

Press Release, 18 August 2023

## **Discussion at the Mozarteum: The Impact of Music on Society | A conference with a top-flight panel of experts**

*Emotional rescue! The Impact of Music on Society* was the theme of a one-day conference organized by the charitable Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership in association with the International Mozarteum Foundation and the Vienna Institute for Cultural and Contemporary History and Arts. A top-flight panel of experts sought to shed light on the role and potential of music, discussing themes that may be summarized under the following headings:

Beyond the Sound of Music: Exploring the Impact of Music Education on Child Development  
Music Therapy: Roots, Developments, and Perspectives in Research and Practice  
Musical Activities in the Acculturation Processes of Young People with Migration Experiences  
“Mozart Lives” – Out-reach Programs of the International Mozarteum Foundation  
Creating Bridges: Musical Activities and Society – Mutual Inspirations

Art, and especially music, knows no bounds. Above all, it knows no social bounds. The present debate examined not only the influence of music on society but also its influence on individuals. Is it possible to gain political support for new structures in this field through the medical and social use of music and of music lessons for young people when this use is supported on a lasting basis?

Although there continues to be a lack of large-scale comparative research projects with common research parameters, numerous international studies have shown that there is a demonstrable qualitative trend here. If elementary schoolchildren are taught music by well-qualified teachers in a targeted way, then it is possible to observe tangible improvements in terms of both their ability to learn and their motor skills. Language teaching can be improved by targeted music lessons, and the children’s cognitive abilities are increased.

These positive effects of music can also be seen in music therapy, which in Austria has been recognized and regulated by a federal law since 2009. A whole series of international studies has also shown that a number of psychological illnesses and social and physical disorders can be remedied in this way, allowing patients to take significantly less medication. Despite this evidence, which has been confirmed by many years’ experience on the part of music therapists, this treatment is not covered by health insurance companies. Politicians clearly have a lot of catching up to do here since a lasting improvement in the state of our health is manifestly possible without resulting in negative side-effects and without requiring the cost of medical treatment.

Smaller case studies have also shown that making music together can have positive results in the acculturation of migrants. One example is the Orchestral Union. Interactive work in music helps with the intercultural work between the cultures of the migrants’ homelands and Austrian culture. Mention should also be made in this context of orchestral projects such as that of the International Mozarteum Foundation in Cuba and Colombia as well as in Salzburg itself since these contribute towards an increase in cultural understanding across the globe and also help to reduce social conflict.

Ulrich Leisinger, Director of Research Department at the International Mozarteum Foundation, notes that “in 2008 the Foundation made a modest but far-sighted start in this field and since then has played a leading role in communicating music in and around Salzburg. Thanks to our varied programmes for young people in the areas of museums and concerts, every child in Salzburg should now come into contact with Mozart – a figure who fascinates all age-groups – at least once in his or her time at school. Such a contact can often have a lasting impact. Our initiatives have found successors and we are grateful for all the support that we have received from powerful partners in every field.”

“As a land of music Austria should be aware of these multifarious opportunities,” says Oliver Rathkolb of the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna. “It should lay greater emphasis on music teaching in establishing pedagogical goals in all types of school by allotting more classes to music. Given the current turbo-charged rate of globalization and the psychological demands placed on every society, targeted music lessons can ensure greater emotional calm and certainty.”

**The following participants spoke on the various topics and took part in round-table discussions:**

**Joel Bell**, Chairman of the Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership

**Dr Elisabeth Dumont**, Lecturer at the Maastricht Academy of Music

**Dr Rubén Gallo**, Professor in Latin American Literature at Princeton University

**Dr Katarzyna Grebosz-Haring**, Inter-University Organization Science & Arts, Department of Musicology and Dance Studies, Paris Lodron University of Salzburg, Mozarteum University of Salzburg

**Dr Kristina Hammer**, President of the Salzburg Festival

**Marifé Hernández**, Vice Chair of the Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership

**Dr Johannes Honsig-Erlenburg**, President of the International Mozarteum Foundation

**Dr Ulrich Leisinger**, Director of Research Department at the International Mozarteum Foundation

**Dr Helga Rabl-Stadler**, Special Adviser on Foreign Culture at the Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs and former President of the Salzburg Festival

**DDr Oliver Rathkolb**, Professor at the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna

**Dr Monika Smetana**, Professor, Institute for Musical Therapy, mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna

**Ulrike Sych MA, Rector**, mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna

The **Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership** has its headquarters in New York and is a charitable foundation that promotes strategies and actions by individuals, organizations and governments, all of them designed to contribute to a fair, productive and harmonious society. The Chumir Foundation works to facilitate open-minded, informed and respectful dialogue among a broad and engaged public and its leaders to arrive at outcomes that help to create better communities.

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