

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Higher Music Education: An Invitation for Action

DEI International Symposium by members of the Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality Working Group of the AEC - Empowering Artists as Makers in Society project

Monday, 7th October | Tuesday, 8th October, 2024
Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore

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The [Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality Working Group](#) of the [AEC - Empowering Artists as Makers in Society \(ARTEMIS\)](#) project invites Higher Music Education (HME) institutions to explore, discuss and implement practices fostering Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) at the local level. The aim is to collectively dream up possible futures for HME through DEI work responding to the need to accommodate the plurality of backgrounds, artistic paradigms, access capabilities, identities and aspirations amongst current as well as future students and professionals alike. A central question for the symposium is:

How can HME institutions become a network of change makers in society rather than merely adapt to local and global changes and pressures?

Despite the global networks and the volume of interaction, each institution is dealing with local and global changes, trends and challenges at their own pace and in their own ways related to their specific context. This means that what is considered pertinent in the institutions in terms of DEI varies, with issues ranging from policies dealing with the (legally) protected characteristics of students to questioning the formation of canon repertoire. However, regardless of whether the discussions focus on musical traditions and heritage, definitions of high standards, diversities of human characteristics, qualities and orientations, curriculum development, code of conduct, power relations, or the purpose of musicianship in the changing society and the natural environment, the DEI topics appear to raise a shared experience of *resistance* amongst the institutions.

Implementing DEI within HME and dealing with resistance involves both everyday choices and interactions, as well as wider, futures-oriented strategic planning. Both of these dimensions will be discussed during this 2-day symposium facilitated by members of the Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality Working Group and hosted by the [Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music \(YST\)](#) in Singapore, combining plenary presentations with interactive activities and thematic discussions in smaller groups.

While external experts may be needed at times to support DEI work within institutions, sustainable changes come from internal commitment.

The symposium will also offer a chance to learn about the resource package developed by the Working Group titled [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Higher Music Education: An Invitation for Action](#). The publication is divided into five sections: an invitation, a view into the landscape of DEI in HME institutions, personal experiences and reflections by colleagues from different AEC member institutions, digital resources to support the ongoing DEI work, and a section dedicated to resistance in order to unpack this overarching theme within the context of HME.

We invite all staff and students from Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore, representatives from [SEADOM](#) partners, and all other invitees to this DEI International Symposium presented by the [Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen \(AEC\)](#), co-funded by the European Union.

About us

Dr. Katja Thomson

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Lecturer and researcher in Music Education at the Sibelius Academy, Uniarts Helsinki
Chair of the Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality Working Group

Dr. Katja Thomson is a Lecturer in Music Education and a researcher in the project Music Education, Professionalism, and Eco-Politics (EcoPolitics, 2021-2025) at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. Her spatially oriented research focuses on intercultural music practices as part of societal engagement in Higher Music Education institutions. In 2021, Thomson completed her doctoral dissertation on an ensemble project that included musicians with refugee and immigrant background and students from the Sibelius Academy.

She has worked extensively in co-developing and implementing education programmes promoting creative, participatory music practices. Her international experience in this field includes work in Brazil, Nepal, the Philippines and European countries. Thomson is currently a member of the committee focused on societal engagement within the European IN.TUNE alliance. Originally from Finland, she lived in the UK from the late '90s until 2011.

Xiangning Lin

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Faculty at the Yong Siew Conservatory of Music
Member of the Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality Working Group

Xiangning is a pianist, artistic researcher, educator, as well as a curator and producer of interdisciplinary works. She is a faculty member at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, teaching courses related to music and cultural studies. This fall, she begins her PhD studies in the History Department at the National University of Singapore. Her research interests lie in the intersections of cultural history, decolonialism, literature, and music, with a focus on Southeast Asia.

As an advocate for greater diversity and inclusivity in the arts, she is currently a member of the Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality (DIGE) Working Group as part of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC) — Empowering Artists as Makers in Society project. Recent panel invitations on this matter include the 49th AEC Annual Congress and General Assembly: *Imagining opportunities for establishing new traditions which embrace a more diverse world – Networking beyond Europe* (2022), and the Association for Asia Pacific Performing Arts Centres (AAPPAC) Conference *Future Forward: Notes for the Way Forward* (2022).

Monica Vejgaard

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President of the European Performing Arts Students' Association
Member of the Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality Working Group

Monica Vejgaard is a Danish flautist, composer, and multimedia artist dedicated to amplifying the voices of emerging artists and fostering positive change within the cultural and creative sectors. She holds a bachelor's degree in classical flute performance from the Danish National Academy and is currently pursuing her master's degree. During her studies, she studied abroad at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg, Germany, and at the Estonian Academy for Music and Theater.

Passionate about turning ideas into action, she has been part of organising several cultural events in Denmark and abroad while also working as a Cultural Policy Consultant for the National Union of Students in Denmark, empowering art students to effect change and cultivate connections.

Monica is a member of the DIGE Working Group within the AEC, a European Music Council (EMC) Fellow, a board member of the Danish Flute Festival, and the President of the European Performing Arts Students' Association (EPASA). She is currently doing an internship at the Royal Danish Embassy in Tokyo, where she engages in public and cultural diplomacy.

Alfonso Guerra

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AEC Membership and Finance Coordinator, ARTEMIS Project Manager
Coordinator of the Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality Working Group

Alfonso graduated from the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles in Belgium with a master's degree in Music Composition and holds a master's diploma in EU Project Design & Management 2021-2027 from the Europa Innovation Business School in The Netherlands. Moreover, he recently obtained a postgraduate certificate in Migration, Ethnic Diversity and Intercultural Relations at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium, where he is currently enrolled in Gender and Sexuality studies.

At the AEC, besides liaising with more than 310 member institutions worldwide and monitoring the overall financial management of the office, Alfonso is involved in project management and has developed expertise in diversity, inclusion and gender equality matters as coordinator of the Diversity, Identity, Inclusiveness Working Group of the AEC – Strengthening Music in Society project, and more recently as coordinator of the IncluMusic project on Special Education Needs (SEN). Moreover, he is dedicated to culture as an active composer, harmony teacher and professional music engraver. Since 2022, Alfonso coordinates AEC's flagship project, AEC – Empowering Artists as Makers in Society, and is involved in project writing and reporting processes with the European Commission.

Schedule

Monday, 7th October

10:00 - 10:30 Welcome and registrations

10:30 - 11:00 Plenary session 1. Introduction: YST alignment with AEC

11:00 - 12:00 Plenary session 2. AEC - the road towards a more diverse HME in Europe

12:00 - 12:30 Activity 1. Ice breaker and statistics

12:30 - 13:30 *Lunch*

13:30 - 14:30 Discussion groups on different topics

14:30 - 15:30 Plenary session 3. The work of the DIGE Working Group and the resource package

15:30 - 16:00 *Coffee break*

16:00 - 17:00 Activity 2. Unpacking questions by participants

17:00 - 17:30 Wrap-up of Day 1

Tuesday, 8th October

10:00 - 11:00 Parallel session 1: Student and alumni session
10:00 - 11:00 Parallel session 2: Staff, faculty and senior management session

11:00 - 12:30 Activity 3. World Café on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
12:30 - 13:30 *Lunch*

13:30 - 14:30 Plenary session 4. Open discussion
14:30 - 15:30 Closing remarks

Invitation (from AEC)

Dear colleagues,

In the frame of the [AEC - Empowering Artists as Makers in Society](#) project (ARTEMIS, 2022-2025), co-funded by the European Union, members of the [Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality Working Group](#) will facilitate a 2-day symposium aimed at exploring, discussing and implementing practices fostering Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in Higher Music Education (HME) at the local level.

The symposium will be hosted by the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore. It will take place on Monday, 7th October and Tuesday, 8th October, and is free of charge.

Please note that both AEC and YST would like to kindly extend this invitation to all staff and students enrolled at HME institutions in Singapore and neighbouring countries, but also to representatives from [SEADOM](#) partner institutions to join.

The symposium will provide the opportunity to collectively dream up possible futures for HME through DEI work, responding to the need to accommodate the plurality of backgrounds, artistic paradigms, access capabilities, identities and aspirations amongst current as well as future students and professionals alike. It will also offer a chance to learn about the resource package developed by the Working Group: [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Higher Music Education: An Invitation for Action](#).

Should you want to attend the symposium in Singapore, please fill in the following Google form: <https://forms.gle/RWKwKaZD9p8Z9tDy7>.

Deadline for receiving registrations is Sunday, 15th September.

Please note that the form will be closed as soon as we reach 50 registrations, and that a maximum of 10 attendees are allowed per institution (except for YST as the host institution). Due to this restriction on the number of attendees, we would greatly appreciate it if those registered will indeed attend the 2-day symposium in Singapore. Otherwise, please feel free to contact us as soon as possible so we can reallocate empty spots to participants on the waiting list.

Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be happy to be of your assistance. On behalf of the Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality Working Group, we are very much looking forward to seeing you in Singapore!

With best wishes,
Alfonso Guerra