

AEC Executive Committee and

Council Election 2026

CV's and Statements of Candidates



THE ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE
DES CONSERVATOIRES, ACADÉMIES
DE MUSIQUE ET MUSIKHOCHSCHULEN

List of Candidates for the Council:

- Willi, Barbara Maria (Czech Republic)
- Rimšaitė, Rima (Lithuania)
- Varema, Henry-David (Estonia)

CANDIDATURE AS A MEMBER OF THE AEC COUNCIL 2026

MOTIVATION AND INTENTION

I am applying for a second term as a member of the AEC Council because I firmly believe that, in a world increasingly affected by crises and uncertainty, solidarity among representatives of higher music education is more important than ever. Together, our voice is stronger and our impact greater.

AEC provides a unique platform for protecting, promoting and developing the cultural values that form the foundation of our societies. At a time of profound technological transformation, we have the opportunity not only to embrace innovation but also to ensure that the human, artistic and educational dimensions remain at the centre of development. Music and arts education offer a distinctive contribution by nurturing creativity, critical thinking, empathy and cultural understanding.

To keep this voice authentic and relevant, we must strengthen collaboration across all levels of our institutions, among leaders, administrators, teachers, researchers and students alike. The diversity of experience and expertise within the AEC community is one of our greatest strengths and a source of resilience and innovation.

During a second term on the AEC Council, I would focus particularly on four priorities. First, I would support sustainable international cooperation models that enable long-term partnerships and shared study programmes, building on successful examples such as the European Master of Early Music. Second, I would advocate for the responsible integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence into music higher education, ensuring that innovation strengthens rather than diminishes the human and artistic dimensions of learning. Third, I would continue to promote socially safe, inclusive and supportive academic environments that foster both artistic excellence and personal well-being. Finally, I would work towards strengthening the visibility and societal relevance of music and arts education within European higher education policies and public discourse.

AEC has both the capacity and the responsibility to champion the enduring value of music education and its essential contribution to society. I would be honoured to continue contributing to this mission through a second term on the AEC Council.

CV

Barbara Maria Willi is a harpsichordist, researcher, academic leader and Professor of Historical Performance Practice with extensive experience in higher arts education, institutional leadership and international cooperation. She served as Dean of the Music Faculty of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) in Brno, Czech Republic.

Her innovative approach has significantly shaped the academic profile of her home institution through the establishment of several study programmes, including the doctoral programme *Interpretation and Theory of Interpretation* and the multi-level programme *Historical Performance Practice*. As dean, educator and researcher, she has actively promoted a socially safe and supportive environment for students and staff.

Drawing on her long-standing international artistic network, she has fostered strong partnerships between the academic and cultural sectors, creating opportunities for students to engage in professional artistic practice from the very beginning of their studies. Under her leadership, sustainable approaches to education and cooperation have gained increased prominence. One of the outcomes of this strategic vision is the international Joint Study Programme *European Master of Early Music*, developed in partnership between JAMU Brno and the Royal Conservatoire The Hague.

Her current interests focus on strengthening sustainable academic partnerships, supporting research into the use of digital technologies in international academic exchange, and developing innovative teaching formats at both national and international levels.

prof. Barbara Maria Willi, Ph.D., MBA

CANDIDATURE FOR THE AEC COUNCIL

in the elections to be held on 7 November 2026

I present my candidature to the AEC Council:

Signature:

Name: Barbara Maria Willi

Institution: Janáček Academy of Performing Arts, Brno

Country: Czech Republic

I enclose my curriculum vitae and short statement (250-350 words) in English.

Proposer's signature: 

Name: Martin Prchal

Institution: Royal Conservatoire

Country: The Netherlands

To be sent to the AEC office by 7th September 2026

info@aec-music.eu

RIMA RIMŠAITĖ

Candidature for the AEC Council

SHORT STATEMENT

I am standing for election to the AEC Council because I believe that international cooperation is not an additional activity in higher music education: it is one of the conditions for its relevance, resilience, and artistic vitality. After more than three decades in LMTA's international relations and many years of active engagement with AEC, I would now like to contribute more directly to the Association's strategic development.

My AEC experience includes the Polifonia network's Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Socrates working group and eight years in the planning group for AEC Annual Meetings for International Relations Coordinators. These roles showed me the value of sustained professional dialogue, shared responsibility, and practical cooperation among institutions with different histories, resources, and priorities.

My wider professional experience has taught me how to translate European priorities into institutional practice. I work with students, teachers, institutional leaders, and international partners, coordinating mobility, developing partnerships, and implementing Erasmus+, Nordplus, Tempus, and interdisciplinary arts projects. I would bring to the Council institutional memory, strategic awareness, diplomacy, reliability, and an ability to listen across cultural and institutional contexts.

If elected, I would work to strengthen meaningful and inclusive internationalisation across the AEC community. I am particularly committed to ensuring that smaller institutions and countries are heard, that Nordic-Baltic and wider European dialogue is reinforced, and that international opportunities are accessible to students and staff with different needs and circumstances. I would also encourage connections between music and other artistic disciplines while keeping artistic quality and human relationships at the centre.

I am ready to represent members, maintain regular communication between them and AEC, participate actively in Council work, and take responsibility for relevant portfolios, platforms, or working groups. My goal would be to help turn the diversity of AEC's membership into shared strength: a source of learning, solidarity, innovation, and confident advocacy for higher music education throughout Europe.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Rima Rimšaitė is Head of the International Relations Office at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LMTA), a position she has held since 2008. She has worked in LMTA's international relations since 1989 and has been its Institutional Erasmus Coordinator since 2005. She holds a higher education diploma in musicology, equivalent to a Master's degree.

Her work focuses on the internationalisation of higher arts education, academic mobility, institutional partnerships, and European project development. From 2002 to 2007, she directed the public institution LMA International Projects Group. She has coordinated numerous Erasmus+, Nordplus, Tempus, Creative Europe and interdisciplinary projects involving music, theatre, film, opera, and digital arts. An Intensive Programme “Erasmus Conducting Course”, organised with the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, was ranked among Europe's six best Erasmus IP projects in 2002.

Her direct AEC experience includes membership of the planning group for AEC Annual Meetings for International Relations Coordinators from 2008 to 2016. She has also contributed to the development of AEC guide for international coordinators “Ten Steps How to Develop your Erasmus Programme”. She also served on the Nordplus Music international relations committee from 2009 to 2015 and has coordinated Nordic-Baltic projects including Music Laboratory PROCESS, Nordopera, NORD+MIX, Virtual Audition, the Baltic Academies Orchestra, Nordic Conservatoire, Performance Recording, Dig. Music, and many others.

Her professional interests include inclusive international education, intercultural dialogue, diversity, community building, and sustainable cooperation. She is a founding member of the LMTA Alumni Association. She speaks English and Russian fluently.



THE ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE
DES CONSERVATOIRES, ACADÉMIES
DE MUSIQUE ET MUSIKHOCHSCHULEN

AEC Elections Form 2026: Council Member

To be sent to the AEC office **by 7th September 2026**

info@aec-music.eu

CANDIDATURE FOR THE AEC COUNCIL *in the elections to be held on 7 November 2026*

I present my candidature to the AEC Council:

Signature:

Name: Rima Rimšaitė
Institution: Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LMTA)
Country: Lithuania

I enclose my curriculum vitae and short statement (250-350 words) in English.

Proposer's signature:

Name: Martin Prchal
Institution: Royal Conservatoire
Country: The Netherlands

Statement of Candidature - AEC Council Member 2026

I am pleased to present my candidature for the AEC Council. For more than three decades, my professional life has combined artistic practice, teaching, international cooperation and academic leadership. Since 2016, I have served as Vice-Rector for Artistic Activities and International Relations at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, and I would welcome the opportunity to bring this experience to the work of AEC.

As Vice-Rector, I am involved in institutional strategy, academic policy, curriculum development, quality assurance, international relations and the development of artistic activities. I have also established and developed international partnerships with institutions across Europe and beyond. Alongside my academic work, I have remained an active professional musician and have held leadership positions in several national music organisations, including the Estonian Association of Professional Musicians, the Estonian Music Council and, for five years, the Estonian String Teachers Association.

Having participated regularly in AEC meetings over the past decade, I have come to value AEC as a unique European forum for exchange, cooperation and mutual learning. If elected, one priority I would bring to the Council is the continuity of musical training across educational levels, from primary and secondary schooling through to tertiary education at conservatoires and universities, particularly in addressing the shortage of music teachers now affecting schools in many parts of Europe, a concern I know well from my years leading the Estonian String Teachers Association and from what I see more broadly across music teaching in Estonia. A further priority would be helping institutions navigate the tension between rapid technological change and the preservation of artistic tradition.

I also believe AEC's role as a forum for solidarity matters more than ever in the current climate. Institutions in the Baltic region navigate a more uncertain geopolitical environment, while institutions across Europe more broadly face their own pressures. As a Council member, I would work to ensure that AEC remains a space where institutions of different sizes, situations and regions can share strategies and support one another.

I would be honoured to contribute to AEC's strategic development with the perspective of an institutional leader, educator and active musician, and with a strong commitment to collegiality, openness and European cooperation.

HENRY-DAVID VAREMA

Vice-Rector for Artistic Activities & International Relations | Professor of Cello

Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Estonia

henry-david.varema@eamt.ee | +372 56675590

PROFILE

Senior higher music education leader, professor and internationally active cellist with more than three decades of experience spanning artistic practice, teaching, institutional governance and international cooperation. Vice-Rector at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre since 2016, with responsibilities including strategic development, academic policy, curriculum development, quality assurance, international and public relations, artistic activities and budget planning. Long-standing experience in professional music organisations and international networks, combining the perspectives of institutional leadership, educator and practising musician.

CURRENT ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Vice-Rector for Artistic Activities & International Relations — Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT) 2016–present

Member of the senior management team; contributes to institutional strategy and academic policy.

Responsible for international and public relations and for the strategic development and coordination of artistic activities.

Experience in curriculum development, quality assurance, cross-departmental collaboration, budget planning and improvement of institutional processes.

Represents EAMT internationally and develops institutional partnerships and cooperation projects.

Professor of Cello (previously Associate Professor) — Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre teaching since 2001; Professor/Associate Professor 2006–present

Teaching, mentoring, curriculum development and supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate projects.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION

Regular participant in AEC meetings and conferences for approximately a decade, representing EAMT in European discussions on higher music education, institutional strategy, internationalisation and artistic development.

Initiated and developed international partnerships, mobility programmes and artistic-academic projects across Europe and beyond. Current initiatives include a 2026–27 Nordic–Baltic collaboration with the Sibelius Academy, the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre and the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, encompassing joint orchestra projects, concerts in Tallinn, Vilnius and Riga, and exchanges of students and soloists.

Contributes to international dialogue on the relationship between higher music education and professional life, including as a panellist at the 2026 IAMA-related discussion ‘From Conservatory to Career: Bridging the Gap Between Training and the Professional Stage.’

Extensive international teaching experience, including masterclasses at universities in Europe, the United States, Canada, Brazil and Australia, invited participation at FIMUS in Brazil, and teaching projects in Colombia.

Regularly involved in expert and evaluation committees, international conferences and strategic cooperation networks in higher education and the cultural sector.

GOVERNANCE & PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Chair / Vice-Chair — Estonian Association of Professional Musicians (Eesti Interpreetide Liit) Chair 2012–2013 and 2020–present; Vice-Chair 2018–2020

Responsible for strategic priorities, organisational development, projects, budgeting, external relations and cooperation with public authorities and cultural institutions.

Board Member — Estonian Music Council 2012–2014; 2019–present

Contributes to music-policy discussions and cooperation across cultural and educational organisations.

President — Estonian String Teachers Association 2009–2014

Led the organisation, coordinated professional development activities and strengthened international links with teachers' associations.

ARTISTIC & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Long-term orchestral leadership experience alongside an international career as cellist, soloist and chamber musician.

Principal Cellist — Estonian National Opera Orchestra 1997–2022

Associate Principal Cellist — Sydney Symphony Orchestra 2014

Long-standing chamber-music collaboration with the Petersen Quartet and collaborations with leading international artists.

Masterclasses, residencies and performances across Europe, Asia, North America and Oceania.

Artistic recognition includes the ECHO Klassik Award and Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Musical Arts, Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, 2005.

Advanced studies, Universität der Künste Berlin, 2000–2002.

Advanced studies, Hochschule für Musik & Theater München, 1992–1995.

Tallinn Conservatoire, 1992.

LANGUAGES

Estonian – native | English – native | German – very good | Finnish – good | Russian – basic | Spanish – basic



**THE ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE
DES CONSERVATOIRES, ACADÉMIES
DE MUSIQUE ET MUSIKHOCHSCHULEN**

AEC Elections Form 2026: Council Member

To be sent to the AEC office by 7th September 2026

info@aec-music.eu

CANDIDATURE FOR THE AEC COUNCIL *in the elections to be held on 7 November 2026*

I present my candidature to the AEC Council:

Signature:

Name: Henry-David Varema
Institution: Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre
Country: Estonia

I enclose my curriculum vitae and short statement (250-350 words) in English.

Proposer's signature:

Name: Ivari Ilja, Rector
Institution: Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre
Country: Estonia