altruistic. We must acknowledge that we are also here for ourselves. Our own professional development is important and this is to be celebrated. Contemporary working life is complex and we are constantly encountering a myriad of experiences. We witness many wonderful things and marvel at the support and love we are shown by those with whom we collaborate and by those that participate in what we have to offer. These moments would not be such if they were not operating on a continuum. Therefore, we experience tension, work in difficult and challenging environments, contexts where the structures appear to be against us and situations where there is a lack of value and respect as regards the important practices we are undertaking.

But there is some good news - this conference is ours to own. It’s an opportunity to remember you are not alone in both your struggles and your successes. Strong, reciprocal relationships bind a healthy professional life and in the coming days, our Baku conference will unfold in many wonderful, diverse, and surprising manifestations. There will be a kaleidoscope of happenings in forms of papers, workshop, and music making so allow this event to replenish and reinvigorate you.

This year we have added a wider participatory element to the proceedings with open sessions where you are invited to offer ideas as regards how the organization might move forward whilst also thinking about how you might get more involved in our growing gamut of activities. The Presidents reception tomorrow is also open to you all.

So....on behalf of the ISME board I want to say enjoy your time here, grasp every opportunity you can to hear and see new things, build important new relationships and further deepen existing ones.

Whilst journeying through this week I want to encourage you - every so often - to just stop.....

take in the moment.....

and reflect on what a privilege it is to be here.

Have a great week.