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ARTS PHILANTHROPY

FORUM PROCEEDINGS

Strategic Philanthropy for the Arts

Collaboration and Partnerships for a Meaningful Impact

Strategic Philanthropy for the Arts
Collaboration and Partnerships for a Meaningful Impact

Twin partner

Main partner

Institutional partners

In-kind partnerships

Strategic Philanthropy for the Arts

Collaboration and Partnerships for a Meaningful Impact

INSTITUTIONAL GREETINGS

CHRISTOPH BRENNER
Director of Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana

Good morning everyone, and welcome.
Welcome to the second edition of the Strategic Philanthropy for the Arts Forum, organized by the Fondazione Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana and the Associazione Amici del Conservatorio, with the support and collaboration of EFG, to whom we extend our heartfelt thanks, along with all the other project partners - LAC, Brain Circle, Ashoka and Fondazione Mantello Filantropia. We are absolutely delighted to have you here with us today.
I am pleased to give the floor to our President, Mrs. Ina Piattini-Pelloni. Thank you again.

INA PIATTINI-PELLONI
President Fondazione Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana

Honorable Roberto Badaracco, Deputy Mayor of our city, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Fondazione Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana, I warmly welcome you to this second Forum on Philanthropy.
I would like to thank EFG as the main sponsor, and I would also like to extend my gratitude to Angela Greco, whom I would describe as the deus ex machina of this event.
I sincerely thank those who will take the stage today to share their stories, ideas, and experiences. I also want to acknowledge those who selected and performed the music.
I do not wish to take time away from the valuable contributions to come, but I would like to share a brief story—one born from a utopian vision: “Beauty will save the world.” In this context, beauty represents the relentless pursuit of quality. It is a story that comes to life through a vision that transcends daily constraints, surpasses individual interests, and aspires to the common good, to beauty, and to collective excellence. This very vision has guided the leadership of the CSI in engaging and uniting the region’s musical institutions under a shared mission.
Thanks to everyone’s collaboration, we will bring to life the magnificent project of the City of Music—a place that will be alive with thousands of young people, passionate about. It is a short story, almost a fairy tale, yet it demonstrates how the power of utopia, the flame of vision, and the strength of collaboration are the essential ingredients in the experiences and ideas that you, the participants of this Forum, will share today. So, my infinite thanks to all of you. I wish you an inspiring and visionary day for the future. Thank you.

ROBERTO BADARACCO
President LAC Lugano Arte e Cultura and Deputy Mayor of the City of Lugano

Good morning, everyone.
It is a pleasure to see so many of you here at LAC for this important Forum.
I would like to thank the President of the Conservatorio, Ina Piattini Pelloni, the President of the Amici del CSI, Carlo Donadini, all the attendees, and the speakers who will explore today's theme in many different ways.
The topic of philanthropy is crucial for all public and private institutions, but especially for an entity like LAC, which, while supported by public funding, relies heavily on patrons and sponsors.
The same applies to the Conservatorio: Ina mentioned the wonderful Città della Musica project, which has also been embraced by the City of Lugano. It will be a true jewel for the city and will surely create a virtuous cycle, but without benefactors, it would be almost impossible to realize. As I mentioned earlier, LAC itself operates with about 50% of its revenue coming from public contributions. The rest comes from sponsors and patrons who believe in this institution.
Philanthropy is a broad concept, but having people willing to dedicate their funds and resources—especially in the cultural sector—is absolutely essential. Culture carries important values, fosters awareness, and, I dare say, enriches us internally. It opens our hearts, and without it, society would likely be much more barren and difficult. Our world is already complex, but thanks to culture, we can uphold important values.
The role of philanthropists, patrons, and those who allocate their resources for the greater good is fundamental to the growth of civil society and the community as a whole. I have met many benefactors who give from the heart, believing in their contribution to public institutions and cultural organizations. This generosity is something beautiful, important, and essential for the functioning of both culture and society.
I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to LAC for this collaboration, as well as to all the organizations and institutions mentioned today. I truly believe that through these discussions and in-depth conversations, we can learn about the best practices in philanthropy.
So, my sincere thanks to all of you—patrons, organizations, and institutions—who are here today for this event. I am confident that this will be a valuable opportunity for dialogue that will lead to positive outcomes for the future.
Have a wonderful day, and thank you.

CARLO DONADINI
President Associazione Amici del Conservatorio

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.
It is a great pleasure for us to welcome you to this second edition of the Philanthropy Forum. We are delighted to have with us an international audience, united by a shared interest in philanthropy and the arts. Only God knows how much this society needs culture, which should inspire and preside over all human actions.

Unfortunately, our experiences tell a different story. This Philanthropy Forum has been strongly supported by the Associazione Amici del Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana, since for us, it represents a crucial moment to reflect and promote innovative ideas that can lead to a lasting and meaningful impact.

Ticino is a Canton where music plays a vital role—not only from a cultural perspective. Indeed, Canton Ticino has a strong musical tradition. But music also holds significant economic and social value.

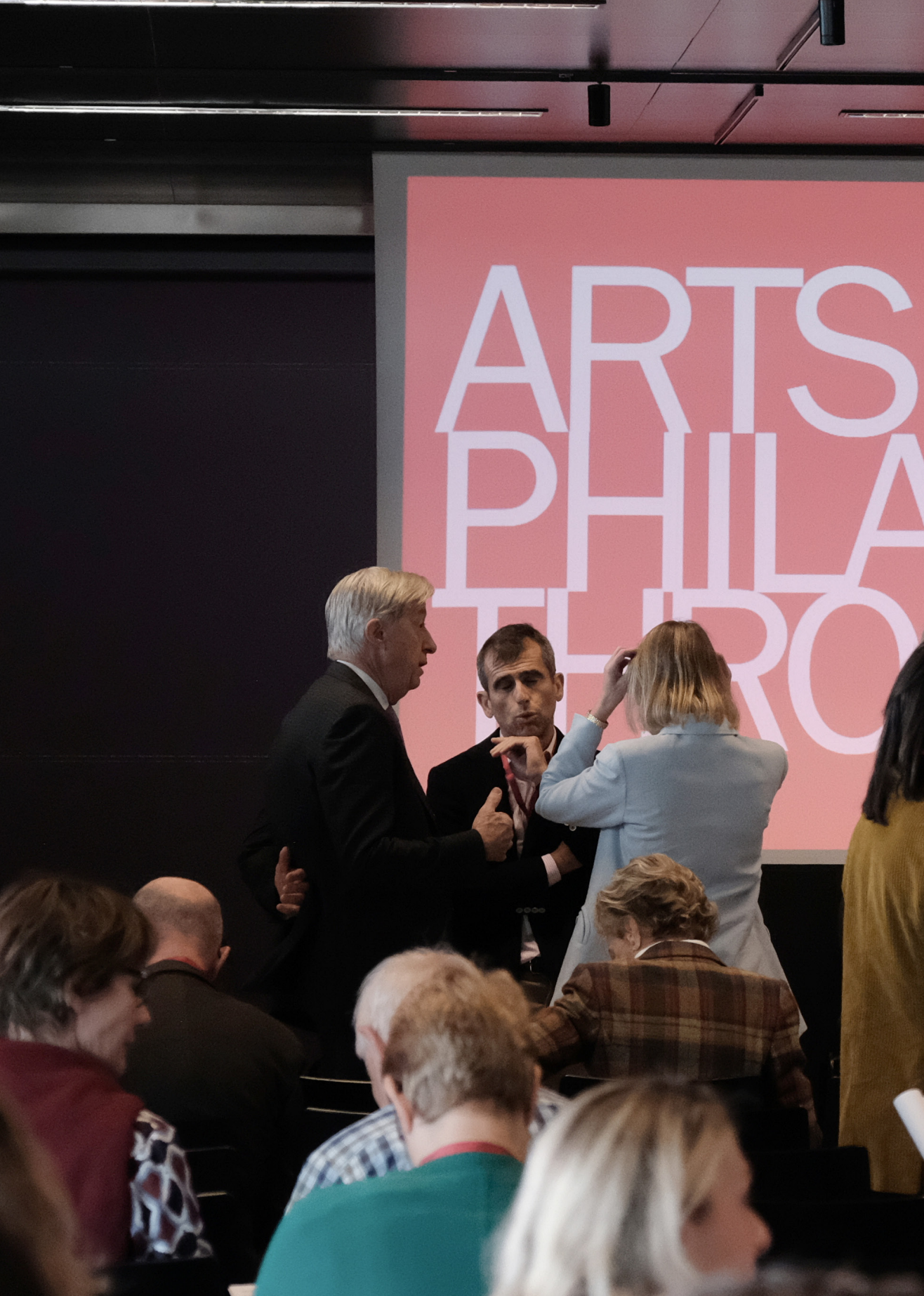
A study conducted by the City of Lugano has demonstrated how culture generates financial returns that are reinvested into various sectors of public life. During the first edition of this Forum, we launched the Fund for music inclusion, which has proven to be an effective tool in ensuring that those who, for economic reasons, would otherwise have to forgo a musical education, can have access to it. Yes, even in wealthy Switzerland, in Canton Ticino, there are families who cannot afford music education for their children.

Through this fund, we have engaged professionals and volunteers who, with their dedication—partly on a pro bono basis—have contributed to making music accessible to everyone. This has been a highly successful initiative, and just recently, we distributed over 100,000 Swiss francs in scholarships to families who otherwise would not have been able to provide a musical education for their children.

For this reason, I am deeply satisfied to see how the institutional maturity of the Conservatorio and, if I may say so, of the Amici del Conservatorio, enables the formation of collaborations that—like this Forum—transcend the borders of Canton Ticino and attract the attention and interest of international figures.

In the first edition, we launched an innovative project that proved to be effective. In this second edition, we will introduce a new challenge on an international level: the Città della Musica. The theme of this edition is collaboration, as already mentioned by Ina Piattini. What does collaboration mean? It is a fundamental element—for us, for everyone—because it is the driving force that transforms ideas into shared, concrete projects and leads to long-term, sustainable results. We will explore this theme through four highly engaging panels. The first will delve into the essential characteristics of successful collaboration, emphasizing the importance of clear communication, shared objectives, and mutual trust. The second will focus on the transformative power of music, as mentioned by our friend Roberto Badaracco, Deputy Mayor of Lugano—examining its impact on society and individuals. The third will show how collaboration can spark creativity, expanding the boundaries of artistic expression. The fourth will explore new forms of collaboration for socio-economic development, where art can become a catalyst for change.

I am certain that these discussions will offer us new perspectives and strategies to enhance our philanthropic initiatives in the arts sector. Thank you for being here today at our Forum, for your commitment, and for the dedication that has contributed to making this day a success. Thank you all, and I wish you a productive and inspiring day.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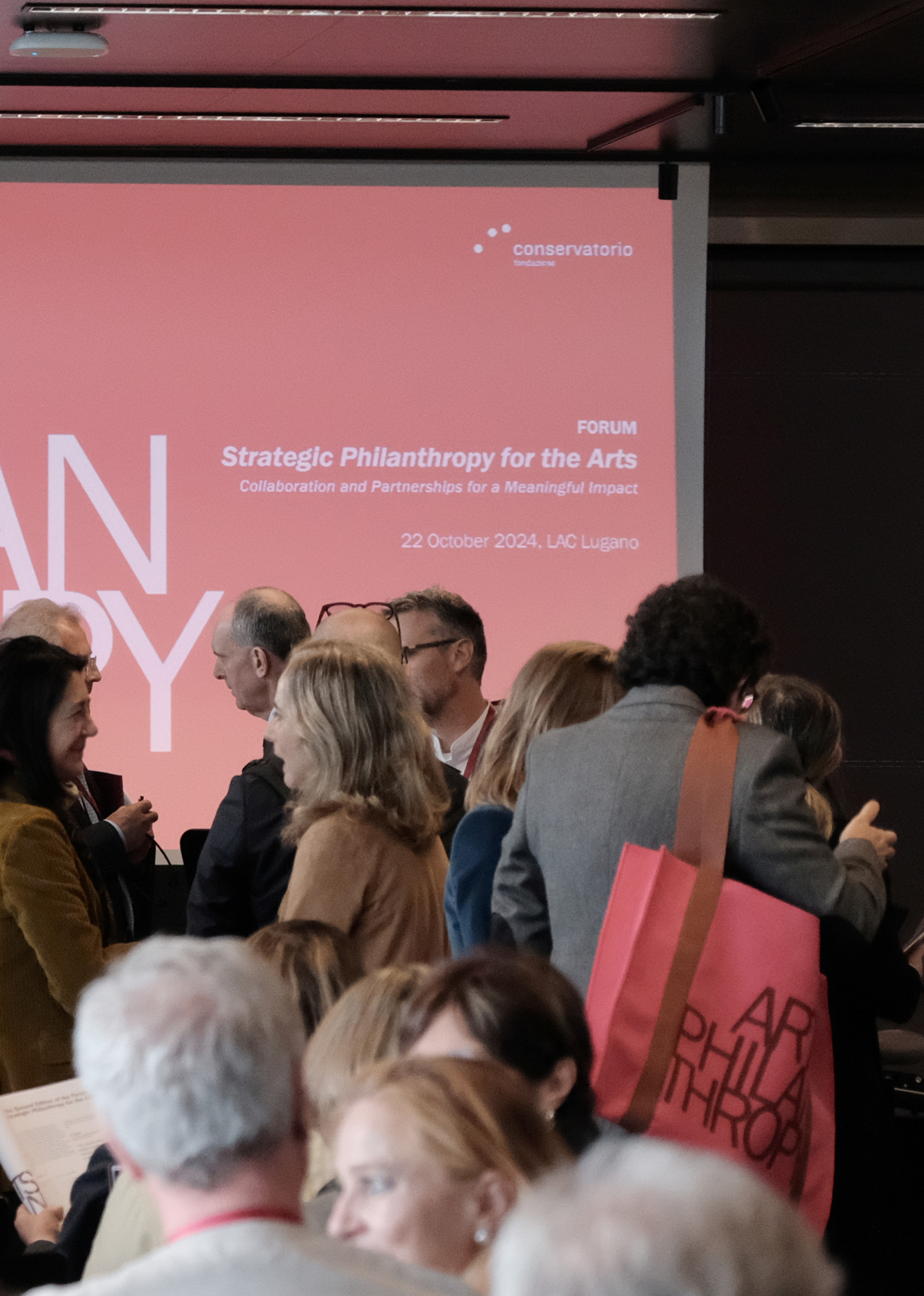
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FORUM
Strategic Philanthropy for the Arts
Collaboration and Partnerships for a Meaningful Impact
22 October 2024, LAC Lugano

INTRODUCTION

PAOLO BERNASCONI
Prof. Dr.h.c., Co-Founder Filantropia Fondazione Mantello

But today, what kind of patron?

Throughout the centuries, the figure of the patron has been celebrated—beginning with Giambattista Tiepolo's depiction in "Maecenas Presenting the Liberal Arts to Emperor Augustus". Yet the noble role of the patron in support of the arts gradually waned over time. From the Medici in Florence, to the Cardinals and Popes, to the sovereigns of France and England and the great collectors of our contemporary era, the arts have often served the interests of their patrons. All too frequently, this once-noble institution—patronage—veered toward the pursuit of personal prestige, commercial gain, consolidation of power, and even political legitimization.

What strategy should be adopted today for philanthropy in favor of the arts, in all its forms—from the highest expressions to the more modest ones? If possible, let us reduce it to three key characteristics: empathy, sustainability, and altruism.

Empathy first and foremost, toward the beneficiaries of philanthropy, demands the ability to listen carefully to the needs of their beneficiaries—needs that evolve over time and do not always align with the patron's vision. This approach emphasizes sharing emotions rather than relying solely on a professional fundraiser armed with balance sheets and business plans. In the humanitarian sector, for example, the rigorous auditors from donor States funding the International Committee of the Red Cross were invited to crisis areas to witness firsthand the needs of vulnerable populations. Fostering genuine listening and dialogue means moving away from the traditional discretion of the philanthropic world—which sometimes bordered on secrecy—and embracing openness. This approach can even support public information and quality journalism (as seen in the Journalist Founders Forum organized by Philea-Philanthropy Europe Association). Such openness creates synergy beyond the traditional boundaries that have historically separated the business world from philanthropic organizations, ultimately paving the way for a synergistic exchange of expertise aimed at convergent goals—a true ecosystem that brings Switzerland in line with what is abroad known as the "Third Sector," alongside the Public and Private Sectors.

When it comes to sustainability, merely aligning with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals is no longer sufficient; it is essential to continuously measure the impact of one's activities. Being philanthropic is not enough—one must also demonstrate sustainability by providing public accountability through voluntary, spontaneous adherence to the so-called "Non-Financial Reports." These reports are becoming increasingly common in the economy under the impetus of European Union regulations—a trend that even the Swiss legislator has effectively embraced (see the detailed provisions introduced into the Swiss Code of Obligations starting January 1, 2020, in Articles 964b et seq., including criminal penalties for non-compliance under Article 325ter of the Swiss Penal Code). Moreover, it is the responsibility of the philanthropic community to identify and expose the numerous

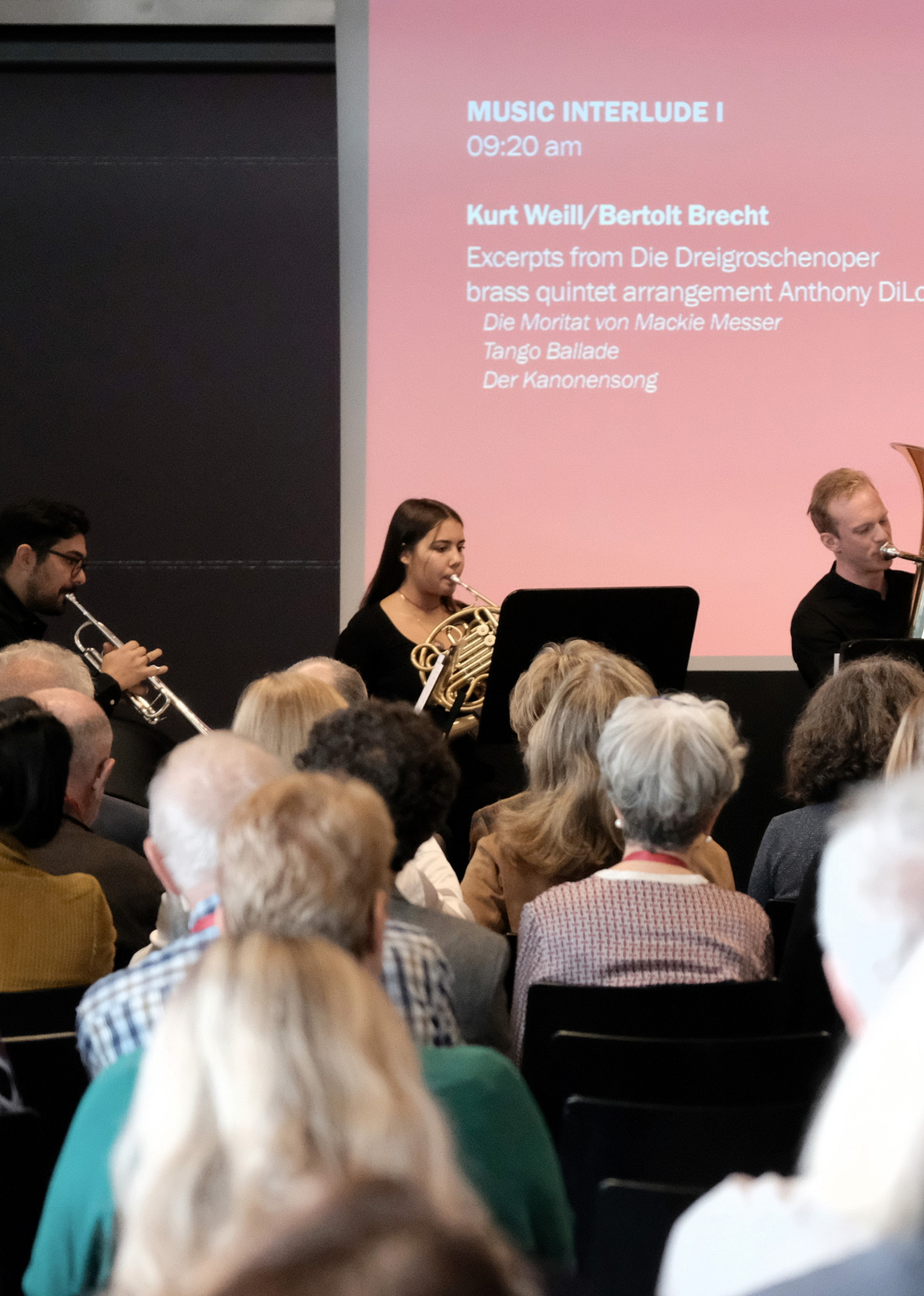
charlatans promoting greenwashing, social washing, peace washing, and similar deceptions. A simple, effective criterion is to examine the actual results these consultants have produced over the years—especially regarding sustainability in finance under the "ESG" label, where experts in the environmental field are abundant, but expertise in governance and social matters (including human rights) is much scarcer.

Altruism is the cornerstone of philanthropy and one of its most effective guiding principles. A philanthropist should not act out of a desire for personal glory, propaganda, political legitimization, or commercial promotion—a tendency too common in the banking and financial worlds. Consultants chasing lucrative mandates or State subsidies do not meet the true standard of altruism.

If the Third Sector must continuously strive to uphold these three principles, then public authorities—state and para-state institutions alike—must also work to create favorable conditions for philanthropy. In an era when public funding for healthcare, social services, education, and culture is being cut, philanthropy can at least partially remedy these shortfalls and help counterbalance the effects of growing inequality in our society.

For example, on the fiscal front, many Swiss cantons have eliminated outdated tax obstacles. Cantons such as Aargau, Basel, Bern, Geneva, and Vaud—and, as of February 2024, even Zurich—have introduced new tax directives that remove restrictive conditions for public-interest foundations and associations seeking tax exemptions. In Ticino as well, tax exemption should be extended to foundations that promote activities outside Switzerland and to corporate philanthropic initiatives (unternehmerische Förderformen) supporting social and cultural enterprises through equity participations, loans, convertible loans, social impact bonds, and similar instruments.

Let this be a formal and concrete appeal to political authorities—at both the federal and cantonal levels—to abandon the historical distrust of philanthropy and finally recognize and promote the new forms already flourishing in other countries. Meanwhile, as a tangible applause for modern philanthropy, let us extend a sincere round of applause to the promoters and supporters of the Città della Musica in Lugano.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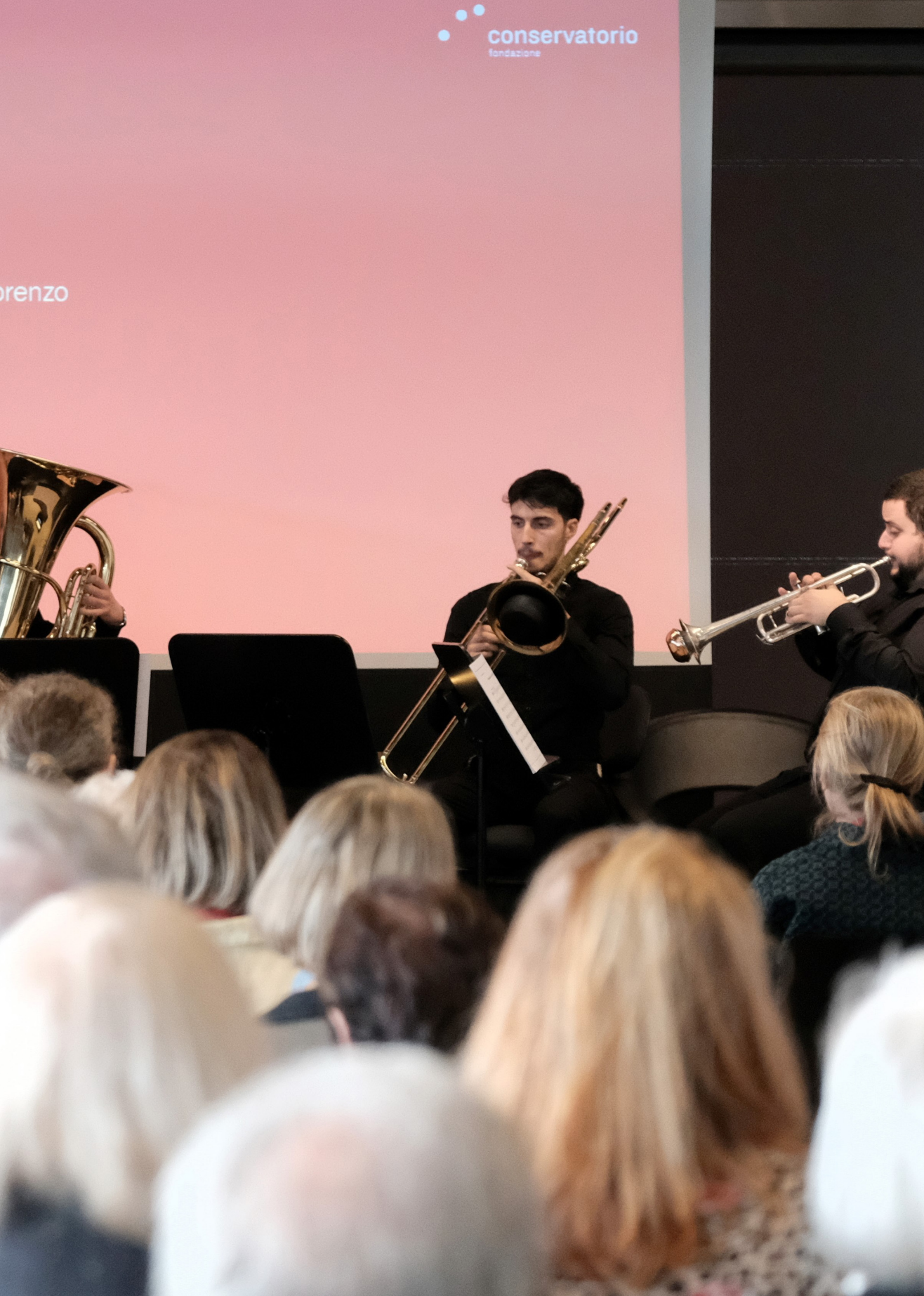
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PANEL 1
CORES FEATURES IN SUCCESSFULL PARTNERSHIPS

LEONIDA FUSANI, Director Konrad Lorenz Institute of Ethology, Head of Department of Behavioural & Cognitive Biology
ANDREW HOLLAND, Director Stiftung Mercator Schweiz
KAROLE VAIL, Director Peggy Guggenheim Collection Venice
FRANCO POLLONI, Head of Switzerland EFG Bank

The essential features for successful collaboration

The first panel focuses on the fundamental elements that underpin successful collaborations. Collaboration is essential for guaranteeing sustainability and longevity among organizations. It is not an automatic result but can be facilitated, managed, and championed. Effective collaboration is characterized by clear communication, aligned goals, mutual trust, and shared benefits. These principles, observed in both natural ecosystems and human organizations, are critical for maximizing the impact of joint efforts. By discussing these core features, the panel aims to provide a blueprint for successful collaboration that can be adapted to various cultural contexts. The insights gained from this discussion will help philanthropic organizations forge stronger, more effective partnerships that drive meaningful change in the arts.

FRANCO POLLONI - Dear guests, dear friends, dear President, greetings to all of you. I am Franco Polloni, responsible for the Swiss-Italian region of EFG Private Banking. For our bank, being here today is not a matter of opportunism.
In truth, philanthropy is part of EFG's DNA, thanks to our shareholders. The Latsis family, as you may know, has been actively involved for years through the Latsis awards for science and the two federal polytechnics. Therefore, when my friend Carlo (Donadini, ndr.) called me last year saying, "Franco, there is a great opportunity to partner in this second initiative," I embraced it wholeheartedly. This decision was partly motivated by my inability to frequently participate in the Associazione Amici del Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana, despite being a member, and also due to the admiration and closeness my family, especially my daughters, have always felt for the world of music. Supporting this extraordinary initiative was a natural choice. I am extremely proud to be here today for this second episode and can already confirm that EFG will be present at future forums as well. We will accompany you on this journey.
I will begin with some introductory remarks, focusing on the theme of this panel: the elements underpinning successful collaboration in philanthropy for the arts. Collaboration and communication are essential to ensuring the sustainability and longevity of all organizations, not just those involved in philanthropy. This success is not automatic but can be facilitated, managed, and championed. Effective collaboration is characterized by clear communication, alignment of goals, mutual trust—which is a key element—and, importantly, the sharing of benefits.

This principle is vital. Observed in both natural ecosystems and human organizations, collaboration is critical to maximizing the impact of joint efforts. In this panel, we aim to provide a blueprint for successful collaboration that can be adapted across cultural contexts.

I firmly believe that insights gained from this discussion will help philanthropic organizations forge stronger, more effective partnerships that drive meaningful change in the arts.

Allow me now to introduce our esteemed panelists. First, we have Karole Vail. Since 2017, Karole has been the director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice and a member of the scientific committee of the Fondazione del Centenario della Banca della Svizzera italiana. Before her position in Venice, Karole was a curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York for 20 years.

Today, we are also honored to have Andrew Holland, the director of the Mercator Foundation Switzerland. Andrew is a trustee of the Swiss Photography Foundation, a member of the board of Swiss Foundation, and an advisor to the St. Gallen Collegium, the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy, and the Centro Competenze Non-Profit (CENPRO, Lugano-Vezia). With a background in law, Andrew has deep expertise in arts funding in both Switzerland and the USA.

Last but not least, we are joined by Leonida Fusani, a professor of animal physiology and ornithology at the University of Vienna and the director of the Conrad Lorenz Institute of Ornithology since 2014. Leonida's groundbreaking research in elaborate courtship displays and animal migration has earned him accolades, including the Frank Beach Award in 2007.

Now, let us dive into the panel's core discussion: the features of successful partnerships. I'll begin with Karole.

Karole, you have led the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice for seven years. Your activities go far beyond organizing temporary exhibitions; they encompass conservation of artistic heritage, educational programs for schools and the public, and scholarships to support students entering the art sector. Strategic fundraising initiatives are key to sustaining and developing your institution, making the active management of philanthropic stakeholders essential. Based on your experience, what role does philanthropy play in your organization, and what are the opportunities and threats in building successful partnerships?

KAROLE VAIL - Philanthropy plays a vital role in supporting the operations and projects of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. While we rely heavily on our visitors—whose daily presence provides the core revenue needed for operations and basic maintenance—there is so much more to be done. To realize crucial projects and bring innovative ideas to life, we depend on the generosity of philanthropists in various forms.

Our individual membership program, inspired by American models, reflects our connection to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. As the Italian branch of this foundation, which was established in 1937 by Solomon R. Guggenheim—a visionary philanthropist who believed in giving back to society—we uphold his legacy of transformative impact.

Corporate philanthropy also holds a prominent place in our history. Nearly 40 years ago, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection was a pioneer in introducing corporate sponsorship to Italy, a bold move given that philanthropy was far less developed in Europe at the time compared to the United States. Early collaborations included partnerships with Alitalia and, later, the creation of Guggenheim Intrapresæ about

35 years ago, though it was initially known by another name.
Corporate philanthropy also holds a prominent place in our history. Nearly 40 years ago, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection was a pioneer in introducing corporate sponsorship to Italy, a bold move given that philanthropy was far less developed in Europe at the time compared to the United States. Early collaborations included partnerships with Alitalia and, later, the creation of Guggenheim Intrapresæ about 35 years ago, though it was initially known by another name.
Over time, we recognized the need for deeper, more substantial relationships with institutional patrons. This led to enduring collaborations with entities such as Banca del Gottardo, BSI, and, more recently, EFG Bank, which became a key partner in 2017. Building these relationships is no small feat. As has been emphasized time and again, trust, transparency, and mutual understanding form the bedrock of such partnerships.
Since arriving in Venice in 2017, I've personally experienced how vital it is to maintain ongoing dialogue with partners. Together, we explore the museum's needs, identify major collaborative projects, and seek mutual benefits. However, finding the right partner has grown increasingly challenging, especially in a world filled with so many worthy causes.
The disparity between wealth and poverty, exacerbated by the aftermath of COVID-19, has heightened the urgency of committing to social causes and supporting communities. That said, I firmly believe in the transformative power of the arts. Art and music have the ability to inspire change and foster understanding. A century ago, Kandinsky spoke of the transformative potential of art, a belief that continues to guide us as a cultural institution. While we may not resolve global conflicts, what we do can contribute to building a better, more understanding world.
Maintaining this utopian vision, however, comes with its own set of challenges. Persuading potential partners of the importance of specific projects requires persistence and clear communication. Yet, through continuous dialogue, we can overcome these obstacles. I am deeply grateful for the fruitful partnerships we've built, such as those with EFG, which enable us to pursue our mission.
The Peggy Guggenheim Collection is a unique institution—a hybrid in many ways. Situated in Italy yet deeply tied to the United States, we must navigate both American and Italian legal systems. As a private museum, we do not receive government funding, though we occasionally receive project-specific support from the Regione del Veneto. For instance, funding from the Regione del Veneto allowed us to focus on the work of a Venetian artist a few years ago. However, our status as a private museum presents challenges. Unlike public institutions, we do not qualify for Italy's art bonus, which offers tax credits to philanthropists. This can make it more difficult for some donors to work with us. Despite these hurdles, we remain committed to fostering collaborations that advance our mission and celebrate the transformative power of art.

FRANCO POLLONI - Thank you, Karole, for sharing your insights. Let us now turn to Andrew Holland. Switzerland is undeniably a philanthropic powerhouse, with over 13,000 charitable foundations.
Perhaps this is a number that politicians should take a closer look at. Philanthropy in Switzerland has evolved significantly over the last decades, reflecting broader societal

changes and, as you mentioned, global trends.
Historically, philanthropy in Switzerland was often associated with wealthy individuals and family-run foundations motivated by personal values and the desire to give back to society. However, in recent years, there has been a notable shift towards more institutionalized philanthropy. This includes the emergence of corporate foundations, community foundations, and impact-driven investment vehicles, bringing greater professionalism, transparency, and accountability to the sector. Foundations are increasingly adopting best practices in governance, impact measurement—always a crucial topic—and strategic grant-making.
We can see examples of this evolution in Ticino, with initiatives like the Centro di Competenza e Non-Profit in Lugano and the recent establishment of the Fondazione Mantello Filantropia. But back to you, Andrew. Based on your experience, what are the key challenges for further strengthening collaboration between private, public, and non-profit sectors?

ANDREW HOLLAND - At first glance, the idea of public-private partnerships (PPPs) seems very attractive. There are clear benefits: you can share risks, leverage expertise, expand networks, gain credibility and legitimacy, and encourage participation. Nevertheless, it happens very rarely because there are significant barriers.
For example, if you take an easy model like financing a building, it's relatively straightforward—it's about pooling resources, aligning funds, and managing contracts. In my early career, I saw this in practice with the KKL in Lucerne. Today, we use similar approaches, such as supporting consortiums for various projects, which simplify processes with a single application and reporting system.
But things become far more complex—and interesting—when we move beyond projects to tackle broader systems. Let's take a subject like transforming musical education. Imagine a system that starts in primary schools, extends to secondary schools, moves into apprenticeships, universities, and then into the job market. Now you're no longer dealing with a single foundation or partner; you're involving the cantons, the confederation, social partners like associations, philanthropists, foundations, and private investors.
This is where barriers arise. For the private sector, there are financial risks and potential reputational risks. For the public sector, there are political risks: if you lose a degree of control, you may face uncertainty about outcomes, which could affect re-election prospects or parliamentary votes. There's also the challenge of mutual benefit. One side may prefer classical music, while the other favors hip-hop or breakdance. How do you align those priorities into a win-win scenario?
Another barrier is the fundamental difference in systems and processes. A foundation can often make decisions within weeks or months, but the public sector may take years. Lobbying, parliamentary approvals, and legislative work can delay progress significantly. To borrow Einstein's quote, "When the world goes down, I want to be in Switzerland, because everything takes five years longer." Having worked for the Swiss Arts Council (Pro Helvetia), I often said this is both a strength and a weakness. The slower pace means that once we reach a decision, it's sustainable. But it also highlights the challenge of bridging these timelines.
Mindsets are another obstacle. The private sector operates differently, with its own approach to risk and innovation.
Meanwhile, in the public sector—speaking

from my own experience—there can be a sense of power imbalance. An NGO might approach the state and feel like the public sector holds all the cards because of its authority. Yet the private side often has more money and influence. Balancing these dynamics and building trust is critical.
That said, these challenges are not insurmountable. The key is to address them from the very beginning. Everything must be on the table from day one—every limitation, fear, and concern. Transparency is vital. For example, a foundation might be limited by its board's approval process, while public entities must operate within strict legal frameworks. Both sides need to understand these boundaries to work effectively together.
Trust must also be cultivated. It's not just about funding; the networks, expertise, and legitimacy that each side brings are equally important. And finally, collaboration requires patience. It takes time to align visions and strategies. It's essential to remain committed, even when disagreements arise, because the long-term benefits far outweigh the short-term frustrations.
Public-private partnerships, despite their complexity, are incredibly powerful. Governments benefit from private funding, making it easier to secure parliamentary approval and public support. Meanwhile, foundations can move beyond short-term projects to address systemic issues, creating sustainable, transformative change.
For example, rather than funding individual initiatives, a foundation might influence the entire ecosystem of music education, from primary schools to professional opportunities, resulting in a far-reaching, long-term impact.
The difficulty lies in the fact that public-private partnerships are still underutilized. Many stakeholders are hesitant because they lack prior experience or best practices to guide them. However, with the right expertise and commitment, these collaborations can unlock immense potential. So, who's ready to take on the challenge? Public-private partnerships are not easy, but the rewards are undeniably worth the effort.

FRANCO POLLONI - Thank you, Andrew. Finally, Leonida, your research on animal behavior often explores themes of collaboration and communication. In human societies, fairness is a cornerstone of successful partnerships. Based on your expertise, how does fairness influence collaboration in animal societies, and what can we learn from this?
It's a good question and a difficult one to answer. While it remains within my scientific expertise, I will attempt to go beyond that.

LEONIDA FUSANI - As you mentioned, I study elaborate behavior, and I am deeply fascinated by complex forms of communication, particularly phenomena in science that we still don't fully understand—like why birds of paradise perform their magnificent displays. We are often tempted to provide simple explanations for such behaviors, but the reality is far more complex.
Just yesterday, I was discussing this with another participant at the forum, and I gave an example. Evolution typically occurs along two distinct pathways: on one side, there is technological improvement, where evolution drives things to work better. On the other, there is aesthetic evolution, which enhances how things look.
Beauty and aesthetics are as intrinsic to the natural world as they are to the human experience. In this sense, art becomes a necessary part of life, as we thrive on

beauty. Without it, technology alone would feel sterile and unfulfilling.

To answer your question, if I were trying to court a donor or funder—something I often do because scientists, as you know, also rely on funding—I would emphasize this connection. While we depend on taxpayer funding, we also rely heavily on corporate and private contributions to sustain our non-profit research efforts.

Basic research, by definition, is non-profit. The key is to convey that the benefits of such research may not be immediately visible, but they often become transformative over time. A great example in science is the discovery of PCR (polymerase chain reaction), one of the most successful inventions in molecular biology. All modern medicine and biological research are built upon this technique. It was discovered by someone who spent his free time surfing, and during one of his lab tasks—which was tedious and required constant replenishing of reagents destroyed by heat—he had an idea. He thought about bacteria living in the extreme heat of oceanic steam vents and wondered if their enzymes could withstand such conditions. That thought led to the development of a process using heat-stable enzymes, ultimately resulting in one of the richest biotechnology patents, owned by DuPont.

This illustrates how knowledge often becomes valuable in unforeseen ways. Similarly, beauty and art may appear intangible or impractical at first, but their value often becomes evident in the long term.

To make this idea more relatable, I would encourage potential donors to reflect on history. Think about what humanity has achieved in the realms of art and science and the profound impacts those achievements have had over the centuries. If we take the same long-term perspective, we can envision the incredible potential of investing in the present for future generations.

I'd like to return to Karole and perhaps place a focus on a key point. At the beginning of our discussion, we heard about the critical role that art and culture play in society and the importance of investments in this space. Lugano, I believe, has been at the forefront of these efforts. Currently, there's much debate surrounding La Città della Musica. Drawing on your experience in New York, Venice, and now, what do you see as the contribution a museum like yours—or the arts in general—can make to society? Are there examples where arts initiatives have truly transformed society? And what role can philanthropy play in driving these changes?

Museums have undoubtedly evolved and continue to change rapidly. They must better understand the communities they serve. A museum is no longer just a building on a hill for a select, elite few. It has become much more dynamic. Beyond housing collections and hosting temporary exhibitions, museums now organize and invest in diverse public programs and activities designed to engage a wide range of audiences. Inclusivity is more crucial than ever, and the Guggenheim has consistently prioritized this approach.

We also need to appeal to younger generations, especially Generation Z, who may find museums intimidating or less accessible. Ideally, a museum is a place where people can spend the entire day—immersing themselves in the artwork, participating in workshops, and engaging with various activities. Philanthropic support plays a vital role in enabling us to create such spaces, envision the future, and develop innovative ways to make museums more inviting—not just for the public but also for the philanthropists themselves.

Of course, there are ethical considerations that we must respect.

As a nonprofit institution, a museum operates under specific rules that differ from those of the public or private sectors. Maintaining independence is essential, especially as many corporate supporters have their own collections or agendas. It's important to establish clear agreements and mutual understanding from the outset to ensure alignment and transparency.
Museums are also navigating an increasingly competitive cultural landscape—whether it's modern art, music, or new foundations being established. Sometimes it's unclear why these initiatives are created—whether for genuine educational purposes or for tax benefits. Amidst this competition, we strive to uphold our values while recognizing and supporting those who share them.

FRANCO POLLONI - Andrew, as director of the Mercator Foundation Switzerland (Stiftung Mercator Schweiz), you and your partners initiate and support projects that aim to bring about sustainable change. Could you share some examples of activities you've supported, particularly in the arts and cultural transformation? Or perhaps broaden the view to other areas?

ANDREW HOLLAND - Certainly. Let me think of an example that might resonate across sectors. I'd like to highlight the Media Forward Fund, a recently launched initiative to support media work oriented toward the common good.
Let me explain how it came about, as it provides insight into how we work in this sector.
Last June, I met Tim Göbel, the director of the Schöpflin Foundation, and we discussed the challenges facing media today. For democracy to thrive, people need access to reliable information so they can make informed decisions without being swayed by social media bubbles or echo chambers. Journalism, especially at the local and regional levels, plays a critical role here—not just letting large Zurich-based media houses dominate the conversation. Research shows that strong local media fosters greater trust in democratic institutions, higher voter turnout, better organization, and improved community well-being.
We realized this issue wasn't unique to Switzerland—it affects Germany, Austria, and beyond. So, we decided to create a fund to support innovative, common-good-oriented media projects. But simply providing money wasn't enough; we wanted to ensure these projects could become sustainable. Buying a newspaper wouldn't change the system. Instead, we designed a framework: a call for proposals inviting creative, sustainable media initiatives across German-, French-, and Italian-speaking Switzerland. Alongside funding, we offer coaching, training, networking opportunities, and fundraising support.
To make this happen, we partnered with other foundations and impact investors. Foundations like ours understand funding, but we lack expertise in impact investment. Media projects cannot rely solely on private funding—they need sustainable business models. We also engaged public authorities, starting discussions with government representatives in Switzerland and Germany. Within a year, we had established a 9 million fund to support these initiatives.
The fund doesn't just support individual projects—it fosters collaboration. Participants engage in peer learning, exchange ideas, and develop collectively. Our hope is that this systemic approach, combined with public-sector involvement, will drive long-term change. As foundations, we have a unique position. Governments must focus on re-election, and businesses must prioritize

profit. But we can take risks, learn from failures, and share insights to improve systems. We act as strategic risk-takers, using our capital to explore solutions that benefit society as a whole.

FRANCO POLLONI - Leonida, let's delve into the importance of trust and transparency. Collaboration inherently requires these elements, along with coordination, effort, and a fair allocation of tasks among participants. A balanced distribution of duties is often essential for achieving efficient and successful outcomes. How much does fairness influence collaboration in other species?

LEONIDA FUSANI - From studying animal societies, we've learned that many of the rules governing collaboration are remarkably similar to those in human societies. Take, for example, a colony of bees—a familiar and fascinating example. Their social structure relies on precise coordination among the queen and the workers, ensuring the colony functions as a cohesive whole. However, bees, being small insects, might feel more removed from our own experience.
Turning to other animals, we find parallels in species like apes and corvids (crows and ravens), which have become popular in recent years for their striking similarities to human behavior.
One key principle that governs their collaboration, as you mentioned, is reciprocity. Simply put, collaboration thrives on mutual exchange. In our society, as in theirs, partnerships are built on the understanding that if I help you today, you'll help me tomorrow.
Reciprocity, however, extends beyond material exchanges. At its core, it's about fostering relationships. A single encounter rarely leads to meaningful collaboration because there isn't enough foundation to build upon. But in societies where individuals interact regularly, trust and reciprocity become fundamental. Without these, collaboration cannot function effectively.
Another crucial element we can learn from animal societies is fairness. A well-known researcher, the late Franz de Waal, conducted fascinating experiments on this topic, particularly with monkeys. In one study, monkeys were asked to perform a simple task, such as pressing a button, and were rewarded with food. Typically, a piece of cucumber was enough to make them happy. However, when one monkey was rewarded with a banana—a clearly more desirable treat—while the other only received cucumber, the latter became visibly upset. This reaction highlights an innate sense of fairness. When resources or rewards are distributed unequally, it can lead to dissatisfaction and disrupt cooperation. Fairness, therefore, is critical to collaboration. Sharing resources and wealth within a society reinforces cooperation and ensures its longevity.
In essence, reciprocity and fairness are the foundational building blocks of collaboration—not only in human societies but across the animal kingdom. These principles teach us that successful cooperation is rooted in trust, mutual respect, and equitable sharing, whether among humans or other species.

FRANCO POLLONI - I'd like to return to Karole and revisit some of the points raised earlier, particularly by Paolo Bernasconi, about the importance of philanthropy.
In the United States, philanthropy has long been deeply ingrained in the culture, as your experience highlights. However, as Paolo pointed out, trust remains a significant challenge in Europe, where the practice is

still evolving.
The world, though, has changed dramatically, and we live in an era of globalization. We've seen major cultural institutions like the Louvre establish a presence in the Middle East, and your institution is also preparing to expand to Abu Dhabi. Beyond Venice, the Guggenheim has become a truly global entity, with locations in places like the Basque Country, specifically Bilbao. This raises an important question: does globalization signal a globalization of philanthropy as well? By establishing locations in these new regions, are you simply following this trend, or is there something more at play? Perhaps you can reflect on your own experiences with the Guggenheim to shed light on this.

KAROLE VAIL - The Guggenheim's expansion has indeed been remarkable, though much of it has been driven by external interest.
It began with the original Guggenheim in New York and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, which are part of the Guggenheim Foundation. Then, in 1997, the Guggenheim Bilbao opened. Interestingly, Bilbao is not legally part of the foundation, which makes its story even more intriguing.
The initiative to create the Guggenheim Bilbao came from the Basque Country itself, particularly from its local government and banks. . In the 1980s and 1990s, Bilbao was a region struggling with industrial decline, economic hardship, and terrorism.
It desperately needed revitalization, a new vision for its future. At the time, the Guggenheim Foundation wasn't even aware of Bilbao—except perhaps among surfers, as I know firsthand from my husband, who surfs.
What happened in Bilbao was truly transformative! Through the vision of key individuals in the Basque Country, coupled with the Guggenheim Foundation's recognition of the project's potential, the museum became a beacon of change. The Guggenheim Bilbao brought jobs, restored dignity, and gave the city a renewed sense of purpose. While terrorism hasn't disappeared overnight, groups like ETA are no longer active, and Bilbao has undergone an extraordinary cultural and economic revival.
At first, there was skepticism among locals, who viewed the project as a form of American imperialism. But over time, the museum's impact became undeniable. Today, the people of Bilbao take immense pride in it, with a large individual membership base. In 2022, the museum welcomed 1.2 million visitors—a testament to its ongoing success. Though its collection is relatively small, it continues to grow, host exhibitions, and draw visitors, thanks in part to Frank Gehry's iconic building.
The upcoming Guggenheim Abu Dhabi follows a similar trajectory. Here, too, the initiative came from the Emirates, inspired by the success of Bilbao. The Guggenheim Foundation saw this project as an opportunity to foster cultural dialogue and build bridges between different worlds. While the building is still under construction—currently about 65% complete—it's anticipated to open between 2026 and 2027.
After the phenomenon of the so-called "Bilbao Effect," many cities and countries sought to replicate this model. However, not all have succeeded, often for complex reasons. Still, the power of art and culture, coupled with the crucial support of sponsors and local stakeholders, remains undeniable. Each of these elements plays a vital role in ensuring the success of such institutions and their ability to create lasting impact.

FRANCO POLLONI - I'd like to circle back

to Andrew with a question that I'm sure will resonate with my colleagues from the Bank. The topic concerns the legal framework, which Paolo touched on earlier. Increasing transparency is compelling us to scrutinize our counterparties more carefully. This overarching focus on due diligence and reputation means it's no longer just about giving money; we need to thoroughly understand who we're giving it to and for what purpose. Is this aligned with overarching principles? From this perspective, the world is becoming more transparent, but navigating this transparency has become increasingly complex. We must assess our counterparties with great care. Based on your experience, how do transparency, due diligence, and adherence to governance principles affect your work? And, in your opinion, are Swiss institutions prepared to adapt to these evolving expectations?

ANDREW HOLLAND - There are several aspects to consider. Switzerland generally has a relatively liberal foundation law compared to other countries. For instance, our sister organization in Germany has 12 staff members solely dedicated to financial and legal compliance, while we operate with a 60% mandate and a budget three times smaller. This underscores how the challenges differ significantly between countries. Transparency is absolutely critical—not just for legal compliance but also for legitimacy and public trust. We've seen cases where foundations have been criticized in the media under headlines suggesting that "wealthy individuals are trying to dictate government priorities." If an organization lacks transparency or even a basic website, it can seem suspicious, leading to fear and mistrust.

This is why being transparent about your activities and mission is essential. You need to confidently demonstrate that your work aligns with your statutes and contributes to society. If criticisms arise, you can simply direct people to your website, where everything is clearly outlined and in full compliance.

Beyond transparency, foundations must also demonstrate the societal value they create. It's not enough to fund projects that align with what a founder might have envisioned decades ago. We must think critically about how to address the needs of today. Our work should focus on fostering real, meaningful change—not on self-promotion or PR for the foundation.

Recent developments in Switzerland are also helping to professionalize the sector. For example, in Zürich, it is now permissible to provide reimbursements to foundation board members. This is crucial for attracting younger, diverse talent, as many individuals—especially those with families or full-time jobs—cannot afford to dedicate time without compensation.

Another positive shift is the growing acceptance of entrepreneurial models. Foundations are no longer restricted to supporting only NGOs; they can now work with social entrepreneurs. This flexibility is vital because younger generations often prefer starting innovative projects or startups rather than forming traditional associations, which they see as slow and bureaucratic. These changes allow us to support transformative initiatives using a broader range of tools—not just grants but also loans, equity investments, and more.

Finally, there are emerging challenges tied to international regulations, particularly from the European Union. Issues related to terrorism financing, money laundering, and sanctions require us to ensure we fully understand the ownership and control of the entities we support.

However, this creates a unique challenge in Switzerland, where foundations, by definition, have no owners. The money is dedicated to public good, which makes it difficult to meet certain EU requirements.
Swiss foundations, including ours, are working hard to lobby for solutions to these issues. While progress is being made, some legal ambiguities remain unresolved.

FRANCO POLLONI - Let's turn to Leonida, continuing our discussion on collaboration and behavior. One of the greatest challenges in nature is the emergence of freeriders—those who take advantage of others for their own benefit. We also encounter such behavior regularly in our daily lives. In our society, this type of behavior is often frowned upon. Are there mechanisms in nature that counteract cheating?

LEONIDA FUSANI - This is a fascinating topic, though I always caution against making overly simplistic parallels between animal and human societies. It's easy to draw comparisons, but the dynamics are often far more complex.
In nature, societies are usually quite protective of their rules and traditions. When a free-rider or cheater emerges—and this can happen at any level—there are typically mechanisms in place to counteract such behavior.
What's particularly interesting, even when thinking about free-riders in human society, is that animal societies tend to tolerate cheaters, but only to a certain extent. There's a kind of natural tolerance threshold. A system cannot function perfectly without any free-riders or cheaters. However, as long as their presence remains at a low frequency, the society as a whole can continue to function effectively.
In fact, the existence of these individuals can sometimes stimulate the development of new systems or strategies that improve the overall efficiency of the group. In a way, their presence serves as a reminder that innovation and adaptation are necessary for long-term survival.
There's an old saying, "the exception proves the rule," and I think that applies here as well. In societies—both animal and human—cooperation and collaboration benefit from occasional challenges to the status quo. Free-riders force us to reevaluate and refine our systems. If everything were perfect all the time, stagnation could set in, eventually leading to collapse.
Thus, the presence of free-riders, while seemingly disruptive, can actually drive awareness of inefficiencies and encourage innovation. They push societies to avoid becoming complacent and overly reliant on rigid rules and traditions, ensuring systems remain dynamic and adaptable.

A final question for Andrew Holland from Christine Romberg from the Hilti Foundation.
You mentioned one example of building this fund. What has been your experience with collaboration among foundations?

ANDREW HOLLAND - You might have noticed I laughed at this question. That's because, earlier, I was reflecting on what my final sentence would be if asked to sum everything up. My thought was this: Compared to the state, our sector, despite having over 13,000 foundations in Switzerland, is still financially small.
Studies in Germany illustrate this well—if you consider the funding needed for the public education system, foundation money would run out by January. So yes, we're small. But if we work together, we can achieve far greater impact.

The reason for my laughter is that, in practice, we rarely collaborate. When it happens, it's often informal—perhaps a quick phone call to Hans or Claudia, checking in about a project. While useful, this approach is limited in scope.

True collaboration, I believe, requires more than this. It needs to happen at a strategic level. Take, for instance, a topic like musical education. Instead of each foundation working independently, imagine bringing together five foundations that support this cause.

The idea would be to align from the outset: What are our common goals? What unique strengths can each of us bring?

One foundation might have the capacity to invest in infrastructure or buildings, while another focuses on funding specific projects. Yet another might contribute expertise or policy advocacy. By pooling these strengths strategically, we could maximize our collective impact.

If we could shift towards this type of strategic alignment and collaboration, I believe we would see transformative results. That's the direction I hope we can move toward, and if we achieve it, I would be very happy.

#1 Agora
The power of interdependence: a conversation with Niccolò Branca, President and CEO Branca International Group

Angela Greco: Dear Niccolò, there are different organizational models, and I'd like to explore your proposal based on "being" or, more precisely, "being aware." Could you elaborate on this concept?

Niccolò Branca: Good morning, everyone, and thank you for the invitation.
To truly be means to be present. Most people are not fully present in their daily lives. From the moment we wake up, our minds are filled with thoughts, often overwhelming us. Our bodies are in one place, but our minds are elsewhere. When this happens, we are merely existing rather than truly living. We overlook beauty because we are trapped in our thoughts. But what is beauty if not the ability to be free from self-centered thinking? Presence generates energy, fostering awareness. Awareness is a light that illuminates everything—it enhances beauty and dissolves difficulties with its warmth.
It also reveals that we are part of an interconnected whole. This realization leads to genuine collaboration among people and is the foundation of the conscious economy. The word economy comes from the Greek oikos (home) and nomos (law or truth). Economy is not an exact science but one shaped by human beings. When people are confused or disordered, they create division and conflict, as we see in today's world. A conscious economy, however, arises when we are aware of our interconnectedness and act accordingly.

Angela Greco: In this forum, we are exploring collaboration, and your perspective on awareness and interdependence is particularly relevant. Could you delve deeper into this connection?

Niccolò Branca: Let me pose a question: Do we merely exist, or do we truly live?
When I observe the universe, I see an intricate system of interdependence. The stars and sun provide energy to the Earth, which in turn sustains life. If I hold a bottle of water, I don't just see a bottle. With awareness, I see the entire system behind it—the sun, the rivers, the workers who bottled it, the logistics team that transported it, the store that sold it. This simple bottle is the result of an interconnected network of people and natural elements.
Nothing exists in isolation. Even the air we breathe is a product of interdependence—plants produce oxygen through photosynthesis, which depends on sunlight, originating from atomic storms on the sun. When we accept our interdependence, we recognize that our well-being is linked to the well-being of others. This understanding shifts our actions from being solely self-serving to benefiting the collective good.

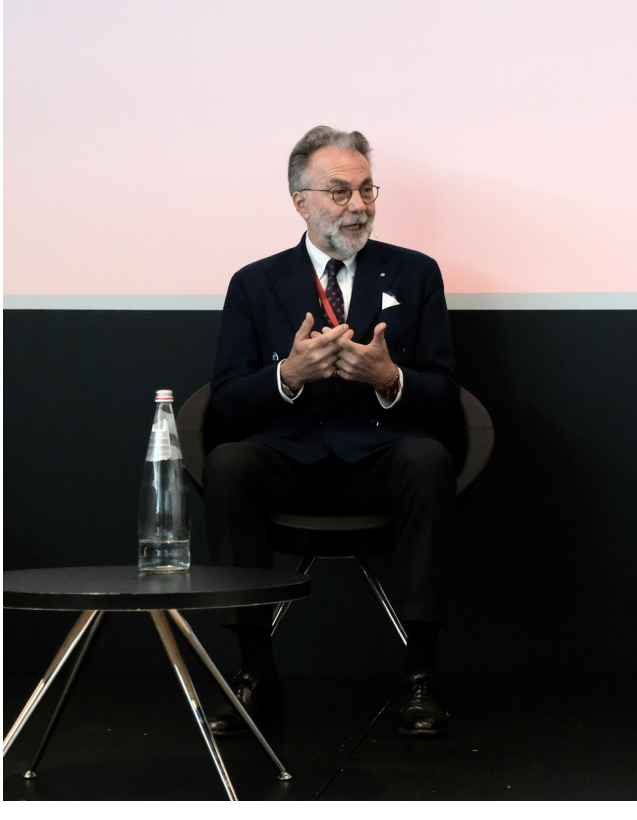
Angela Greco: Have you successfully implemented this principle in your company? Could you share how?

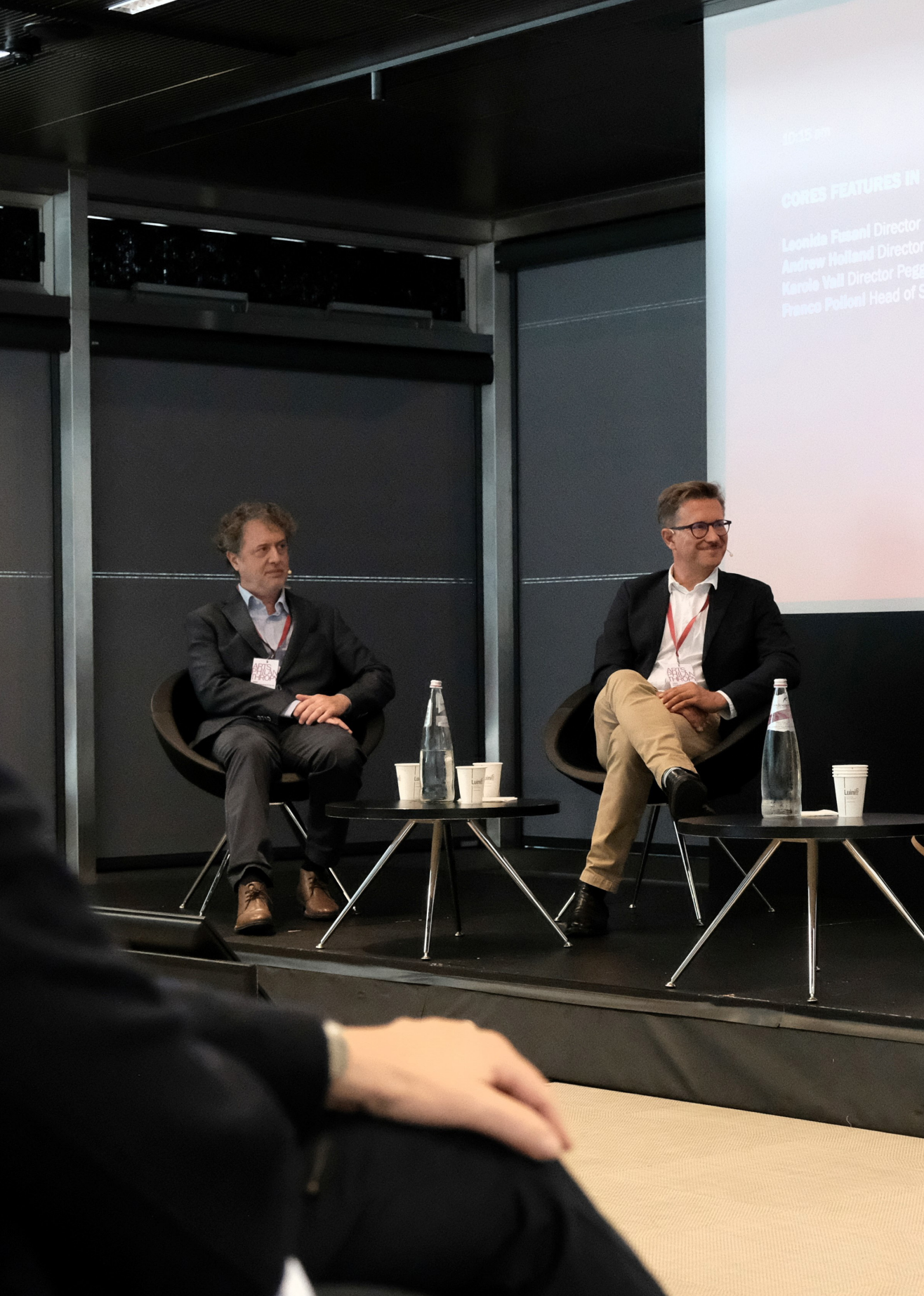
Niccolò Branca: Success is a continuous journey, not a final achievement, but I strive to apply these principles.
When I took over the company 25 years ago, one of my first actions was to establish an ethical code in 1999. Since we source herbs and roots from around the world, I wanted to ensure our suppliers upheld ethical standards

—prohibiting child labor, ensuring gender equality, and protecting the environment. Our ethical code prioritizes dignity, treating individuals as ends, not means.
From there, we introduced an environmental and social report, and more recently, a policy on violence prevention. We shifted from a logic of power to a logic of responsibility. For example, instead of "giving powers" to managers, we emphasize "giving responsibilities." When a manager asks, "What powers will I have?" I respond, "You will have responsibilities." This shift surprises many, but it is crucial in fostering awareness.
We also implemented collaborative meritocracy. Traditional meritocracy fosters competition for individual gain, but in our model, merit is recognized collectively. A successful idea may originate from one person, but it requires a team to bring it to fruition. Therefore, rewards are distributed across departments, reinforcing collaboration over individual ambition. This synergy balances self-interest with altruism, aligning personal and collective goals.

Angela Greco: Awareness of interdependence often fosters gratitude, which is central to philanthropy. What are your thoughts on this?

Niccolò Branca: Gratitude is a fundamental aspect of life. Every morning, I focus on my heart and express gratitude—for another day, for the people around me, for both joys and challenges, which help me grow.
I often remind my colleagues that while financial success and recognition may be motivating factors, what truly matters in the end is the impact we have on others. One day, when sitting on a bench by a lake, material achievements will fade in importance, but the good we have done for others will remain.
Even in business and finance, gratitude and ethical practices can lead to meaningful contributions. Ethical profit generation allows for reinvestment in research, innovation, and philanthropy. Giving back is not just an act of charity; it is a recognition of our interconnected humanity. When we help others, we uplift ourselves as well. By embracing this mindset, we can create a better, more conscious world.

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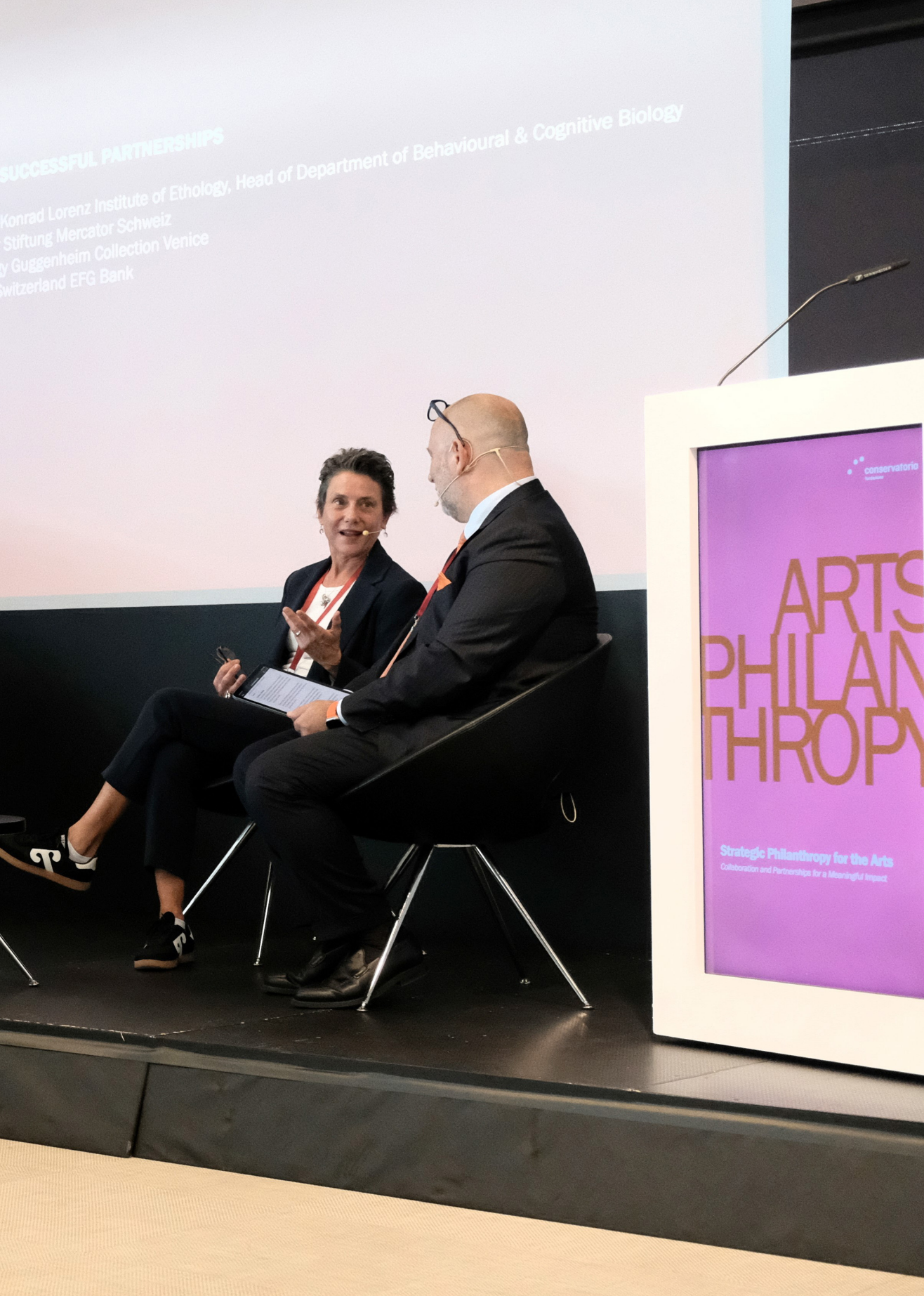

SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS
Konrad Lorenz Institute of Ethology, Head of Department of Behavioural & Cognitive Biology
Stiftung Mercator Schweiz
y Guggenheim Collection Venice
Switzerland EFG Bank
conservatorio
ARTS
PHILAN
THROPY
Strategic Philanthropy for the Arts
Collaboration and Partnerships for a Meaningful Impact

PANEL 2
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF MUSIC

JANICE HARPER SMITH, Professor of Voice and Vocal Pedagogy, Opera/Concert Singer i.r.
DANIELA PERANI, Neuroscientist and Professor at Università Vita - Salute San Raffaele
CHRISTINE RHOMBERG, Chair of Academy for Impact through Music
LUCA MEDICI, Director Scuola di Musica del Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana

The transformative power of the arts

The second panel explores the profound social impact of collaborative art programs, such as ensemble music. Recent research indicates that group music-making activities can enhance cognitive and emotional development, fostering a sense of community and belonging. These programs play a crucial role in promoting social inclusion and cohesion, particularly among marginalized populations. A further and important impact of these collaborative art programs is that they offer training to individuals who might otherwise be excluded. This approach not only broadens access but also increases the opportunity for discovering new talents, providing young people with concrete opportunities for professional growth. This panel brings together experts and practitioners to discuss successful models and strategies for maximizing the social impact of collaborative music initiatives. By highlighting concrete examples and sharing best practices, the panel aims to inspire and guide philanthropic efforts in this vital area.

LUCA MEDICI - Good morning, everyone.
It's a pleasure to be here with you today, discussing the transformative power of music alongside three brilliant women: Daniela Perani, neuroscientist and researcher; Janice Harper Smith, singer, teacher, and artist; and Christine Rhomberg, member of the executive board of the Hilti Foundation and responsible for social change projects.
I'd like to start by sharing my perspective.
I am the director of a music school that, in recent years, has developed a vision of its role in society. We believe that one of the greatest yet often overlooked values of music education is its ability to create meaningful impact beyond the classroom. To address this, we have developed several projects focused on inclusivity—both economic and social—bringing music to places where it is not easily accessible.
One such initiative, Together Sounds Better, is a program for people with disabilities, ranging from mild to severe, which we recently implemented at Provvida Madre. Soon, we will launch another project in collaboration with the Red Cross, aimed at children with migrant backgrounds.
As we embarked on these initiatives, we also asked ourselves: how can we prepare our teachers for this work? Musicians are trained to play and teach, but not always for these unique and challenging contexts. To address this, we have developed training programs for our educators. Additionally, we have organized events to explore and explain the transformative power of music. One such event took place this spring, where we analyzed why music holds such a profound impact on children and human beings in general.

For us, music is a powerful tool for social change, a means to create a better world. However, as musicians and artists, we sometimes risk convincing only ourselves of its importance. So, Daniela Perani, is there scientific evidence that supports this idea?

DANIELA PERANI - Thank you for this very important question. Neuroscience has only recently begun studying the effects of music on the brain. It's a relatively new field of research. One word I'd like to highlight in this context is empathy. I was recently interviewed on this very topic, and I find it fascinating because empathy is generally perceived as something positive. However, it can also have a negative side.

What does empathy truly mean? And how is it related to music? In neuroscience, empathy is fundamental to how our brains function. Every action we take, every sensation we perceive, and every emotion we feel throughout our day is rooted in an empathic process. Our brains resonate in response to the actions of others—this is why music plays such a crucial role.

But it doesn't stop there. This morning's talk touched on key aspects of brain function that align with this idea. When we are exposed to positive experiences, our brains resonate positively. Conversely, when surrounded by negativity, our brains respond accordingly. This effect is particularly striking in children. We learn because we are empathic. We understand because we are empathic. And this is precisely why music is so powerful.

Music has become a major area of interest in neuroscience, particularly when studying the brains of musicians. Research shows that musicians have structurally different brains compared to non-musicians. Thanks to advanced imaging techniques—such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) with specialized sequences—we can now analyze brain thickness, neural connectivity, and regional interactions. And what we've discovered is remarkable: musicians' brains are distinct in significant ways.

However, what's even more intriguing is that there is no single "music area" in the brain. Music is a multi-modal activity that engages various cognitive strategies and neural networks. It involves not just sound processing, from the primary to the secondary auditory cortex, but also motor functions. Have you ever noticed how people, especially children, instinctively move their hands or fingers when they listen to music? This simple behaviour is a clear indication of the deep connection between music and rhythm.

The multi-sensory nature of music explains why the brain is so engaged, whether we are actively playing an instrument or simply listening. However, in modern society, most people only experience music passively—background music, ambient sounds—without actively engaging with it. And while this may create a mood, it doesn't rewire the brain. To truly change the brain, we need effort, consistency, and active participation. The good news is that neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to adapt and change—exists at any age. Through practice, we deepen our understanding of music, strengthen our cognitive abilities, and ultimately, transform our brains. And, by changing our brains, we change society. That's my brief answer.

LUCA MEDICI - Now, Janice—based on your experience as an artist and educator, what are your thoughts on the current state of music education?

JANICE HARPER SMITH - Well, to put it simply, music education is in a global crisis, unfortunately.

Before I dive into the reasons behind this and share some of the research I've done for the forum, I want to take a moment to thank the Orchestra Sinfonica of the Conservatorio for last night's wonderful concert. It was a powerful reminder of the vital role philanthropy plays in supporting private music schools. The level of musicianship was incredibly high, which was both inspiring and encouraging.

Listening to Grieg and Brahms also brought to mind the deep influence of folk music and folk songs on great composers like Brahms and Bartók—the list goes on. And yet, one of the challenges we face today is that people simply don't sing as much anymore. This is a significant issue in music education, though I won't have time to go into it in detail today.

So, back to your question—why is music education in crisis on a global scale? I believe there are two main reasons.

The first is systemic. It's a structural issue. Andrew Holland touched on this earlier—more than touched on it, actually, he described it better than I probably can. The problem lies in the complex network of decision-making across different levels, where communication and collaboration are lacking. Responsibility is constantly passed along to the next level, and in the end, no one is truly accountable. This lack of coordination among decision-makers is a major obstacle. The first panel made excellent points about the importance of collaboration, and this is exactly where it's needed. A 2021 study in Switzerland, which examined music education across the cantons, clearly highlighted this systemic failure. The study found that while strong proposals and well-designed curricula existed on paper, they were simply not being implemented in classrooms. This was shocking to me as I researched the topic.

A similar issue was reported in Germany. In 2017, the secretary of the German Musical Advisory Council revealed that up to 80% of public school music lessons were either not taking place at all or being taught by teachers with no formal musical training. And considering the impact of the pandemic, I highly doubt the situation has improved since then. This is yet another example of how fragmented the system is, with too many layers of responsibility and not enough accountability or standardized approaches.

The second major problem is the severe shortage of music teachers. In fact, there's a shortage of teachers in general. One reason for this is that fewer young people are studying to become music educators. Other career paths are becoming more attractive, and as a result, music education is being pushed aside in school curricula.

The Swiss study also pointed out that in teacher training programs, music education is merely an elective for general classroom teachers. This is deeply concerning because, in many cases, when there are no dedicated music teachers available, the responsibility falls on classroom teachers. But if they lack musical training, confidence, or even interest in teaching music, it has a profoundly negative impact on children's musical development.

So, have I answered your question? Yes. And it's a rather bleak picture. But I do have a more hopeful note to end on.

There are signs of a budding renaissance in music education, particularly in addressing the teacher shortage. In 2021, England passed a National Plan for Music Education—aptly titled The Transformative Powers of Music. A key feature of this initiative is the establishment of music hubs, designed to collaborate and provide musical education at the local level. Currently, there are 43 hubs across England, and this government-backed effort is an encouraging step in the right direction.

Another promising development comes from California, where Proposition 28 was recently

passed, allocating 1 billion for increased music and arts education in public schools. Notably, 80% of that funding is earmarked for hiring new teachers to fill the gap. The U.S. has recognized the severity of the teacher shortage and, in response, major organizations—including the American Music Educators Association, the American String Association, and the American Choral Directors Association—have joined forces to create a workforce coalition dedicated to finding long-term solutions.

LUCA MEDICI - Christine, institutions supporting global vision, about the topic we are discussing.

CHRISTINE RHOMBERG - Well, in many ways, my vision has already become a reality—right here, where we are sitting—because what we are striving for is the conscious use of music as a powerful tool to empower young people.

To truly achieve this, however, we need to break down two existing bubbles. The first is within the field we work in—the world of music for social action. This field consists of projects and initiatives that use music as a means to support young people born into challenging circumstances, giving them the opportunity to develop themselves, build self-esteem, gain self-awareness, and recognize their own potential. This isn't necessarily about discovering musical talent, but about fostering self-belief so that, if their circumstances allow, they can make the right choices for their future.

Despite being part of a global movement with hundreds of programs around the world, this field still operates in isolation. It remains a bubble that isn't sufficiently connected to the established music sector. But change is happening—gradually, step by step. And even here in Lugano, I sense the first cracks forming in these barriers.

Bridging these two worlds—the traditional music sector and the social music movement—is crucial. We need to join forces and learn from one another because the potential for mutual benefit is immense. Take, for example, the issue of the music teacher shortage, which has already been mentioned. In the professional music world, teaching is often seen as a third-choice career path. Most young musicians aspire to become soloists; if not, they aim to play in an orchestra. Teaching is often viewed as a fallback option rather than a primary goal. Yet teachers are at the heart of everything we accomplish in music. They shape the future of music itself. We need to change the narrative and advocate for teaching as the truly fulfilling, essential profession that it is.

In our field—music for social change—the shortage of teachers is even more pronounced. The ones we do have are often trained as professional musicians, prepared for orchestral or solo careers, but not necessarily equipped with the pedagogical skills needed for teaching in this context. Many come into this work simply because the job market forces them to. In Germany, for instance, fewer than 25% of music graduates manage to make a living solely from their craft. As a result, many turn to teaching in social music programs without the necessary training or understanding of the deeper purpose behind their role.

And that's the reality—it is often a last resort. But teaching isn't just a profession; it's a calling. To be a truly great teacher requires a sense of vocation. Our challenge now is to inspire the next generation of musicians to recognize and embrace that calling.

LUCA MEDICI - Yes, I believe you've highlighted a crucial issue.

A musician who cannot sustain themselves through their art is ultimately not able to pursue their true passion. I recall an intriguing project by Simon Radl in Berlin called Rhythm Is It. It was an extraordinary initiative, and just last month, I met someone from Berlin who confirmed its significance. However, they remarked that it was a one-time event and nothing substantial followed.

I think some of the points discussed today—such as the lack of collective strategy and the existence of isolated bubbles—enable politicians to disregard these issues. When everyone advocates solely for themselves, a unified, global strategy is absent.

CHRISTINE RHOMBERG - You're absolutely right; this is a failure of advocacy. Within the social and established fields, we possess all the data, studies, and facts, yet we fail to communicate effectively. We struggle to convey the importance of music in a manner that resonates with public decision-makers and stakeholders.

At the Hilti Foundation, we ventured into the realm of music for social change by supporting emerging programs. Initially, we collaborated with El Sistema in Venezuela, but we later shifted our focus to smaller, young projects requiring our assistance. As a private foundation, we have the flexibility to take risks and invest in these initiatives. Through this journey, we realized that the primary obstacle was the scarcity of qualified teachers who fully grasp their roles in these programs. This realization led us to establish the Academy for Impact through Music (AIM) to enhance the effectiveness of music-based social change. We see ourselves as an innovation lab, harnessing existing knowledge within the sector—knowledge often lost due to a lack of collaboration. At AIM, we train educators from social music programs, helping them understand their objectives more clearly.

Many programs claim to be "Sistema-inspired," but what does that mean? They teach groups rather than individuals, using music as a vehicle for broader social impact. We provide these educators with innovative tools to empower young people more effectively.

Since launching this project, we've sought to collaborate with other foundations and partners. However, the entire sector suffers from inadequate advocacy. When we share our work, many people fail to grasp its significance or impact because we do not communicate our achievements compellingly. Therefore, AIM not only focuses on teacher training but also emphasizes leadership development, guiding programs to articulate their mission clearly.

Additionally, we concentrate on impact measurement. As Fiona Cunningham, AIM's (Academy for impact throught music) director, often says, we need both "numbers for the brain" and "stories for the heart." These elements are essential for convincing decision-makers and funders—both public and private—of the value of music for social change.

This challenge extends to the established music sector, where music's public significance is dwindling, reduced primarily to entertainment. Today, we will hear from Werner Bachstein on this matter. It is imperative that we collectively advocate for the vital role music plays in nurturing the next generation and shaping society. Community art is essential in this endeavor, and we must work tirelessly to raise awareness and ensure that our contributions are recognized and respected.

LUCA MEDICI - Last night, Daniela, we were discussing society. Today, I feel motivated to take action, so I do. But tomorrow, that motivation fades, and I no longer feel the

same drive. How can we effectively influence society to uphold these values? Society is constantly evolving, and we need to develop strategies to guide this transformation in a meaningful way.

DANIELA PERANI - Yes, I believe, as you said—and as we already know—knowledge is the most important factor. Without knowledge, we cannot make informed decisions or form sound judgments. However, knowledge from fields such as neuroscience, social sciences, and psychology often remains confined within their respective disciplines. It rarely reaches the wider public or influences other sectors. While research funding is often directed toward urgent, high-impact areas, disciplines like music and education receive far less support. What's even more surprising is that many potential funding opportunities go untapped simply because people don't apply for them.

This is also true for music. We need to persuade governments, universities, and local institutions to actively seek and allocate funding specifically for disseminating research findings and making knowledge accessible to all. Additionally, we should foster collaboration among institutions, stakeholders, and experts to determine the best approaches for music education and related fields.

For instance, how many people know that children who study music tend to perform significantly better in subjects like mathematics and language? This has been scientifically proven, yet it remains largely unknown. If people are unaware of music's crucial role in cognitive development, why would they prioritize it in schools? Who truly cares about music education if they don't recognize its importance? Neuroscience has already demonstrated its value, yet this knowledge is not widely applied.

Beyond education, music has profound therapeutic benefits. As our population ages, addressing neurodegenerative diseases becomes increasingly critical. Music can play a key role in this, not only as entertainment but as a tool for fostering social connections and improving well-being.

Consider pain management: research shows that people experiencing chronic pain can find relief simply by listening to music, reducing their dependence on medication. In the early stages of neurodegenerative diseases, music helps maintain social bonds and cognitive function. It is not merely a pastime—it actively changes the brain.

Even learning an instrument later in life, as a beginner rather than an expert, has significant benefits. Yet, how many people know this? And why aren't such findings being widely implemented?

Raising awareness of these insights on a broader scale is essential. We need collaborative programs, funding to facilitate knowledge exchange, and conferences where experts and policymakers can discuss these topics.

Ultimately, convincing politicians to take action requires a bottom-up approach—decisions should be informed by research and community-driven initiatives. This is crucial for shaping effective policies that truly recognize the value of music in education, health, and society as a whole.

LUCA MEDICI - Then you are suggesting we should learn politician to sing, Janice?

JANICE HARPER SMITH - Everyone should learn to sing—not to perfect their pitch or tone, but to actively participate in music. It's not about hitting every note correctly or having a flawless voice; it's about

engagement. The real impact of music comes from this active participation.

I recently came across a study that followed the musical development of 220 children over a span of 10 years. The findings were remarkable: these children developed a heightened awareness of their surroundings. Their sense of self-awareness and self-respect increased through their involvement in music.

What parent wouldn't be interested in knowing that music education can help their child develop a longer attention span, greater resilience, stronger self-respect, and more discipline? These are real, tangible benefits that music provides.

As our insightful panel members have pointed out, we need to spread this message. Awareness is key. I believe we should start with parents because many of them simply don't realize how crucial music education is for their children.

Parents should be asking their kids when they come home from school: Did you have music class today? If the answer is no, they should be asking, Why not? You need that!

This is where we must begin—by spreading the word and ensuring that music is recognized as an essential part of education and child development.

CHRISTINE RHOMBERG - I completely agree. Sometimes, parents don't even need to ask—they can simply see the transformation in their children. I will never forget one of my first visits to a small music school high up in the Andes of Peru, just a year and a half after its program had begun. The city itself was bleak, filled with slot machines and bakery shops—hundreds of each, for reasons I couldn't understand. But for the children, there was nothing. No activities, no opportunities.

The music school had around 150 students. During a presentation, while the choir was performing and the orchestra was preparing to take the stage, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned around to see a group of mothers who had chosen a spokesperson. She told me something I will never forget: *"You must continue supporting this program. You cannot imagine how much our children have changed in just a year and a half. Before, they never talked about school. They came home, we had to push them to do their homework, and they had no interest in learning. But now, ever since they started attending music school, they won't stop talking during dinner. They tell us everything they've experienced. They feel like they are part of something bigger. They belong to a group, a family. They collaborate. And, for the first time, they understand that without them, the group is incomplete."*

She went on: "In an orchestra, if the third double bass is missing, the group isn't whole. Our children have never felt needed before. But now, they hear: 'We need you. You must come back tomorrow.' This gives them purpose. It builds self-esteem. They feel important."

Even today, I regret not recording that conversation. Because these mothers knew. They saw the change in their children firsthand—their growth, their progress.

Another example comes from the impact of the pandemic, which was devastating, particularly for children in vulnerable communities. Before COVID-19, when you asked them why they were in music school, many would say, *"I want to become a better person."* I would always remind them: *"You already are."*

This past summer, a choir from *Sinfonía por el Perú* participated in an international competition in Vienna. Afterward, three young singers—ages 18, 20, and 21—spoke about what the experience had meant to them. Their words were completely spontaneous, yet their analysis was profound. It wasn't just about winning— it was about the struggle to attend

every rehearsal, the discipline required to be fully committed, and the sacrifices they made to be part of something greater. Their language had transformed. They could articulate their challenges and dreams in ways they never could before.
For many, university is not an option due to their circumstances. And yet, music gives them something just as valuable: the strength to face their reality. *It becomes nutrition for the soul.*
There is so much evidence of music's power, and yet we don't talk about it enough. Unfortunately, in many cases, we have to present our case to people who think only in numbers. But what does it really mean when we say there are 5,000 children in a music program in Peru? That number alone doesn't convey the impact, the transformation, or the quality of education they receive.
Yes, numbers are necessary for the brain—but stories speak to the heart. And often, they are the most powerful and persuasive tools we have.

LUCA MEDICI - You are currently running projects in South America—Peru, Colombia—and also in Europe. What are the main differences between these projects? Do you face more challenges in one region compared to the other?

CHRISTINE RHOMBERG - We actually face more challenges here when it comes to establishing a program. Take *Superar* in Lugano, for example. The program, *Superar Suisse*, is headquartered in Zurich, but it also has a well-functioning branch here in Lugano, with LAC as a partner. However, when we first tried to establish the program in Switzerland and requested funding from the city of Zurich, the local music school was consulted. Their response? *"No, this is a bad project. It's not a good idea."*
For those who may not be familiar, *Superar* works primarily with children from migrant backgrounds. It's an integration and social inclusion program that operates within schools, using choir and, more recently, orchestral programs to engage students. But the resistance we faced in Zurich wasn't about the program's quality—it was about competition.
In some parts of the public sector, there's a fear that new initiatives might take away funding from existing institutions. Instead of seeing *Superar* as an added value, a bridge that could introduce children to music who might later become students at traditional music schools, some see it as a threat. It's frustrating because there's no reason for these sectors to work against each other when they could be collaborating.
It all comes down to mindset. Perhaps, as musicians, we are trained to think as soloists rather than orchestra members. But as Werner Bachstein rightly says: *"Success requires groups, not individuals."*
We aren't doing this for ourselves. I'm not doing this for me. We are doing this for young people, for the next generation. Yet, music education in schools continues to decline. Even in Bavaria—a place with a strong musical tradition—primary schools now dedicate just one hour per week to any kind of creative activity. And the teacher is no longer required to teach music. It could be drawing or anything else. This change took effect just last July. So, what more is there to say? The reality speaks for itself.

LUCA MEDICI - We've discussed many philosophical themes, but now, concretely, how do we move forward? What practical steps can we take to build collaboration and develop common strategies? How can we ensure that our topic receives the importance it truly deserves?

JANICE HARPER SMITH - I think when it comes to collaboration, we can take inspiration from what Andrew Holland said today—about not being afraid to put ourselves out there, to approach different educational and institutional bodies. The key is not to ask for money right away, but to engage them with our conviction and enthusiasm.

We already have the scientific evidence. We have the empirical evidence. We have the right to demand change from decision-makers, especially if we truly want social change. And I think we all agree—we could use some of that right now.

One idea that came to mind is the concept of mediators—or call them lobbyists—whose role would be to spread awareness, connect different institutions, and ensure communication between schools, classrooms, foundations, and research organizations. Maybe this could even be done through an online network. I haven't thought it all the way through yet, but I do think this is what we need.

The reality is that musicians are incredibly busy. Teachers are very busy. Doctors are busy. And, well, you—you're practically living in airports, aren't you? So, we need people whose specific role is to foster collaboration and communication.

Perhaps this could be a role supported by philanthropists—people who see the value in music education and want to ensure that this knowledge reaches those who can act on it. Just a thought—but I really believe this kind of mediator could make a big difference.

#2 Agora
Numa Bischof-Ullmann, Superintendent of the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra

Angela Greco: Dear Numa, in your extensive experience working with both regional and international partners, how have you seen collaboration between cultural institutions and private entities enhance the quality and impact of music programming? Could you describe a specific example where such a partnership led to a significant artistic or community outcome?

Numa Bischof Ullmann: Thank you for having me here. It's a pleasure. I hope you have the patience to go through my thoughts.
There are many examples, but one that could be relevant to Lugano comes from my experience in Lucerne, where I run the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra. As some of you may know, Lucerne built a world-class concert hall, the KKL Lucerne. However, they overlooked the need for a dedicated rehearsal space. Despite this oversight, the hall itself was exceptional, and I commend them for that.
After 15 years, we realized that to truly make a symphony orchestra world-class, we needed to provide it with the necessary resources and infrastructure. I suggested to my board that we take action. We had a world-class stage and reputation, but no proper rehearsal space. Fortunately, major philanthropists stepped forward to support the project once they saw the design and cost. However, I proposed that we make this a community project rather than relying solely on large donors.
We invited every subscriber and citizen of the region to participate, offering them the opportunity to contribute, starting from as little as 50 francs. This became Switzerland's first major crowdfunding project for the arts and set a record, raising close to 700,000 francs. More importantly, it engaged a vast number of people, fostering a sense of ownership. When the facility was completed, people began referring to it as our building. Previously, there was little tradition of philanthropy in the region, and people would refer to the orchestra as your orchestra.
I would correct them, saying, "It's not my orchestra; I am here to serve it. It's actually your orchestra." This initiative helped shift that perception.
This community involvement also inspired major donors, who saw that their contributions had a greater democratic impact. Their support was no longer seen as an exclusive privilege but as part of a collective effort. Today, the facility is used not just by the orchestra but also by other institutions, including choruses and educational programs, allowing for broader engagement with the community.

Angela Greco: Dear Numa, that is truly inspiring. Your leadership at the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra has been marked by successful collaborations with private foundations and sponsors. Could you share a particularly meaningful experience where fundraising played a crucial role in supporting artistic excellence, and how these partnerships have contributed to the orchestra's growth and international presence?

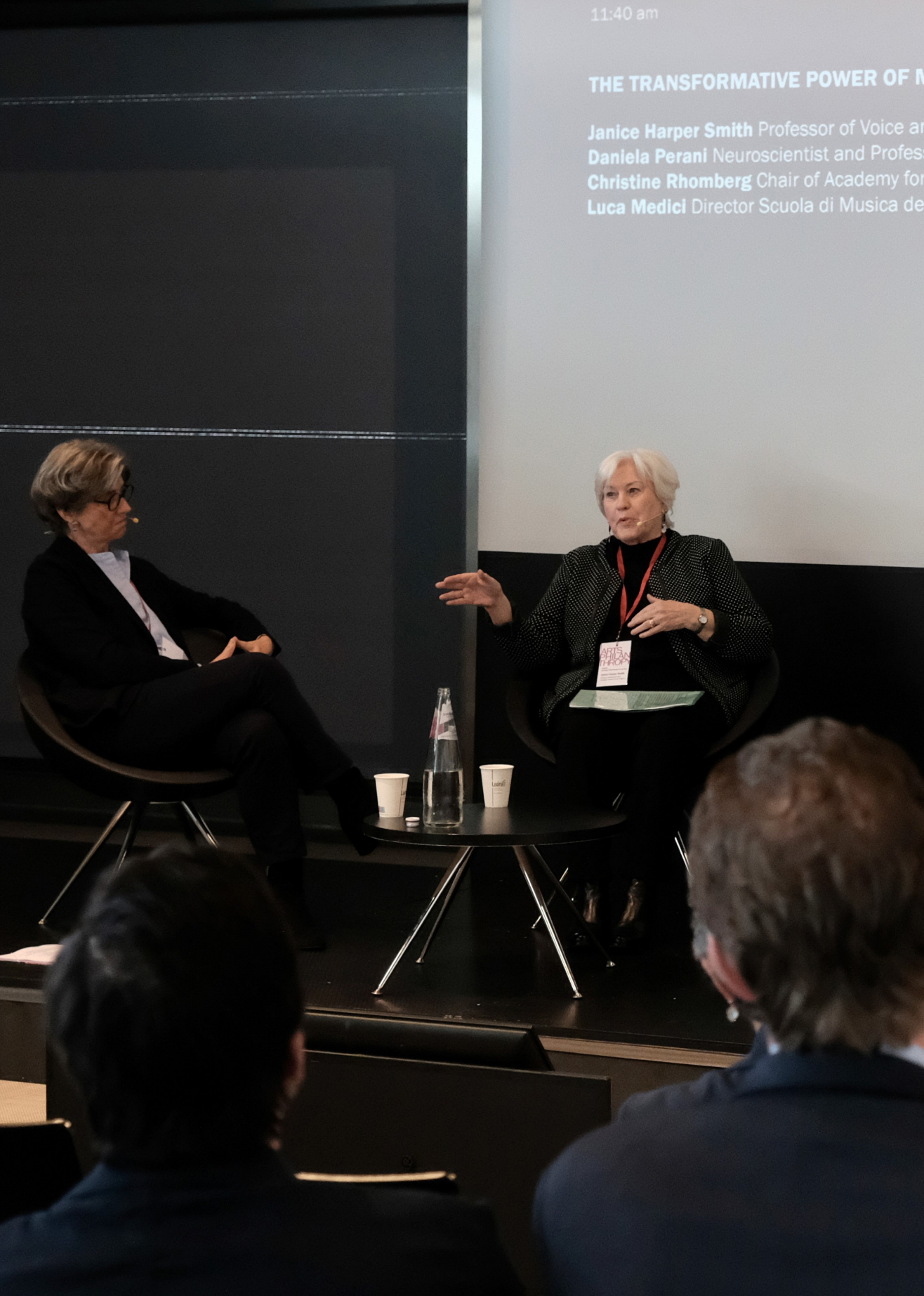
Numa Bischof Ullmann: I could summarize my last 20 years through this philosophy. Traditionally, cultural institutions in

Switzerland were state-funded. The municipality would cover expenses, but this often led to stagnation rather than development. Excellence, particularly world-class excellence, requires ambition, and many institutions shy away from that challenge.
A good example is the Lucerne Piano Festival. For many years, it was run by a separate institution, but it eventually ceased operations. We were asked to take it over, but I initially declined because I did not see our role as merely saving old institutions. Instead, I wanted to rethink and revitalize the festival. The motivation came from the audience, who were disappointed to see the festival disappear. We decided Lucerne deserved a world-class piano festival, but it had to be fully privately funded.
The private backing of this festival led to new collaborations. The Lucerne Conservatory and other institutions saw an opportunity to leverage this funding for broader artistic initiatives. This approach—starting with private investment—enabled multiple stakeholders to benefit.
When I first took on my role, the Lucerne Concert Hall was world-class, but the orchestra needed to rise to that level. The challenge was that no additional public funding was available. Instead of being discouraged, I embraced philanthropy. I set a three-year plan, outlining what was needed to move from level one to level three, and then to level five. Through private fundraising, we raised the necessary funds for the initial phases, leading to significant growth.
The impact was striking. While other orchestras were cutting budgets and downsizing, we were expanding, hiring top talent, and increasing our international presence. This anti-cyclical approach caught attention. After proving our success through private funding, I approached the government with a proposal: we had already secured 65% of our budget through private means, which was unprecedented in Switzerland. I suggested that if they wanted to remain an equal partner, they should contribute in the next phase.
At first, they were hesitant. But over two years, they saw the model's success. Eventually, they agreed to match the contribution of three private donors, each committing limitless funds over time. This ensured long-term sustainability.
The key lesson here is that behind private donations are people—hearts that beat daily for the institution. These donors are also stakeholders, engaged audiences, and passionate advocates. In this way, philanthropy is not just about raising funds; it's about building a committed community that supports and promotes the institution from within.

Angela Greco: That's an excellent model for any institution. As someone who has championed new music and supported young talent, what role do you believe philanthropy and collaboration play in shaping the future of classical music? How can these efforts help foster innovation and inclusivity within the arts?

Numa Bischof Ullmann: That's a big and important question. As cultural leaders, we have a responsibility to ensure access to the arts for everyone. While not everyone may accept the invitation to engage with classical music, we must remove any possible barriers—whether financial, educational, or logistical.
This requires a long-term commitment, not just one-off events for PR purposes. To this end, we established Switzerland's first dedicated department for education and community outreach within a symphony orchestra. This department's sole mission is to develop inclusive programs. They are involved from the beginning, not as an

afterthought. I even gave them representation on our board of directors to ensure their voice shapes our institutional strategy.
By embedding inclusivity within the organization, rather than treating it as a separate initiative, we create meaningful and lasting change.
Angela Greco:
Thank you so much, Numa, for sharing your insights with us. Your leadership is truly inspiring and serves as a model for arts institutions worldwide.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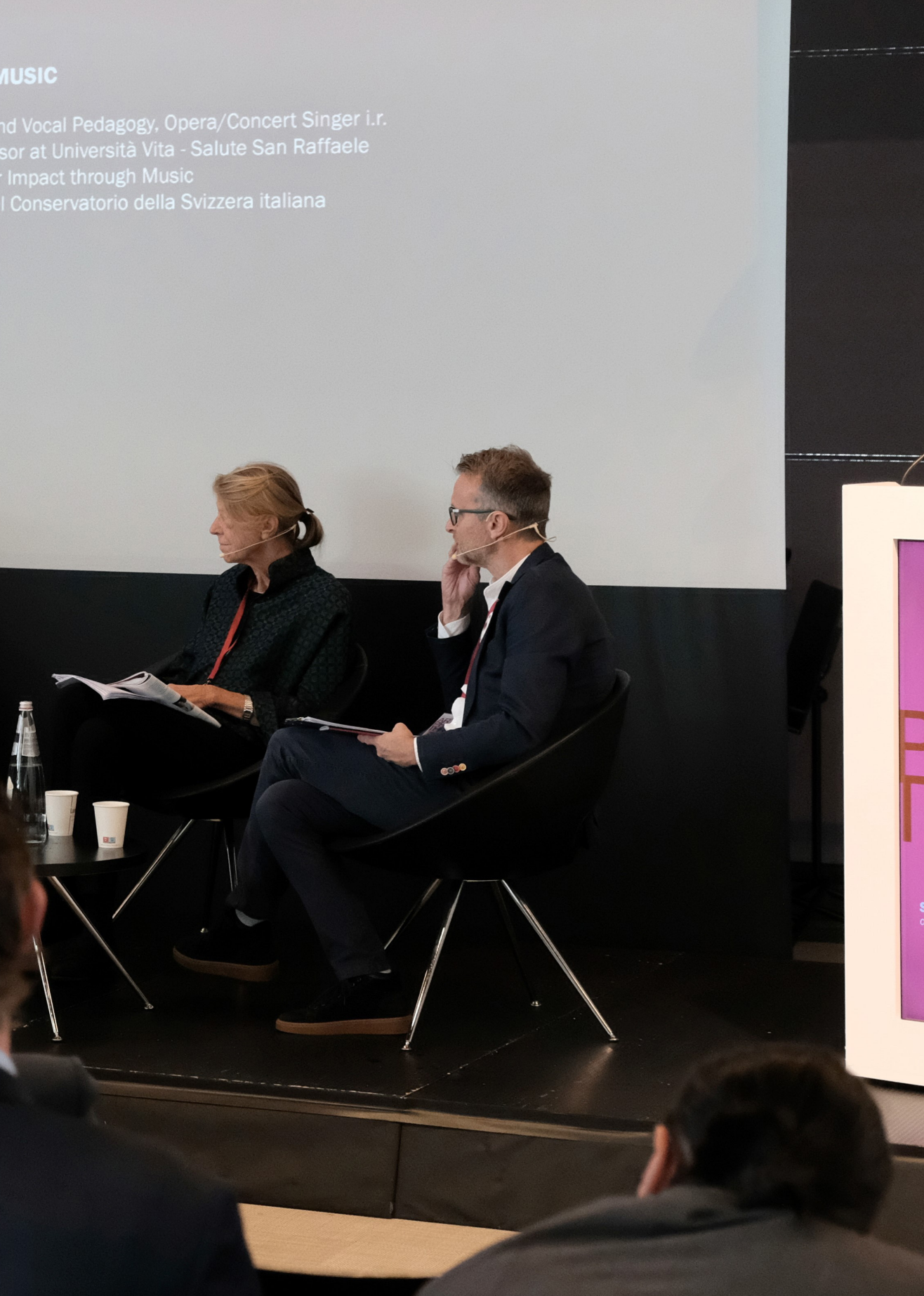
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PANEL 3
COLLABORATION AS BOOSTER FOR CREATIVITY

JEFF ARNAL, Executive Director at Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center
MATTHEW HINSLEY, Executive Director Austin Classical Guitar
MARCO POLONI, Artist and Director Conservatorio Internazionale di Scienze Audiovisive,
FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA, Delegate for Ensemble & Orchestral Activities at Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana

Collaboration as a trigger for creativity

How does collaboration contribute to creativity? The third panel, bringing together artists, cultural leaders, and educators, delves into how collaboration can serve as a powerful catalyst for creativity in the arts, pushing the boundaries of traditional art forms. A dynamic dialogue will take the public on a journey through innovative teaching and learning experiences, the importance of integrating arts to foster innovative artistic expressions, and the social impact of creative thinking. By examining specific experiences and sharing insights, the panel will display examples of interdisciplinary partnerships and the way they enrich the cultural landscape of their communitites.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - I initially thought I would be the only musician on this panel today. But then I discovered that Matthew Hinsley, Executive Director at Austin Classical Guitar, is here—so I had to brace myself for another guitarist! Then I learned that Jeff Arnal, Executive Director of the Black Mountain College Museum and Art Center, is a percussionist. At that point, I figured, “Alright, three musicians—seems like we’re done.” But then I found out that Marco Poloni, Director of CISA, is secretly a musician as well—another guitarist!
So, here we are, a panel full of musicians. As someone passionate about making music, I feel incredibly lucky to have one of the best imaginable jobs. At the Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana, I’m a conductor responsible for orchestral and ensemble projects—essentially, anything that involves musicians coming together to create music. From small chamber groups to full symphony orchestras and operatic productions, my role revolves around fostering collaboration.
This brings us to today’s theme: collaboration as a catalyst for creativity. Collaboration isn’t just important for us—it’s our foundation. There is no music without collaboration. That said, I find it fascinating that music and the arts also embrace individualism in a meaningful way. Take composition, for example—it begins as the solitary work of one person, yet it ultimately relies on musicians and ensembles to bring it to life. This balance between individual creativity and collective effort is something worth exploring further.
At our institution, we are lucky to work across a broad spectrum of artistic disciplines. Currently, we are embarking on a major initiative: the Città della Musica project. This will be a kind of artistic co-housing endeavor, where we will share space and collaborate with prestigious institutions like the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana,

I Barocchisti, and other key cultural organizations in Lugano. Collaboration will be the backbone of everything we do in this new environment, just as it has been for years in our existing artistic partnerships. One example of this collaborative spirit is 900presente, our contemporary music series now entering its 26th season. This initiative has allowed us to forge connections across different creative disciplines, including theatre and multimedia projects. We've partnered with Accademia Teatro Dimitri, a renowned physical theatre school here in Ticino, and together we've brought many ambitious projects to life—something that would have been impossible without collaboration.

To illustrate this, let me share just one of the many projects we've undertaken. Last year, we concluded 900presente with a unique cinematic reinterpretation of Nosferatu by Murnau. We re-edited the film and set it to a newly curated soundtrack featuring music by Alban Berg and Morton Feldman. The performance featured a live string chamber orchestra, electronic elements dispersed throughout the venue, and a dual-screen setup. This project would not have been possible without the support of Swiss Radio Television (RSI), demonstrating yet again that collaboration is the key to creating something extraordinary.

With that in mind, I'd like to turn to Jeff Arnal. Jeff, you work for an institution that continues the legacy of a groundbreaking institution that no longer exists: Black Mountain College. This college was, in many ways, a manifesto of collaboration—pioneering a radical approach to education that intertwined art and interdisciplinary thinking. My question for you is: How does the legacy of Black Mountain College translate into the work you do today at your center?

JEFF ARNAL - I think it would be helpful to start with some context about Black Mountain College—what it was and why it remains so significant.

Black Mountain College existed for a relatively short period, from 1933 to 1957—just 24 years. Yet, in that time, it became a who's who of 20th-century arts and culture. From its inception, the college was deeply influenced by John Dewey's philosophy of progressive education. Its founder, John Andrew Rice, sought to create an experimental learning environment, and in a pivotal moment, he hired Josef Albers—a German artist and educator—after the Bauhaus was forced to close due to Hitler's rise to power. With an influx of German refugees arriving in the United States, Albers shaped Black Mountain College into a liberal arts institution with the arts at its core. Throughout its 24-year history, the list of individuals who passed through its doors is astounding. Willem and Elaine de Kooning were there, Buckminster Fuller built his first geodesic dome, and mathematics and biology were taught alongside music and the visual arts. John Cage and Lou Harrison taught music, and in 1944, Black Mountain College hosted the largest Arnold Schoenberg Festival up to that point.

But beyond the arts, the college also made bold, progressive moves in the face of societal norms. Located in Western North Carolina, in the heart of the Jim Crow South, Black Mountain College integrated its student body a full decade before Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court ruling that desegregated American public schools. This was a groundbreaking and courageous act. The celebrated painter Jacob Lawrence held his first teaching job there.

The college was also a haven for the LGBTQ+ community, providing a safe space for Merce Cunningham, John Cage, and

others to live and work openly. It fostered an extraordinary culture of collaboration and artistic exchange, where disciplines overlapped in ways rarely seen elsewhere.

One of the most famous examples of this interdisciplinary spirit was Theater Piece No. 1 (1952)—often credited as the first-ever "happening." In this performance, Merce Cunningham danced, John Cage delivered a lecture, David Tudor played the piano, M.C. Richards and Charles Olson read poetry, and Robert Rauschenberg displayed his white paintings—all happening simultaneously in an immersive, multi-sensory event.

Black Mountain College ultimately closed in 1957 for a variety of reasons, but its influence only grew over time. Decades later, in 1993, our museum's founder gathered surviving alumni and posed a question: Should we create a museum dedicated to this incredible history?

The response, particularly from Robert Rauschenberg, was clear—it could not simply be a history museum, something static and frozen in time. It had to remain a living, evolving institution, just as Black Mountain College had been. The college changed year to year, even semester to semester, shaped by the people who passed through it. Our museum was founded with that same spirit of constant reinvention.

Since joining the museum nine years ago, I've worked to carry this legacy forward. With my background in performance and time-based work, one of the first things we did was launch a performance initiative. We've collaborated with groups like the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, independent filmmakers, and experimental artists, hosting everything from large-scale productions to intimate solo performances.

We also created the Active Archive Residency Program, allowing artists, curators, and scholars to engage directly with our extensive archive—which includes 4,000 pieces of art from both students and faculty of Black Mountain College.

A key question we continually ask ourselves is: How do we stay relevant? How do we keep this legacy alive? As a curator and director, I take this responsibility seriously. Our approach is simple: We listen to artists. We engage with curators and scholars, and we shape our programming around their needs, ensuring that we remain a platform for experimentation and innovation.

Of course, this requires creative thinking, especially when it comes to funding. In the U.S., arts funding is overwhelmingly reliant on private sources—typically an 80/20 split between private and government funding. In North Carolina, and the South in general, public funding for the arts is even more limited, which means we must be resourceful and adaptable in every project we undertake.

While we offer online programs, we remain focused on in-person experiences. When programming exhibitions or events, I always ask: If Black Mountain College still existed today, would this artist, scholar, or teacher be part of it? More often than not, the answer is yes.

Many of us who work at the museum are also artists ourselves, which gives us a deep understanding of what artists need to do their best work. We go out of our way to provide the right conditions—whether for curators, performers, or scholars—so they can create something meaningful.

In many ways, our museum has recreated some of the original atmosphere of Black Mountain College—but rather than being an educational institution, we now operate as both a museum and a production space.

At its core, Black Mountain College was an experiment in democracy and community—almost a commune of sorts. Faculty and students lived, ate, and worked together, blurring the boundaries between disciplines and fostering a spirit of radical collaboration.

Today, our museum continues that ethos, serving as the only institution in Western North Carolina that presents truly experimental art. Whether it's Morton Feldman, John Cage, or avant-garde contemporary works, we provide a home for ideas and voices that might not find space elsewhere.
That commitment—to experimentation, collaboration, and creative freedom—remains our guiding principle.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - I'm curious about different aspects of Black Mountain. One more question I'd like to ask is: how would you define the community you serve? What is your audience like? Who is interested in what you do, and what kind of impact do you see around you? Do people travel from far away to visit or create there? What is that experience like?

JEFF ARNAL - We have a small staff, yet every day we receive calls or emails from people conducting new research on Black Mountain College. It's a subject taught in art, film, and music schools worldwide, and once people discover it, they often become deeply fascinated. Many reach out to us directly, and the most common question we hear is whether we plan to restart the college. The answer is no—we are not reopening the college, but we do operate a museum and an art center that functions as a living, evolving space.
Our community is growing, and our membership extends beyond the local level to national and international supporters, totaling around 800 members. Though our museum is small, we take great pride in what we offer. Importantly, admission is free, as is access to our research library, which is an extensive resource dedicated entirely to Black Mountain College. Researchers from around the world visit to explore our archives.
Our local community is incredibly engaged. Even when we present challenging performances—like a five-hour concert—people show up and fill the space. The support and enthusiasm we receive are always remarkable and inspiring.
Francesco Boassaglia
Speaking of community, I'd like to turn to Matthew. As a classical guitarist, you didn't have to attend symphony orchestra rehearsals, which must have left you with a lot of time on your hands. And you certainly made the most of it.
When I hear the title Director of Austin Classical Guitar, it doesn't even begin to capture the scope of what you do, Matthew. I'd love for you to share an update on what's happening in Austin—a bit of an "Austin report," if you will.

MATTHEW HINSLEY - Thank you, Francesco. It's a pleasure to be here.
When I think about collaboration as a driver of creativity—especially from the perspective of a community-based arts organization with education at its core—I'm reminded of Yo-Yo Ma's 2013 Nancy Hanks lecture at the Kennedy Center. It's still available online, and I encourage everyone to watch it because it's incredibly inspiring. In that talk, he discusses the edge effect—what happens at the intersections of different fields and sectors when they merge. He explains how, in nature, the edge effect is where ecosystems become most dynamic and creative, and he draws a parallel to how collaboration can fuel creativity and problem-solving in the world.
For me, collaboration is creativity. And as I reflect on it today, I see our work at Austin Classical Guitar unfolding on three levels:

1. Aesthetic and Educational – The art we create and experience.
2. Institutional – How we collaborate across organizations.
3. Spiritual – The deeper, intangible impact of our work.

To give some context, let me share a little about Austin Classical Guitar and the work we do. We are a broad-reaching organization, serving tens of thousands of people in many different ways. We recently opened a concert and creative learning center in Austin, where we present a wide range of performances. Since I began working here 28 years ago, we've hosted the world's greatest classical guitarists on our stage—many of them multiple times.

Beyond concerts, our organization is deeply rooted in education. We had a unique opportunity in the U.S. to introduce a completely new subject to public schools. Before 2000, American schools didn't hire teachers specifically for guitar, so we started experimenting. Early on, we found success—partly because guitar is an incredibly popular instrument, widely accessible, and affordable for students from diverse backgrounds. However, despite its popularity, we realized we had no structured way to teach it effectively in a classroom setting. So, 24 years ago, we began developing a curriculum, infrastructure, and technology to support group instruction. By 2008, we had refined our approach and published a teacher resource called *GuitarCurriculum.com*.

That same year, our local school district released a report highlighting inequities in arts education. Students in lower-income schools had fewer opportunities to participate in music programs, fewer choices, and lower overall engagement compared to their peers in more affluent areas. However, we had already established five guitar programs in low-income schools, and every single one was at full capacity.

Seeing this success, the school district asked us to expand our programs to every school. We did—and soon, educators across the country started reaching out for help. Today, we have programs in 45 Texas school districts and 40 U.S. states. We also developed the first for-credit, daily music program for incarcerated youth, serving students in detention centers since 2010. Now, we're in five centers across Texas, where our team has spent thousands of hours working with young people in the justice system. Some of the most powerful stories come from these experiences.

Returning to the three levels of collaboration, the first—and perhaps the most obvious—is *the aesthetic*. This is where it all begins: the creation and appreciation of art together. But it doesn't stop there.

This year, we welcomed Hindustani composer Reena Esmail as our artist-in-residence. She developed a small musical theme, which we then shared with 65 students from our community. Each student was given a specific assignment: to listen to the theme and respond with their own musical ideas. Reena took those responses and wove them into a new composition, which she and the students co-created over six months.

At the end of that process, we brought all 65 students together on stage, alongside a five-member female vocal ensemble, an incredible bassoonist, and a guest classical guitarist. Together, they premiered a new five-movement work—one that wasn't just performed for the community but by the community itself.

This year, our artist-in-residence is the legendary classical guitarist Pepe Romero. Many of you will know Pepe as a member of Los Romeros, the first and most famous guitar quartet of the 20th century. Pepe was just in Austin last week, and we spent time together on Thursday. This year, he's working with nine students who have formed three

guitar quartets—except each is missing one player. Pepe himself is the *minus one*. Throughout the year, these students are studying and performing the repertoire of Los Romeros, working directly with Pepe to learn from his family's musical tradition. This journey will culminate in our season finale, a celebration of both their growth and the legacy of the world's first guitar quartet.

As a community-based organization, we are in constant collaboration—probably every single day, there's a new partnership forming. Just last Sunday, for example, a private investment fund in Austin hosted an event and wanted to support our work in the juvenile justice system. Some of our students performed at that event, helping to align their mission with ours in a simple yet meaningful way.

Some collaborations are more complex. In 2017, when Hurricane Harvey devastated much of the Texas Gulf Coast, we partnered with social service organizations to create a fundraiser. Just four days after the hurricane passed, we organized a benefit concert, raised $50,000 in two days, and sent those funds directly to three relief groups in the affected areas.

Since then, we've launched an initiative called *Tickets for Good*. Whenever we have a concert with open seating, we partner with charity organizations, allowing them to promote the event to their supporters. We then donate 100% of ticket proceeds to those organizations. This is just one of the many ways we collaborate at the institutional level, using music as a tool to support a larger network of social impact.

The most profound—and hardest to define—aspect of our work is the spiritual level of collaboration. It's about connection, transformation, and the role of music in spaces of trauma, neglect, and healing. Last Sunday, we hosted a concert featuring a young man performing three solo pieces in his first-ever public recital. A year ago, he was incarcerated. He began studying guitar with us while in detention, and after his release, he continued his lessons as part of his probation requirements.

That concert was a turning point in his life—a moment of pride, accomplishment, and recognition. The week before, he had his final hearing in court and asked the judge for permission to play guitar during his hearing. The judge agreed. He performed in the courtroom, and in that moment, he wasn't just a young man completing probation—he was an artist. Stories like his are powerful, but they only scratch the surface of what happens in these spaces. Music builds trust, creates relationships, and reaches places that are otherwise difficult to access—places of trauma, neglect, and hardship. Through creativity and collaboration, those doors begin to open.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - When someone hears a story with such a tangible social impact—one that demonstrates the powerful role of art in our everyday lives—I can't help but wonder: wouldn't this typically be a state-funded initiative? Given that such a large portion of your work is centered around society and people, how does your organization operate? How large is your team to accomplish all of this? How many people work with you, and how is your funding structured between public and private sources?

MATTEW HINSLEY - I have 18 full-time team members and about 65 contractors. We also have a dedicated space in the community where we carry out our work and train teachers.

In essence, we're capacity builders. Our teacher network includes nearly 1'000 teachers across the United States and beyond. Funding for our organization is quite diverse, which is crucial to our sustainability. We receive support from individuals who believe in our mission—many become members, attend concerts, and, through those experiences, discover the full scope of our work. This often leads them to engage with us in various ways.
In terms of funding breakdown, about 25% comes from earned revenue, which includes ticket sales and services. Schools also pay us for specific types of training. Additionally, members of our adult and community ensembles can contribute financially, though participation isn't required to be fee-based. The remaining 75% comes from what we call unearned revenue, or gifts received. Of that, approximately 10% is government funding. The remaining 65% is almost evenly split between foundation support and personal philanthropy.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - Speaking of education and its impact on society, I'd like to turn to someone who leads an institution dedicated to education in a very specific field of the arts—filmmaking. When we think about filmmaking, we often focus on the director, but in reality, it's a highly collaborative art form, involving a large crew working together. Without this collaboration, the art itself wouldn't exist.
Marco, we recently spoke about the enrollment process at your school, and one aspect that stood out was your emphasis on the social skills of prospective students. You mentioned that this is something you pay close attention to when selecting students. How does that process work, and what impact does it have on them later in their studies and careers?

MARCO POLONI - It's a pleasure to be here and to meet such wonderful guests like Jeff and Matthew. Before I dive into your question, I'd like to provide some context—similar to what Jeff did—especially regarding the scale of our institution.
Our school, the Conservatorio internazionale di scienze audiovisive (CISA) in Locarno, is one of six film schools in Switzerland dedicated to training filmmakers, as well as photographers, sound designers, editors, and screenwriters. The other schools are located in Geneva, Lausanne, Zurich, Lucerne, and Lugano-Mendrisio. Our institution is part of the University of Italian Switzerland and belongs to a larger network called CILECT (Centre International de Liaison des Écoles de Cinéma et de Télévision), which connects around 190 leading film schools worldwide. However, within this network, we remain a relatively small institution.
We have 56 students and are a young school—just 31 years old. We are not in competition with, but rather part of a network that includes larger and more established schools like the London Film School or the Munich School for Film and Television.
To put things into perspective, especially for our American audience, Switzerland is a very small country. The canton of Ticino has a population of just 350,000—equivalent to a small American city. The entire country has around 8-9 million people, roughly a third of New York City's population. However, despite its size, Switzerland is dense with educational institutions, meaning that our impact is largely regional.
Now, coming back to your question—my perspective on filmmaking is shaped by my background, which is not from the traditional cinema industry. I don't approach film education with the goal of producing professionals who simply replicate existing industry standards. Instead, I'm more interested in training experimentalists—

filmmakers who approach their medium with a mindset of innovation rather than repetition. Rather than teaching students to make films the way they are conventionally made, we encourage them to explore new possibilities—approaches that may not yet exist.

Another key concept in our philosophy is "gesture." Artists understand what we mean by gesture—for instance, John Cage's *4'33"*, which is as much a musical piece as it is a radical artistic statement. In cinema, gestures of this kind don't have an established tradition because film is an expensive and complex production process. But we still encourage students to explore this idea.

Collaboration is at the heart of filmmaking, which is why social skills are a critical factor in our admissions process. Unlike in music or visual arts—where individual talent often defines a career—filmmaking relies equally on personal ability and the capacity to work with others. We always ask applicants: *How well do you collaborate with people?* Because in film, no one works alone.

Inclusivity is another crucial aspect. We don't just look for students with excellent academic records; we also seek out those with unique backgrounds. One of our most interesting students, for example, grew up in the Amazon rainforest as the son of a shaman. Until he was 18, he had never attended a formal school—his education came from the jungle itself. His teachers were the animals, the river, the trees. Yet, he submitted a remarkable portfolio with stunning photographs and film clips, and despite his lack of formal training, he was admitted and is now thriving.

Of course, he faces challenges—his Italian language skills, both written and spoken, are underdeveloped, and socializing in a structured environment has been a learning curve. But he is growing, and that's what matters. This is just one example of how we strive to keep an open mind and avoid making rigid judgments based solely on academic credentials.

As students move through our ecosystem, some emerge as highly eccentric personalities. These individuals often have the potential to make a real impact, but they also need guidance in learning to collaborate. This is especially crucial in cinema because, as I mentioned before, filmmaking is a machine—it doesn't function without teamwork.

On a film set, there is strict discipline: everyone has a role, a schedule, and a responsibility to let others do their jobs without interference. This isn't just about following rules—it's about necessity. Without this structure, the production simply wouldn't work. It's very similar to a symphony orchestra, where every musician must follow both the score and the ensemble.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - I think this is a crucial point because collaboration often requires certain ground rules to be truly effective. When you bring many people together to work on a project, it's important to define the objective—where are we going? What are we trying to achieve together?

At the same time, you're also dealing with a group of individuals, each with their own personality, strengths, and perspectives. Finding the right place for everyone within that structure can be challenging. If we think about a symphony orchestra, it's one of the most striking examples of this kind of coexistence—it's an incredibly complex and delicate balance.

I always tell my students who aspire to work in a symphony orchestra that, first and foremost, they need a deep love for music. But beyond that, they must also understand

that orchestral work is not just about music—it's about social dynamics. Every day, they will be collaborating with people they didn't choose. Instead, the orchestra chooses them, often without knowing them personally. When you audition for a symphony orchestra, you typically play for just a few minutes in the first round. If you progress, you might get five more minutes, and if you reach the final round, maybe 10 or 15 minutes. But in most cases, no one talks to you. There's no real conversation—it's purely based on performance.

Yet, once you're selected, you become part of a highly structured environment where collaboration is essential. Whether it's a symphony orchestra, a film production, or any other collective artistic endeavor, there has to be a framework—a set of rules that allows different people to find their place and work together effectively. I imagine the same applies to filmmaking.

MARCO POLONI - Yes, absolutely. As you said, having structure and rules is fundamental, and I don't have much to add to that. What I might emphasize, though, is that beyond understanding the rules, one of the most critical skills in collaboration is the ability to listen.

We've had discussions before about jazz—something we all love—and one example I often show my students is Miles Davis. His live performances are fascinating because he plays so few notes. His solos are incredibly short and precise, yet the level of listening happening within the band is extraordinary. If you watch Miles Davis perform with his later bands, especially from the '90s onward, his presence on stage is almost robotic—he moves as if he's unaware of the audience or even the musicians around him. But in reality, he's constantly listening. With small gestures—his mouth, his body, his head, his fingers—he gives subtle but precise cues. To me, he epitomizes the art of listening. Of course, there are many other examples, but the lesson here is universal: listen to what others are doing. Step away from the need to be the center of attention. It's the classic tension between ego and self-awareness—when you stop focusing solely on yourself, you become more attuned to the structure around you.

It's fascinating to see this kind of musical thinking applied to filmmaking as well.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - I think one of the creative advantages of collaboration is that it allows us to engage with artists from different fields. In doing so, we absorb aspects of their thinking, their methods, and their approach to craft. We then apply those insights to our own work in new and unexpected ways.

I wanted to return to this idea with you, Jeff, because when we first met, I asked you about your background. We initially started talking about percussion, but I wasn't expecting to discover the vast range of things you do. How do all these different experiences come together, and how do you apply them now in your role as a cultural leader?

JEFF ARNAL - That's a great question, and honestly, I'm still on the journey. We all are. We're constantly evolving and refining our work.

I started playing drums at a young age. I grew up in Georgia, in the southern U.S., where many people in my community didn't even go to college. But I became deeply committed to the drums, had an excellent teacher, and eventually attended the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Maryland. Moving from rural Georgia to a major city like Baltimore was a huge transition.

At Peabody, I completed my degree and became interested in composition. I studied with a composer who had been a student of John Cage, and that exposure completely transformed my perspective on contemporary music, art, and film. This was back in 1991, and it opened my mind to experimental and avant-garde approaches. At one point, I mentioned an interest in film, and my professor simply said, "If you want to start a film festival, call up filmmakers and make it happen." So we did. That led me to pursue a degree in filmmaking—at a time when digital film wasn't an option. I had to spend two years studying photography, learning the fundamentals of how a camera works, and shooting everything on 16mm film. I made a lot of bad films in the process, but it was all part of learning.

Then I hit a crossroads: Should I pursue graduate school in music or in film? At that point, I was already playing drums in multiple bands in Baltimore, traveling to New York regularly to perform at venues like the Knitting Factory, and recording albums. That's when I met Milford Graves, a phenomenal mentor and an innovator of free jazz drumming in the 1960s. He played with Albert Ayler and was deeply immersed in experimental sound and movement. Studying with Milford from 1997 to 2000 at Bennington College was transformative. During that time, I also met my wife, a choreographer and dancer, which deepened my engagement with dance—another time-based art form.

After graduating, we moved to Brooklyn and decided to start a festival. We had no idea how to do it, but our mentors—many of whom had been part of the experimental arts scene of the 1960s—taught us that if you can't find opportunities, you create your own. So we did. We learned how to write grants, organize performances, and essentially fell into arts administration. After spending about 15 years in Brooklyn and starting a family, we reached a turning point. Raising kids while playing drums and running festivals wasn't sustainable. Fortunately, an opportunity arose at the Pew Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia, where they distribute $15 to $17 million annually in arts funding. They hired me as a music program officer, helping artists and organizations secure grants. That role later expanded to include performance funding, which further broadened my perspective. Eventually, I transitioned to my current work at Black Mountain. What's fascinating to me is that we're always receiving input from different fields—some closely related to our own, others more distant. We absorb all this knowledge and then find ways to synthesize it into something meaningful.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - That's such an interesting trajectory—it really shows how interdisciplinary influences shape creative careers.

JEFF ARNAL - Absolutely. We touched on this in our earlier conversation, but I still see myself as an artist. Whether in my work at Pew or my current role, I approach things with an artist's mindset. That means staying nimble, thinking creatively, and collaborating in unexpected ways. I believe that's an advantage—it allows us to think beyond conventional frameworks while still getting the work done.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - Matthew, how was this experience for you? The work you described in Austin sounds enormous—not just from an artistic perspective, but also in terms of logistics, organization, and

planning. How did you go from playing guitar to leading such a large-scale initiative?

MATTHEW HINSLEY - Well, I won't tell you the entire story because it's a long one, but my fascination with the nonprofit sector actually started when I was a teenager. By the time I was 19, I was already researching foundational documents on economics and the arts.

I never actually graduated from high school, but I was a young college student, starting my master's degree at 20. That same year, I took over an organization that was small and struggling. Over the past 28 years, I've had the opportunity to learn on the job, watching it grow from something very modest to what it is today.

I wanted to share a thought that might be relevant here. Earlier, we were talking about choosing the right partners for collaboration. In music, there's a natural next step to that: selecting the repertoire—deciding what to play and setting a shared goal. In my conservatory and studio experience, this process was second nature.

However, from a social service perspective, there are essential prerequisites before we even get to that step. Everything assumes that participants already feel like they belong, that they are safe in the space. When we audition musicians, they show up knowing they deserve to be there. But in the real world—the world I like to call "reality"—many people don't carry that sense of belonging with them, even though they could benefit tremendously from what we offer.

So, if selecting the repertoire is the third step in a five-step process, here's what our full process looks like:

1. Safety and Belonging – Before anything else, participants need to feel welcome and secure in the environment.
2. Personal Responsibility – This follows naturally; when people feel safe, they begin to take ownership of their role in the process.
3. Perseverance and Learning – Only after the first two steps can we focus on rehearsing, studying, and developing skills.
4. Performance – Once prepared, participants can step onto the stage and share their work.
5. Celebration – After the performance, we close the cycle by celebrating achievements, much like we did after last night's concert.

We train every teacher in our network in these five elements. We also track observable behaviours to ensure that teachers are fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility. This framework allows people from all backgrounds to participate and truly thrive.

The most beautiful part of this process is that it's cyclical. Every time someone completes the journey—from safety to celebration—their sense of belonging strengthens, reinforcing the entire system.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - When teaching guitar in this program, many of your students likely won't become professional musicians. What do you hope they take away from the experience?

MATTHEW HINSLEY - Absolutely—they won't all become professional musicians, and I'll even joke that I hope they don't! But that's not to say we don't support those with high ambitions. If a student wants to pursue music at the highest level, we'll do everything we can to help them.

That said, in our city alone, we have 4,000 students, and they're wonderful young people with diverse interests.

For them, the guitar is more than an instrument—it's a bright spot in their day, a reason to go to school, a source of motivation to work harder in their other studies, and a community they belong to. We study this impact extensively, and the data confirms what we see every day: having something meaningful in school—whether it's guitar, piano, or any other passion—significantly improves students' lives. Music is simply the vehicle for something much bigger: a sense of belonging and an opportunity to thrive in a community. That foundation leads to success in any field.

FRANCESCO BOSSAGLIA - We're running short on time, but Marco, I'd like to ask you the same question. After your students complete their experience in Chiesa—working with different artists in a collaborative setting—what happens next? What do you hope they take away from the curriculum, especially since not all of them will work in the film industry?

MARCO POLONI - I can only echo what Matthew said so beautifully. Our goal isn't for every student to become a professional in the film industry—it's simply not realistic. There aren't enough positions, and beyond that, our mission is broader.

We aim to shape individuals who are independent, responsible, and capable of navigating the world—regardless of their profession. Personally, my first training was in physics, yet here I am in a completely different field. The discipline you study matters less than the skills you develop—structured thinking, methodology, and a sense of responsibility.

Most of our students do find work on sets or productions within a year or two. Some secure full-time jobs, for example, with RTC television here in Manon. Others don't, but that's okay. What's important is that they can lead fulfilling lives.

One key aspect of our program is that we don't see a strict divide between education and professional life. Our students remain part of our community even after graduation. When we launch new film projects, we invite them back to collaborate, forming crews with them and continuing to nurture their development.

To close, I'll share a thought inspired by Jean-Luc Godard from the 1970s. He once said, "What matters is not that the world is real, but how the world really is." It's a play on words, reflecting the contrast between the safe, structured environment of a school and the unpredictable, often harsh reality outside of it.

The transition from a protected space to an unprotected world is delicate, and I believe today's world is becoming more challenging by the day. That's why we give our students a manifesto of principles—values like responsibility, ethics, and inclusivity.

I also try to teach them that everything we do—every thought, every action—has political weight, not in the partisan sense, but in the way it reconfigures the world around us. We have the power to make positive change, even at a small scale. That, ultimately, is what we hope to instill in them.

#3 Agora
Andrea Amarante, Director of Music Department LAC Lugano Arte e Cultura

Angela Greco: Dear Andrea, throughout your career, you have led significant projects in the arts sector, from Teatro alla Scala to the Luzerner Sinfonieorchester. How have these collaborations stimulated creativity within your teams? Can you share a specific example of how a collaboration has led to a particularly innovative or unexpected artistic outcome?

Andrea Amarante: Yes, first of all, thank you for inviting me to speak at these conferences. In reality, as I already mentioned, I feel a bit uncomfortable talking about philanthropy or being invited to speak at a conference on philanthropy because I am just now entering this world. Until April, I was the artistic coordinator of the Luzerner Sinfonieorchester. You have had the opportunity to hear from Numa Bischof Ullmann about his experience as superintendent—he was my superintendent.
Let's say that until April, I lived like those children in a family who never worry about where the money comes from. I simply worked, planned, and developed projects together with Numa. I was never directly involved in seeking sponsorships or funding. One of the most interesting projects we worked on together, and for which I am very grateful to have been a part, was a collaboration with William Kentridge's team on a film production based on Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony.
The music followed what was happening in the video. The film was specifically created around the symphony, and through innovative computer techniques, it was possible to adjust the speed of the film's execution based on the music. Essentially, the music dictated the pace, and the film adapted to it. This may seem like a simple concept, but in reality, it involved a whole series of complex issues that needed to be solved along the way.
A very basic example is adapting to different concert halls. This project was performed in Lucerne, in the open-air ruins of Pompeii, and in a concert hall in Vienna. Working with a team that had very different challenges compared to the usual musical concerns was a unique experience. We had to deal with color saturation controls, additional rehearsals, verifying the temperature of the orchestra lights, ensuring proper lighting for the conductor, and other details that are not typically considered in a symphonic concert. Additionally, there was a post-performance debate featuring William Kentridge and Michael Sanderling about this production and the significance of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony in relation to Stalin and the events in Russia during the Stalinist era. One major challenge was providing simultaneous translation for 1,800 people at the KKL. There are no existing services capable of distributing 1,800 headsets to an audience, so we had to innovate. Working with a Swiss service provider, we developed a way to automatically transcribe the spoken content of the conference and project it onto a screen. It may seem like a trivial thing, but I assure you, it was not at all. This is an example of creativity in action. The ACC's mission places great emphasis on making the arts accessible to the entire community.

Angela Greco: What is your vision for making music accessible to diverse audiences, and how do you plan to ensure that these

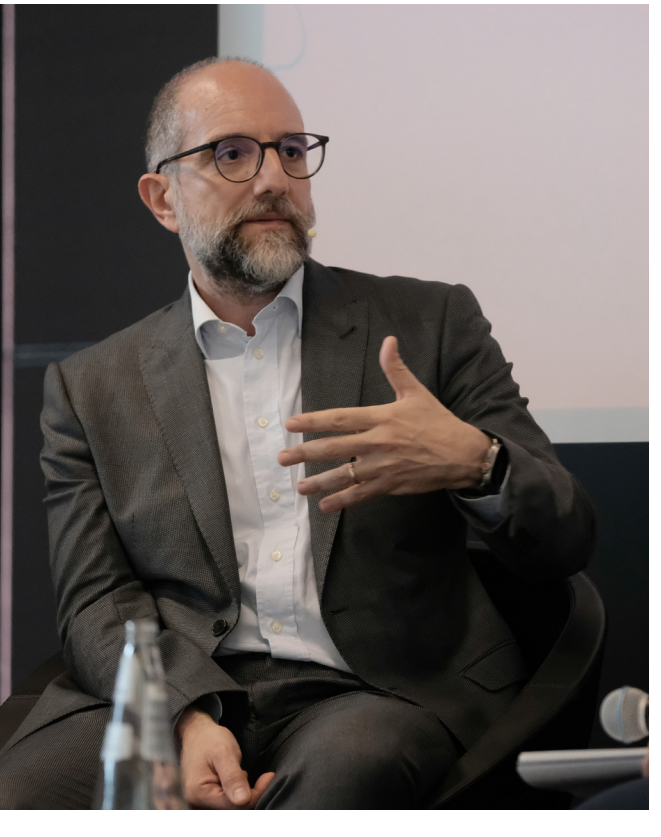
efforts engage both local and international communities while maintaining excellence in programming?

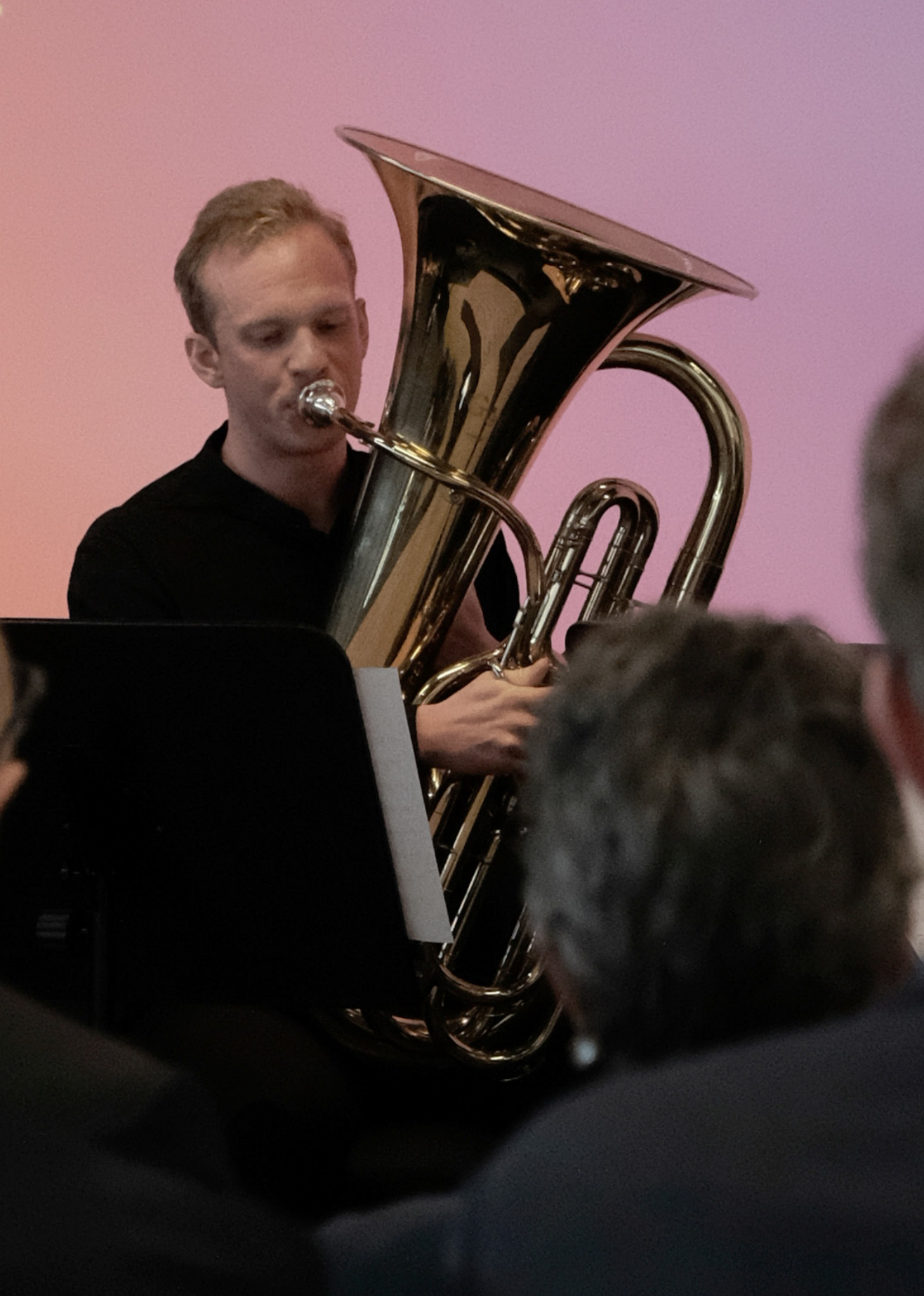
Andrea Amarante: One of the most frequently asked questions since I arrived here is how I plan to expand the LAC's repertoire and what kind of music I want to introduce. I believe the key question is: What does the Lugano audience expect from the LAC? I think the LAC should first and foremost be an open space for everyone. This does not mean that everyone must attend LAC events, but rather that everyone should know they can find something that satisfies their curiosity here. This means collaborating with already existing institutions. I refer to the Conservatorio, but also to Jazz in Bess, a long-established organization in Lugano. Through such interactions, we can ensure that parallel or complementary institutions can utilize LAC's spaces—for instance, hosting concerts in the concert hall or other LAC spaces. In return, LAC can offer curatorial support.
Jazz in Bess, for example, is a fantastic initiative based largely on volunteer work, with limited financial resources primarily derived from ticket and subscription sales. The LAC, however, can integrate a concert into a larger program, providing technical resources and artist fees that might otherwise be unaffordable for the association. This allows us to jointly select artists and programs that benefit the city, offering them on a larger scale at LAC rather than in a small club. It's a wonderful opportunity.

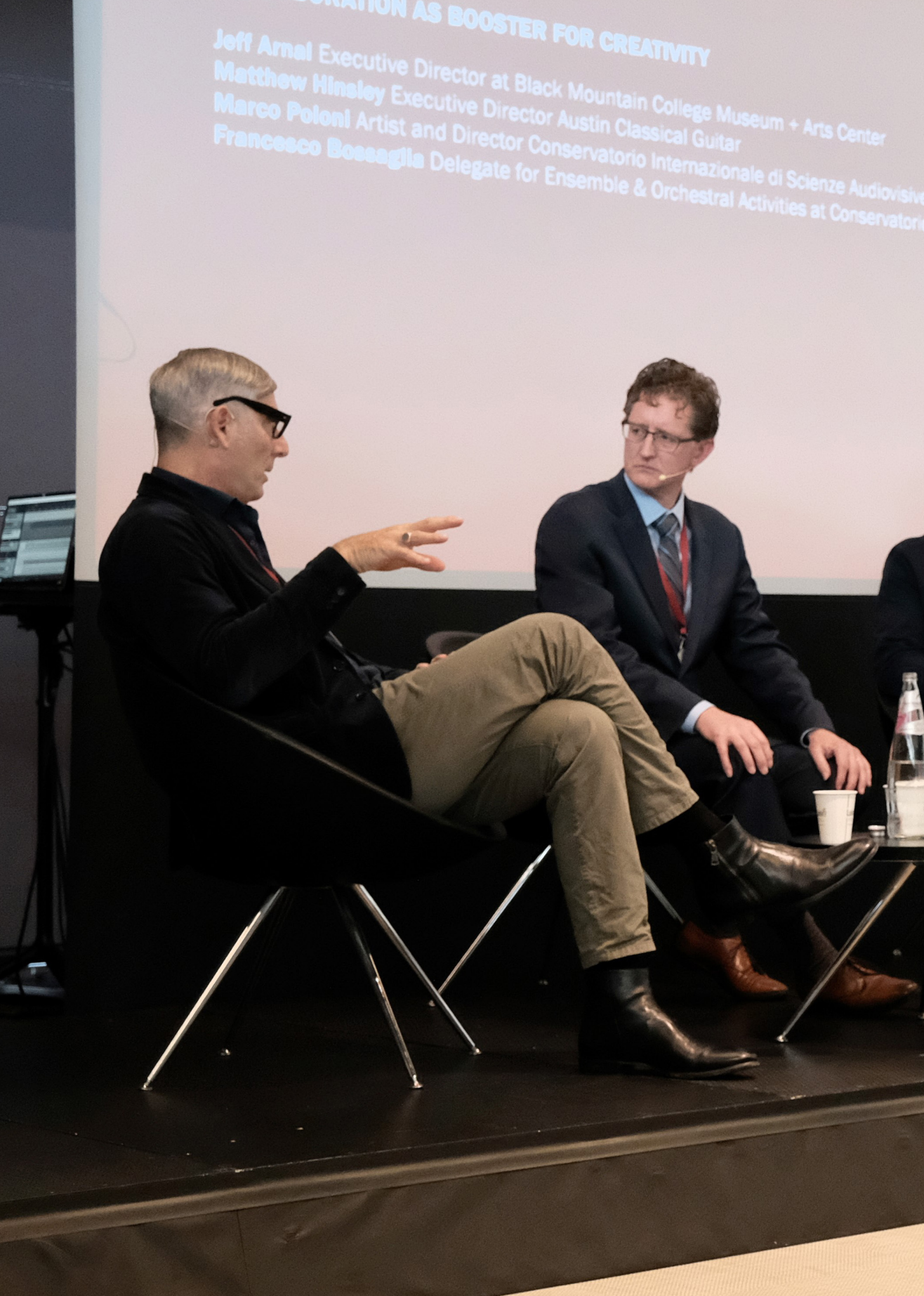
Angela Greco: Dear Andrea, I'd love to conclude our brief conversation by focusing on your experience in fostering interdisciplinary collaborations. In your view, how can creativity and partnerships with other music and arts organizations serve as powerful tools for community engagement and cultural development?

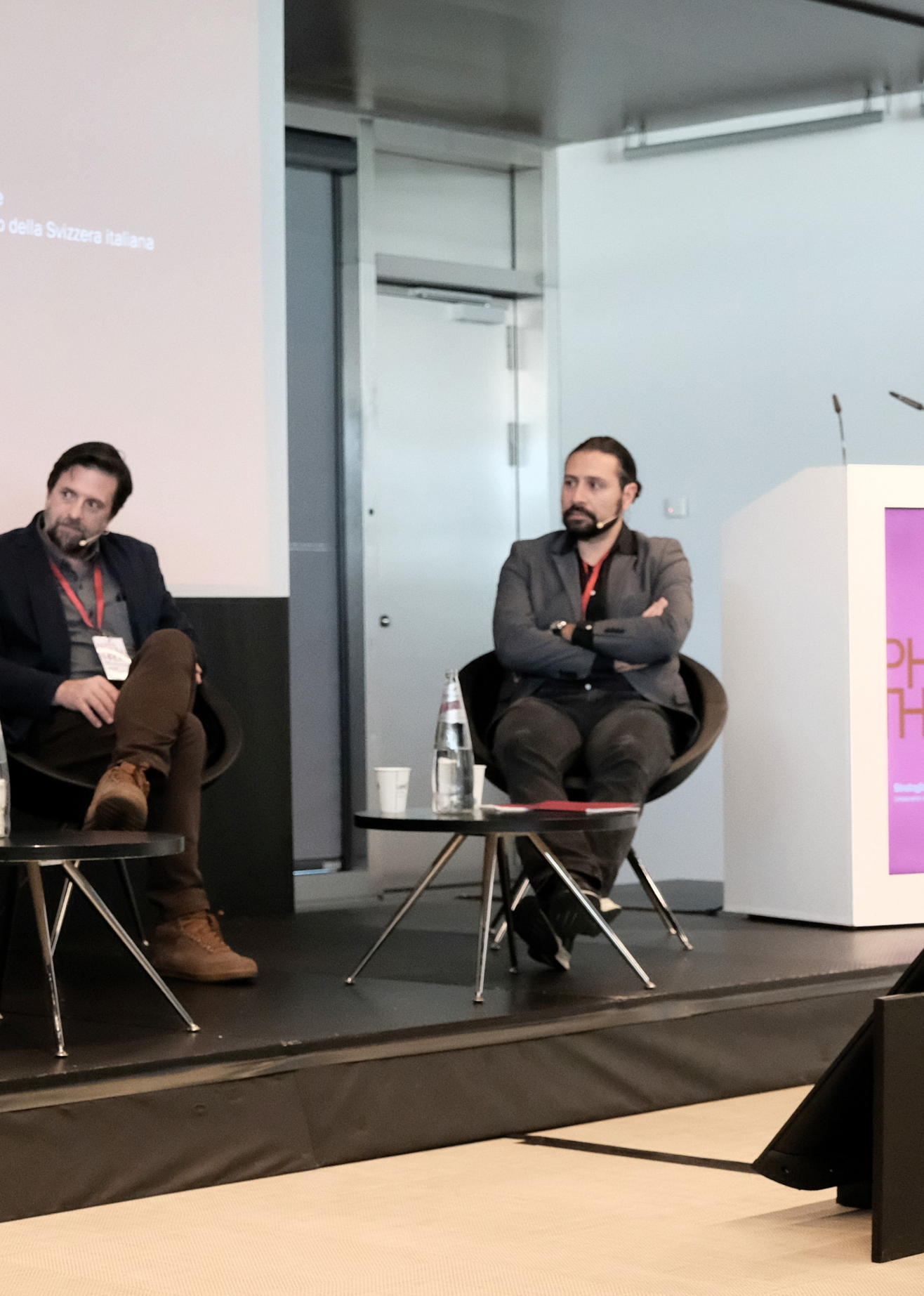
Andrea Amarante: I'd like to connect this to Numa's initial response regarding the construction of the Orchesterhaus for the Luzerner Sinfonieorchester. The Orchesterhaus was built at a very particular moment—just before the COVID pandemic. It was completed right before the first lockdown. At the time, no one knew what would happen, how long it would last, or that there would be a second wave.
From the very beginning, the space was opened to the city. Many Many musicians—especially those not employed by a permanent orchestra—suddenly found themselves out of work, needing to support themselves. As soon as we realized that spaces could reopen under limited conditions (first with 20 people, then 50, with vaccine checks, and so on), we launched a call across the German-speaking regions of Switzerland, particularly in the Canton of Lucerne, but also reaching Zurich and Basel. This was aimed at musicians who were not employed by other symphony orchestras and therefore did not qualify for unemployment benefits.
Within about 40 days, we organized around 30 donation-based concerts. At first, we played for 15 people, then 20, then increasingly larger groups. This experience gave me a deeper appreciation for the richness of the local musical scene. It also revealed the incredible talent of young musicians who had just completed their studies and were forming trios, quintets, and other ensembles. We saw everything—from father-and-son guitar duos to mother-and-daughter harp and piano performances, as well as vocalists.
The experience really showcased the beauty and depth of the local talent. Often, people

seek artists from outside the region, but in reality, we were able to put together a concert season in a very short time, with minimal resources, and an incredible amount of energy. It was truly a wonderful and meaningful endeavor.






ORATION AS BOOSTER FOR CREATIVITY
Jeff Arnal Executive Director at Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center
Matthew Hinsley Executive Director Austin Classical Guitar
Marco Poloni Artist and Director Conservatorio Internazionale di Scienze Audiovisiv
Francesco Bossaglia Delegate for Ensemble & Orchestral Activities at Conservatori


della Svizzera italiana

PANEL 4
NEW VISIONS FOR BLOOMING INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

TESSY BRITTON, Founder Participatory City and Ashoka Fellow
CAROLE HAENSLER, Director Museo Villa dei Cedri Bellinzona, President Verband der Museen der Schweiz
JULIA SANCHEZ ABEAL, CEO Reina Sofia Music School Madrid
CHRISTOPH BRENNER, Director Fondazione Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana

Collaboration as a booster for inclusive socio-economic development

The fourth panel addresses the role of collaboration in bringing together diverse stakeholders, leveraging collective expertise, and mobilizing resources to create transformative change through the arts. The arts, with their inherently interdisciplinary nature, offer unique opportunities for bypassing limits and bounderies, and collaborative philanthropy highlight the importance of making high-quality arts education accessible, ensuring that talented students receive the support they need, and promoting social equity. Additionally, these collaborations drive community development through participatory projects, shaping community environments and fostering inclusivity and social cohesion. This panel features leaders and innovators who share their experiences and projects for using collaboration to promote a more sustainable and collaborative development. By discussing successful models and highlighting the broader societal benefits, the panel aims to inspire and guide philanthropic efforts toward creating a more equitable and inclusive future.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - I'm delighted to welcome my esteemed colleagues: Giulia Sanchez-Abeal, CEO of Reina Sofía Madrid; Carol Haensler, Director of Museo Villa dei Cedri of Bellinzona and President of the Swiss Museum Association; Tessie Britton, Founder of Participatory City and an Ashoka Fellow. Thank you all for being here with me today.

We're here to discuss inclusion, but before we dive into that, I'd like to share a few words about our strategy, philosophy, and guidelines for Città della Musica. We've spent the whole day touching on these ideas without going into much detail.

Our approach is built on two main pillars. First, cooperation. Rather than creating a building solely for the Conservatorio while overlooking the broader musical landscape, our goal has been to develop a shared vision that unites all key musical institutions. This includes Fonoteca Nazionale (the Swiss National Sound Archive), Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, the RSI Choir (the national radio choir), I Barocchisti, and Sonart, an association representing independent musicians. To foster real engagement, we knew we had to create a common identity. That's why we deliberately shifted the focus away from the Conservatorio's name and instead built a new brand: Città della Musica. In many ways, this strategy has been successful in forging a shared identity across the various institutions.

The second key principle was to only create what is missing rather than duplicating existing structures.
I had to smile earlier when Numa Bischoff mentioned that in Lucerne, they forgot to include a rehearsal space for a large orchestra. Interestingly, we faced a similar oversight in Lugano. There's no such rehearsal space at LAC, which is why one of our priorities has been to create a dedicated room for large orchestras.
Another missing piece is a proper concert hall for chamber music. While there is a small 80-seat hall, it's not financially viable for hosting a full season of performances. This ties back to our first point—cooperation. Our goal is to work closely with LAC, as we already do, ensuring that the city becomes even more connected to its musical activities.
That's a brief introduction to our vision. Now, while we've talked about strategy and planning, the real challenge lies in managing this space and developing its identity through ongoing activities. That's why I'm so pleased to have my wonderful colleagues here today—to discuss potential solutions and share their insights.
Let's start with Giulia. You lead a prestigious music university that operates at the highest level of excellence. You carefully select your students and faculty, offering an exclusive education. Given that, how do you also ensure inclusivity?

GIULIA SÁNCHEZ-ABEAL - First of all, listening to you talk about Città della Musica, I couldn't help but feel a strong sense of optimism. Throughout the morning, we heard different perspectives—some hopeful, others more skeptical—about the state of the arts and music. But the fact that such an ambitious project is taking shape is a powerful statement of optimism and collaboration. It truly lifts my spirits this afternoon.
For those who may not be familiar with Reina Sofía School of Music, we are an institution in Spain with a dual mission: to nurture young musical talent and to bring music closer to society. What makes us unique is that we uphold two seemingly opposing values—excellence and inclusivity—at the same time.
On the excellence side, we are highly selective. Each year, we admit only around 170 students, with an acceptance rate of just 5%. We measure our success by the professional paths our alumni take. Currently, 96% of our graduates are employed in music, which reassures us that we are fulfilling our mission.
As I arrived at this building today, I saw a concert poster featuring Kirill Gerstein—one of our alumni. Seeing our former students thriving internationally is how we know our approach is working. But while we strive for excellence, we are equally committed to inclusivity.
For us, inclusivity means ensuring that no student is left out due to financial constraints. We have a tuition-free policy, meaning every student receives a full scholarship. This is possible thanks to the generosity of philanthropists and corporate sponsors. We believe that while talent is equally distributed, opportunities are not. Our model ensures that financial limitations do not stand in the way of accessing top-tier education.
Our student body is diverse—about one-third come from Latin America, one-third from Spain, and the rest from all over the world. Nationality is not a defining factor; instead, we focus on creating a truly international and borderless community.
Beyond education, our second mission is to bring music to society. We organize 300 concerts each year, the majority of which

are free. Digital access has also become a vital tool for inclusivity. Our Canal Escuela YouTube channel provides free masterclasses and concerts, making high-quality music education accessible to a global audience. We also build strategic partnerships to maximize our social impact. For instance, if a corporate sponsor has a CSR initiative focused on elderly care, we create music workshops for seniors. We've also developed programs for women who are survivors of gender-based violence, bringing music into their recovery process.
Ultimately, inclusion must happen on both levels—within education and through outreach initiatives that ensure broad public access to music.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - That's fascinating. Do the people living near your school regularly attend your concerts? How do you engage the local community?

GIULIA SÁNCHEZ-ABEAL - We aim to make our concerts as accessible as possible. We have a small concert hall, but like Città della Musica, we are expanding to a new building, which will allow us to be even more inclusive. We engage with the local community in three main ways:

- Affordable pricing. Madrid has a strong middle class, but also significant socio-economic disparities. We ensure that ticket prices remain accessible so that everyone has the opportunity to experience high-quality music.
- Digital access. Our YouTube channel and online masterclasses make it easier for people to engage with our work, even if they can't attend in person.
- Strategic partnerships. We collaborate closely with the city government, organizing family-friendly concerts and events for children. We also work with corporations to involve their employees in cultural initiatives.

By combining these efforts, we create multiple pathways for people to engage with music—regardless of their background or financial means.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - Carol, in a way, you face the same challenge we do with the term conservatory, which carries a somewhat unfortunate connotation. It suggests something focused solely on preserving the past rather than looking toward the future—a strong and persistent cliché. Museums, in many ways, struggle with a similar perception: they are often seen as places that look backward rather than forward. How do you break this stereotype and create a more dynamic and optimistic presence?

CAROL HAENSLER - Yes, museums are often perceived as conservative because we are in the business of preserving memories. But I believe the key is to make museums places where people can actively engage, share experiences, and create new memories rather than just observe the past.
Let me give you an example. When you walk into the Rijksmuseum Museum in Amsterdam, you don't enter a silent, empty hall. Instead, you're immediately surrounded by creativity: easels, drawing materials, and paper are set up, ready for anyone to use. In the center, models dressed in period costumes pose, changing regularly. Visitors can spontaneously start sketching or painting, engaging with the art in a hands-on way. It's a space where creativity unfolds naturally, and where strangers can connect through shared artistic experiences.
When you invited me to this discussion, Città della Musica immediately reminded me of a

challenge the Zentrum Paul Klee faced when it first opened. The area surrounding it was largely residential, with very few workplaces, and it was somewhat isolated. Unlike today, it hadn't yet integrated into the city's daily life. It took time for the museum to find meaningful ways to connect with its neighborhood.

One of the most successful initiatives in this regard was Paul und Ich, launched after COVID. The goal wasn't about attracting new visitors or marketing—it was about fostering a sense of belonging for the local community. The question was: How can we be relevant to the people who live around us? The idea was simple—if neighbors feel connected to the museum space, they might visit for a coffee, and eventually, one day, they might step inside the museum itself.

The project led to the creation of a community garden, initially launched as a pilot initiative. The garden was divided into three sections—vegetables, flowers, and medicinal herbs—and organized into small working groups. Neighbors, museum staff, and other participants worked together, guided by agroecological advisors from a nearby green space where the museum also cultivates plants.

What made the project special was its shared, self-managed structure. Anyone could join, even if only for a couple of hours. Volunteers signed up on a rotating schedule to take care of the garden, and the harvest was open to everyone. The result wasn't just about growing plants—it fostered a sense of collective responsibility, respect for each other's work, and a space for spontaneous conversations. From April to November, museum staff members would visit every Wednesday from 5 to 7 PM, engaging with the community, listening, and exchanging ideas—not necessarily about art, but about life in general.

At its core, the project was about care—the same principle that guides museums. Just as we care for collections and preserve cultural memories, we must also nurture relationships and allow things to grow. The cyclical nature of planting, harvesting, and replanting reflects the idea that museums are not static—they evolve, they regenerate, and they embrace new generations.

I found this project particularly inspiring, and I thought it might offer some interesting parallels for Città della Musica as you look for ways to integrate into the community.

Here's a more polished and fluent version of your text while keeping it close to the original.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - Thank you very much. Tessy, could you explain what Participatory Cities do and share some insights on how we can avoid becoming isolated—whether as an exclusive "ghetto" or an ivory tower—while fostering true inclusion?

TESSY BRITTON - Thanks, Christoph, and thank you for inviting me.

The arts world isn't one I'm deeply familiar with, so I've found today's conversations absolutely fascinating. My work revolves around participation, but in the context of everyday culture—focusing on how to build inclusive, co-created experiences within neighborhoods.

At its core, my work is about one key question: *What does it take to bring diverse people out of their homes to spend time together, create, repair, and build relationships?* In reality, every participation project we develop is just an elaborate excuse to foster human connection. And listening to the discussions today, I've heard echoes of this idea—how the real impact

isn't just in the activity itself, but in the relationships and community it builds. Participation can take many forms—whether it's practical activities, sports, or music—but in every case, it has the power to transform lives. At a time when society feels increasingly divided, finding ways to bring people together is more important than ever. That's why inclusivity and co-creation are central to everything I do. And what excites me about this conversation is that *Città della Musica* has a unique opportunity to shape its relationship with the local community from the very beginning. Institutions of any size—whether it's a conservatory, a museum, or even a small tennis club—can have a profound impact on their surroundings, as long as they have the *will* to engage meaningfully.

The key is collaboration. By working alongside other local institutions—libraries, schools, parks, and other civic spaces—you can create an ecosystem of opportunities. Each of these spaces offers a different entry point for people, depending on their interests and talents. By weaving them together, you create a network that is both accessible and inviting.

I've even had conversations with companies like IKEA about this idea. If a global retailer can reflect on its local impact and find ways to be a force for good in its community, then an initiative rooted in music—something inherently beautiful and joyful—has an even greater potential to be truly inclusive.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - What are some mistakes we should avoid?

TESSY BRITTON - I hesitate to answer this because I'm sure someone listening right now might already be making one of these mistakes—and they may call me out on it as soon as I leave the room! (Accidentally, of course.)

But in all seriousness, I think one of the biggest pitfalls in the arts sector is the tendency to focus on *drawing people in*—assuming that inclusion means attracting audiences into a specialized, high-talent environment. While that's valuable, I believe the arts have an even greater power: they can *extend outward.*

True inclusivity starts with respecting the culture of the community you're part of. That culture expresses itself in so many ways—through food, fabrics, gardening, daily rituals, and traditions. If an institution like *Città della Musica*—which is deeply specialized and talent-driven—can find ways to *support and collaborate* with everyday cultural expressions, it creates a bridge between the professional arts and the lived experiences of the neighborhood.

I believe that's the most important lesson. And I'm sure my fellow panelists would agree.

CAROLE HAENSLER - Absolutely. There's another project I came across that I found particularly interesting—at the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Lausanne. They launched an initiative to address a common challenge in art exhibitions: visitors often rely on expert guides who *know everything* about the artworks and the exhibition's narrative. While this can be informative, it can also create a barrier—people may feel that if they visit alone, they won't understand anything, which discourages independent exploration.

To counter this, the museum introduced the concept of *passeurs et passeuses de culture*—translated as *cultural connectors*. These are volunteers who have a passion for art and regularly visit the museum. They receive an introduction to each exhibition from the curator or director, and their role is to bring one, two, or three guests—friends,

or neighbors—who might not typically visit a museum.
One example they shared was of a volunteer who always brings her hairdresser and butcher along. The key idea is that these visits are informal, based on personal interpretation and shared emotions.
Instead of feeling pressured to ask "the right" questions—something many visitors hesitate to do, fearing they lack knowledge of art history or contemporary art—people are encouraged to simply *experience* the exhibition and express what resonates with them.
What's particularly interesting is that these *cultural connectors* form a community among themselves. They exchange experiences, support one another, and discuss how to engage new visitors.
This process not only strengthens social connections but also addresses broader issues such as social isolation—something we discussed earlier in relation to music's role in brain health and well-being.
Ultimately, the museum becomes the backdrop for these interactions, but the primary goal isn't to make people "fall in love" with art—it's about fostering a sense of community and shared experience.

TESSY BRITTON - That reminds me—there's another key mistake to avoid. (Actually, there are probably about *twenty*, but I'll keep an eye on the clock!)
One major issue is that collaboration and inclusivity cost money. It's not just a philosophy or a set of good intentions—it has to be put into practice in a tangible way. Institutions need to set concrete metrics to measure inclusivity and engagement. And crucially, they need to allocate proper budgets to these efforts.
The initiative you just described, works because there are people dedicating time and effort to facilitating these connections. If institutions truly want to be inclusive, they must be willing to *invest* in it—both financially and structurally. And it's absolutely worth the investment.

JULIA SÁNCHEZ ABEAL - When we talk about inclusivity, we need to consider its many dimensions. On the one hand, cultural institutions must be deeply connected to their *local* communities, but on the other, they also need to maintain a *global* perspective. Both are equally important.
For us, it's essential to bring people into our concerts, but just as vital to ensure that international students feel they can build successful careers across borders. Philanthropists should recognize this global dimension if they want to support top-quality education.
At the same time, we must engage with *all* kinds of people and organizations—whether they are sponsors, cultural connectors, or grassroots community members. As an established institution, we have a responsibility to step outside our own bubble and embrace projects with *real* social impact.
Christine raised an important point this morning: *How can we break these barriers and create more meaningful engagement?* That requires strong leadership—leaders in cultural institutions must adopt a broad, open-minded perspective on the world. They need to be flexible in forging connections with diverse institutions and individuals, rather than surrounding themselves only with people who think alike.
Coming from the business world into classical music, I've noticed that we sometimes have a tendency to turn inward—to exist in a world of specialists and insiders. But to be truly inclusive, we must develop a deeper understanding of society's diversity.

Institutions should *not only* welcome diversity but *actively embrace* it.
Because, in the end, inclusion and diversity go hand in hand.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - As a young institution, we don't carry the weight of long-standing traditions like some of our counterparts—for example, in Geneva, where Franz Liszt was among the first teachers. While tradition can be a source of strength, it can also be restrictive. In contrast, our youth as an institution might grant us more freedom to push beyond traditional boundaries. Do you see this as an advantage or a challenge?

JULIA SÁNCHEZ ABEAL - I see it as an opportunity—especially when it comes to innovation. One way to leverage this freedom is by deeply engaging with your stakeholders, from sponsors to teachers and beyond.
At the Reina Sofia School, we actively involve our trustees and broader community in our mission. For example, at concerts like the one we heard yesterday, we invite board members to actually *play* in the orchestra. This kind of initiative strengthens their connection to what we do. Since you don't have the weight of rigid traditions, you have the flexibility to introduce such unconventional approaches.
Another crucial aspect is communication—being intentional about your message. You need to define: *What do you want to achieve? Why does it matter?* Today's forum was special because we didn't just talk about music—we explained its relevance in contemporary society. That core "why" should be at the center of your identity as a young institution. It's a unique opportunity to clearly articulate and display your purpose to the world.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - How do you see the relationship between tradition and inclusion? Do they conflict, or can they coexist?

CAROLE HAENSLER - That's a fascinating question, and I think it ties back to what you said about tradition versus no tradition. In the museum world, for example, we often hear the phrase *"you have to come down from your pedestal."* Institutions can no longer stand apart from society; they need to engage with it actively.
At the same time, expertise and historical knowledge remain essential—but they must be open to discussion and reinterpretation. The challenge with traditional institutions is that they can be slow to change, sometimes failing to evolve alongside society. This creates a gap, and suddenly they realize: *We haven't adapted in 50 years, and now we are out of sync with the world around us.*
Being a new institution gives you the unique advantage of starting fresh—you can shape your own narrative and rethink how music education aligns with contemporary realities. You have the freedom to ask: *What do we want to be? How do we want to transmit our values?*
Of course, with that freedom comes responsibility—ethical considerations, accountability—but you don't carry the same structural baggage as traditional institutions. You can shape your identity *within* the present moment rather than trying to reconcile it with a long-established past. That's a rare and exciting opportunity.
Here's a refined and structured version of your text, making it clearer and more engaging while preserving its meaning.

TESSY BRITTON - That's a very interesting question, especially considering the work we've been doing. Many of the participatory activities we focus on—cooking, growing food, making and sharing things—are fundamental

human experiences. People have been engaging in these practices together for as long as we've existed. However, in today's multicultural cities, these kinds of shared activities have become increasingly rare. To address this, we've developed a facilitated platform where 30 people from the neighborhood actively engage others in these everyday activities. This approach is different from traditional clubs or specialist groups, which often have predefined structures and expectations. Instead, it provides a common denominator—a new way of participating that removes preconceived hierarchies or assumptions. Everyone is invited on equal footing, creating an inclusive space where no one feels like an outsider.

A common assumption is that long-term residents of a neighborhood form tight-knit networks, while newcomers need to be integrated. But in reality, many long-standing residents also lack strong community ties. Our approach ensures a truly equal invitation for everyone, without the weight of historical divisions. This flexibility contrasts with institutions like museums, which often grapple with established perceptions of who they serve and how they should operate. In that sense, we've had the advantage of extending an open-ended invitation from the start.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - Many of my colleagues in the U.S., as well as in German-speaking Switzerland and Germany, are engaged in ongoing discussions about cultural appropriation. This can present challenges for inclusion.

As musicians and cultural practitioners, we see music as an act of sharing, not private ownership. Today, for example, we performed works by Weill, Bernstein, and Reich—composers whose music draws from diverse influences. If you look at jazz or blues, you often find a repeating bassline with improvisation layered on top. That same structure exists in 16th-century music, where a repeating ground bass underpins improvisation. The syntax remains the same, even if the language changes.

Our students come from all over the world, and telling an Asian or Latin American student that European classical music is not theirs would be absurd. Yesterday, we had performances of works by Grieg and Brahms, but the performers weren't only from Norway, Germany, or Austria. So in a way, cultural appropriation, as a concept, runs counter to what we do. Our job is to share and interpret cultures, not to divide them. How do you navigate this issue while still upholding the principle of inclusion?

JULIA SÁNCHEZ ABEAL - I encounter this issue daily at the Reina Sofía School of Music, where we have students from 35 different countries. Last year, for instance, was particularly delicate—we had students and teachers from both Ukraine and Russia. With Tchaikovsky's music, for example, we had to ask: How do we approach this in the current context? So we created a debate around it.

At the end of the day, I believe the key takeaway is that we should embrace diversity and recognize that culture is universal—just like music, which is a language that belongs to everyone. Why should we impose artificial divisions on something meant to be shared?

A powerful example of this happened at our school with a trio formed by students from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey—three countries historically at odds, particularly during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. When they first came together in October 2021, in the midst of war, they eyed each

other with suspicion. But then they began rehearsing Beethoven's *Triple Concerto*— a piece for cello, piano, and violin. By the time they performed together, the music had dissolved those divisions. It was a moving testament to the unifying power of the arts. When we talk about cultural appropriation, we need to be careful not to create barriers where none should exist. Culture thrives on exchange. Our role as institutions is to facilitate connection, not restriction. Instead of drawing lines, we should be finding ways to bring people together.
Here's a refined version that remains true to the original while enhancing clarity and flow:

CAROLE HAENSLER - I believe cultural enrichment is a more appropriate term than cultural appropriation. I recall an experience from my time at the Zentrum Paul Klee, where I was guiding a group of journalists. Among them was an Indian journalist who, at the end of the tour, shared her own interpretation of Paul Klee's colors based on Indian cultural symbolism. Of course, Klee himself was unaware of these associations, but her interpretation wasn't wrong—it was simply a different way of understanding his work, one that still captured the essence of his artistic spirit.
This experience taught me that an artwork does not have just one absolute meaning. Instead, its message is enriched by diverse perspectives. The same applies to musical interpretation, where different backgrounds and experiences contribute to a deeper, more layered understanding.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - We're discussing music, museums, and culture in general—but from a social perspective, when living in a diverse community, how can we ensure respect for different cultures while also fostering inclusion?

TESSY BRITTON - One of our main projects took place in East London, an incredibly multicultural area. What we observed was that people wanted to share their culture—through cooking, textiles, and other forms of practical participation. There was a real generosity in this exchange.
The concept of cultural appropriation is often tied to broader discussions of colonization and historical injustices. In museum contexts, this raises valid concerns—there are controversial objects that arguably don't belong there and should be returned to their countries of origin. That's a tangible issue that needs to be addressed.
However, when it comes to fusing cultures in areas like music or food, the situation is more complex. Who decides when something has been incorrectly appropriated? Who sets the rules? It's a delicate balance. The key, as you both mentioned, is transparency, respect, and a clear acknowledgment of the context. When culture is shared in a way that brings people together, it becomes an act of enrichment rather than appropriation. That openness makes a significant difference in how people perceive these exchanges.

JULIA SÁNCHEZ ABEAL - This discussion is closely connected to the idea of tradition. At Reina Sofía, one-third of our students come from Latin America. They bring different musical traditions, knowledge, and expertise that don't always align with Western European classical music. Sometimes, we organize Latin music concerts or Latin jazz performances, allowing these students to celebrate their cultural heritage while studying in Europe. For them, performing Latin American music in this context is a source of pride. It's an example of how respect for other cultures

doesn't mean erasing or diluting traditions—it means providing opportunities to share, celebrate, and *protect* those traditions.

TESSY BRITTON - Exactly. You're creating opportunities for that kind of exchange to happen. Without those opportunities, inclusion looks very different. That's a fundamental part of the process.

CAROLE HAENSLER - This reminds me of a point Matthew (Hinsley, ndr.) made about creating spaces where people feel they belong—where they feel open, safe, and willing to engage. True creativity happens when we allow ourselves to question our own beliefs while sharing ideas with others. I remember a young woman from Japan at a professional museum conference in the UK. She explained that when she applied for museum positions, she was only offered roles in Asian art collections—even though she had studied modern French art. She asked, *Why can't I be a specialist in modern French art? And my response was, Why not? Of course you can!*
This is precisely the kind of shift that needs to happen—not just in museums, but in schools and cultural institutions. We need to create environments where people can step beyond predefined roles, where identity isn't a limitation, and where cultural exchange is genuinely encouraged.
Before thinking about marketing or outcomes, we must focus on *living and caring*—on fostering spaces where these exchanges naturally occur.

JULIA SÁNCHEZ ABEAL - For me, one of the most important concepts in 21st-century art and culture is *co-creation*. As you mentioned, the process should be collaborative—not just among artists, but also between institutions, communities, and even philanthropists. When philanthropists actively participate in the creative process rather than just funding it, we see more meaningful solutions to shared challenges. When new projects are developed *with* communities rather than for them, they carry a shared vision and meaning. That's where the real impact lies.

TESSY BRITTON - That aligns with the approach we took in our branding. We had an organizational name, of course, but we also developed a collaborative brand—*Everyone, Every Day*—that belonged to the neighborhood rather than to us. It wasn't about our organization; it was about the collective actions of the community. That distinction makes a huge difference.

CHRISTINE RHOMBERG - I'd like to add to the discussion on tradition—whether it's a burden or an opportunity.
In the westernmost part of Austria, where I'm from, there's a valley with a deep-rooted cultural history. In the 19th century, a poet from the region wrote: *We treasure the old, we treasure tradition, but we welcome the new.* That mindset has shaped the valley ever since.
During the Baroque period, an architectural school from this valley built churches and cathedrals throughout the Lake Constance region. Today, Austria's most innovative architects come from this same valley, pioneering advancements in wooden architecture. The local craftsmanship has evolved continuously over the centuries. This proves that tradition doesn't have to be a constraint—it can be a foundation for innovation. If you ever have the chance to visit Bregenzerwald, you'll see how

seamlessly tradition and modernity can coexist. It's not a difficult balance to strike. Thank you.

CHRISTOPH BRENNER - That reminds me of a quote from Gustav Mahler: *What you call tradition is nothing but your immobility and fear of embracing new challenges.*

TESSY BRITTON - That's a great point. With all of these discussions, I think the key is to move carefully. The idea of *move fast and break thing*s isn't always the best approach, especially when dealing with cultural issues. Progress happens when you move *gently*—when you take the time to bring people along with you.
By the way, Christine, I'm curious—do you think the valley's openness to innovation was a response to the poet's words, or do you think it was always an intrinsic part of the culture?

CHRISTINE RHOMBERG - I think it was quite natural. Historically, the valley was relatively isolated, so there wasn't much movement in and out—except for architects and craftsmen. But the people were always deeply proud of their work, their traditions, their clothing, and their crafts.
What makes this region unique is that they were never *protective* in a rigid way. Unlike in some other areas, they were always open to sharing. That openness has shaped their character and allowed them to continue evolving.

#4 Agora
Werner Bachstein, Director of the Community Arts Lab - Porticus initiative

Angela Greco: Dear Werner, you have an incredible wealth of experience in transcultural and participatory art. Can you please tell us about your endeavors with Bruner Passage in collaboration with the Wiener Konzerthaus for combining artistic excellence with social and political goals?

Werner Bachstein: Maybe for those who don't know, Bruner Passage is actually a kind of community art center in the midst of a poor area in Vienna. The Wiener Konzerthaus, I don't think I have to describe—it is a well-known institution. To connect this to the broader discussion on big institutions and how they can open up, as well as initiatives on the periphery and their ability to engage, I believe the key is building bridges.
One term that comes to mind is "attornamento," an Italian word that captures the process of renewal. Very often, in efforts to create new spaces for engagement, we unintentionally exclude others, reinforcing exclusivity rather than openness. The same issue exists within both traditional and progressive circles—each building walls in their own way.
Large institutions can actually benefit from reconnecting with their founding roots. Many of these institutions were originally built as civic engagement initiatives, meant for all citizens. For example, the Salzburg Festival was founded on an idea of peace. These foundational values often get lost in today's programming but could serve as a powerful means to reengage diverse communities. Art, after all, is a connector—it reconnects us to ourselves, to one another, and to our environment. Opera, for instance, wasn't invented in grand theaters but in marketplaces.
Thus, we need both the center and the periphery. The big houses must make efforts to step beyond their traditional walls, while community spaces must also find ways to engage with larger institutions. Both ends must crack open their barriers and truly listen to one another. It's easy to assume the moral high ground—whether as a traditionalist or a progressive—but true openness comes from stepping beyond one's comfort zone.

Angela Greco: And you are also an active member of the Community Arts Network (CAN), which fosters collaboration by connecting members with like-minded organizations and individuals. Can you tell us a bit more?

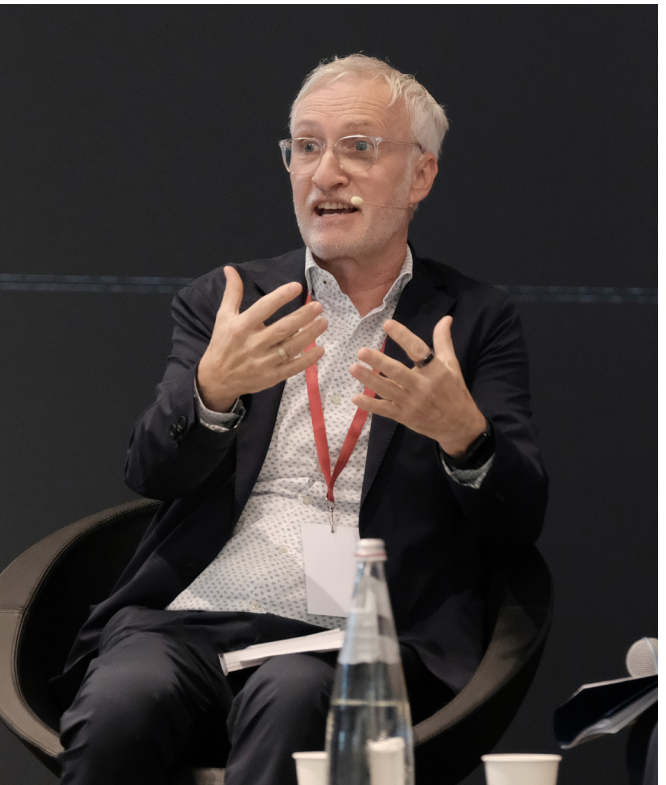
Werner Bachstein: Yes, I work within a foundation that supports many community arts initiatives. Through our mapping efforts, we found that the most common needs among these organizations are funding and connections. Funding is always an issue, of course, but we also found that collaboration itself requires investment. True collaboration demands energy, especially when working outside of familiar circles.
The arts sector, like many others, is highly fragmented. Even within music, few musicians comfortably navigate multiple genres—pop, classical, contemporary—due to the rigid divisions in the field. CAN aims to bridge these gaps by fostering connections and visibility for extraordinary initiatives.
Beyond networking, our mission is to ensure accessibility.

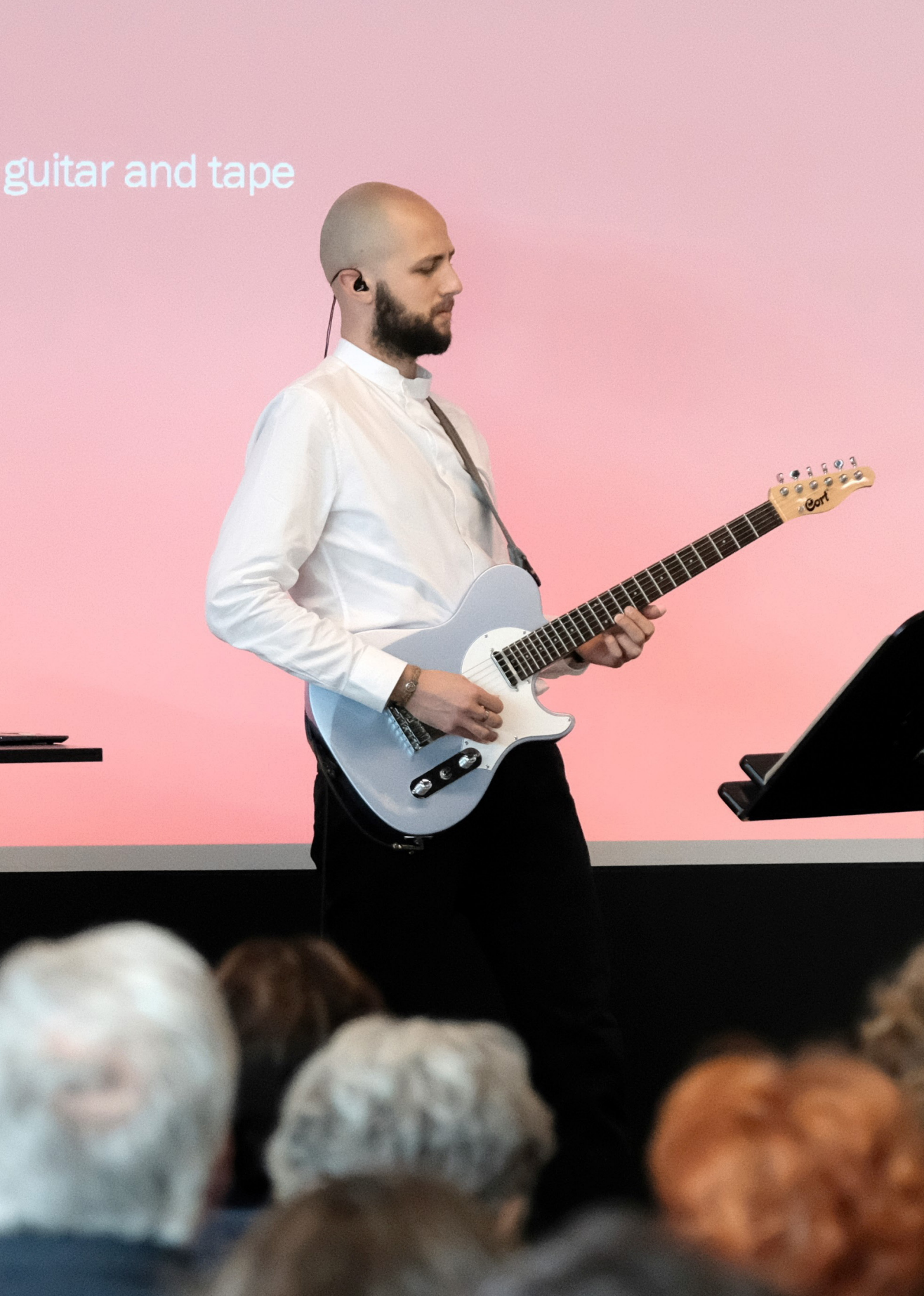
If we truly believe that art is a universal language, a means of transformation, and a source of hope and empowerment, then it must be available to all. Unfortunately, the arts have often been treated as a luxury, whether within elite institutions or exclusive creative circles. Our goal is to break down these barriers and create inclusive alliances.

Angela Greco: I want to ask you about your project, *Mapping Humanity: Arts as Our Compass to Well-Being*.

Werner Bachstein: We asked ourselves: How can we generate enough momentum—enough "sound"—to shift the perception of art from a nice-to-have to a necessity? Many in the philanthropic world acknowledge the power of the arts, yet few actually invest in it. Too often, artists are an afterthought—brought in to provide entertainment rather than being central to the conversation.
With *Mapping Humanity*, we aim to reposition art as an essential tool for transformation.

We're building a large ecosystem that amplifies underrepresented voices, particularly from the Global South. We want to make noise and mobilize funding for initiatives that truly make a difference. Renowned figures like Leonard Bernstein and Miriam Makeba—La Mama Africa—serve as inspiration for this movement. We want to involve artists who are already engaged in this work, raising awareness and resources to support grassroots initiatives.
At its core, this is about reconnection. The crisis of our world reflects an inner crisis within ourselves. Art helps us reconnect—to our inner selves, to others, and to the greater whole. When I doubt whether Arts for Humanity makes a difference, I look at a quote on my fridge by Howard Thurman: *"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."*

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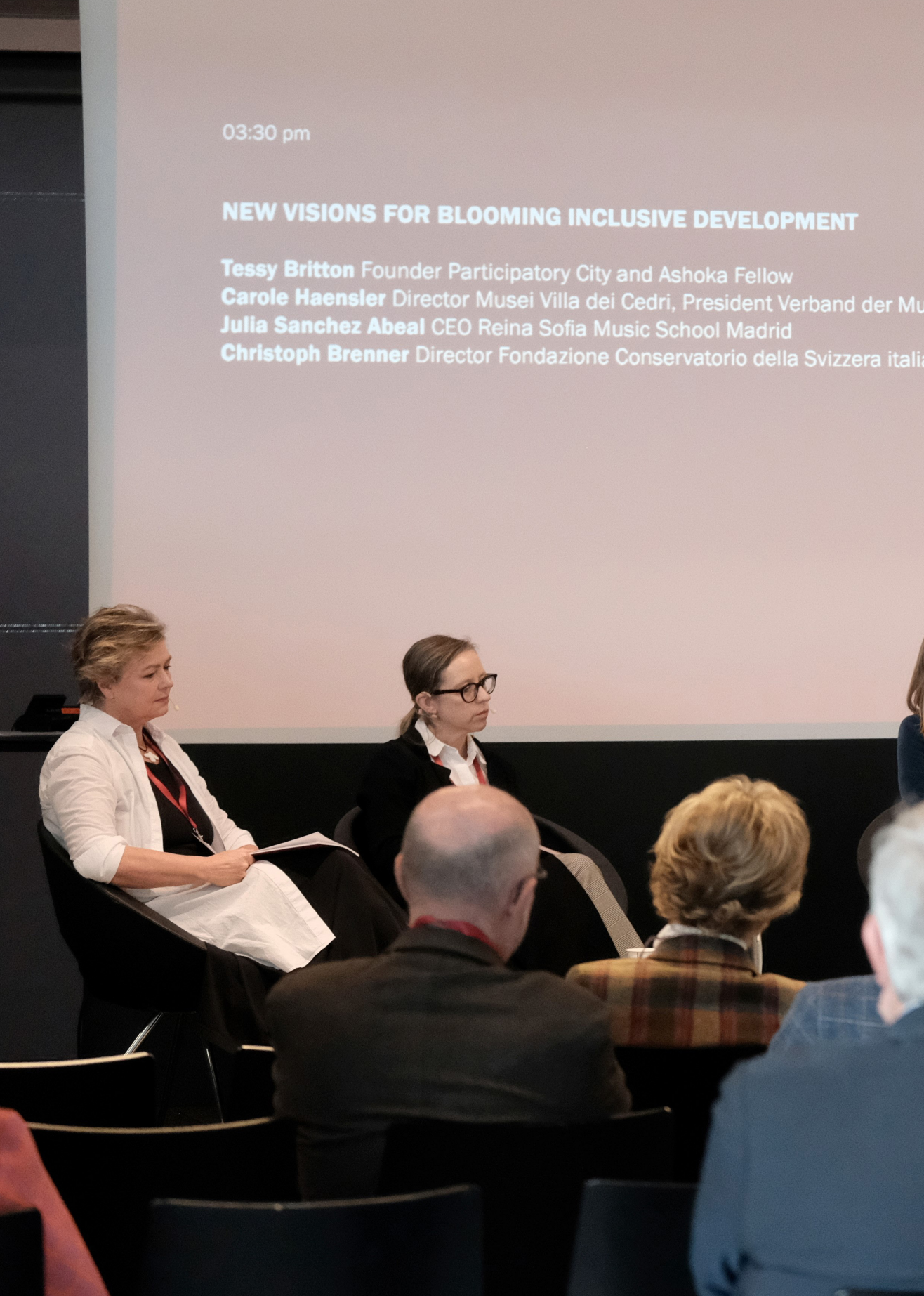
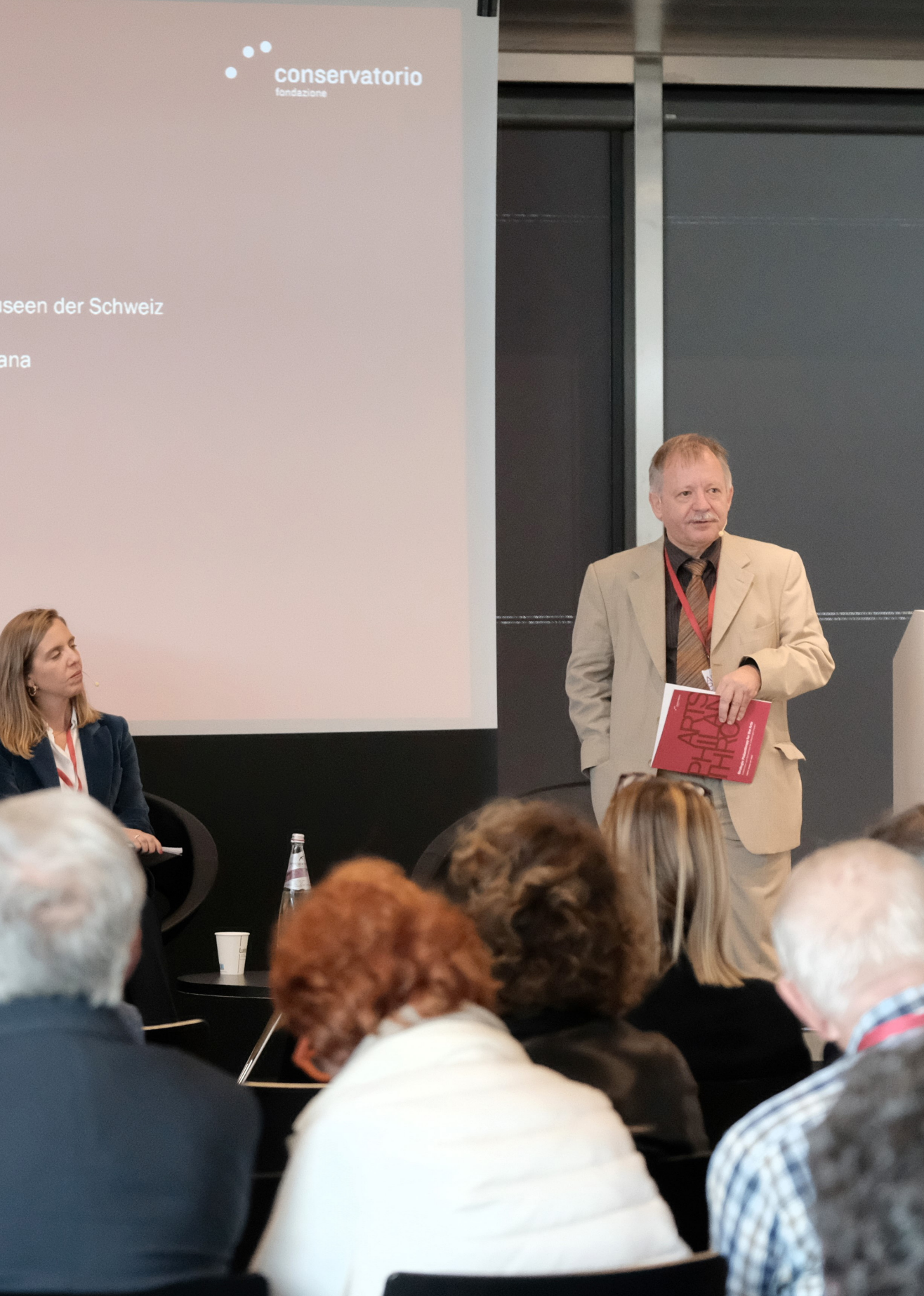

03:30 pm
NEW VISIONS FOR BLOOMING INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT
Tessy Britton Founder Participatory City and Ashoka Fellow
Carole Haensler Director Musei Villa dei Cedri, President Verband der Mu
Julia Sanchez Abeal CEO Reina Sofia Music School Madrid
Christoph Brenner Director Fondazione Conservatorio della Svizzera itali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