

## **ISME 2016 World Conference Glasgow President's Speech Opening Ceremony**

What a glorious occasion to celebrate the opening of the 32<sup>nd</sup> ISME World Conference in Glasgow! I welcome each one of you warmly to our ISME family and give a very special welcome to all attending their first ISME conference! This magnificent culmination of human endeavor has enticed us to stretch our resources and energies, many travelling vast distances to attain the jewel we know is found here...the companionship of music that touches our soul, connecting us with the spirits of others and (as many believe) with a greater being.

Please join me in thanking the Conference Organising Committee, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Meeting Makers, the Glasgow City Council, the volunteers and the people of Glasgow for their generous hospitality and for making this World Conference possible.

Each of us began life nurtured by the rhythmic cradle of our mother's womb, our cultural identity emerging within the melodies of our mother's songs and entwining through the multiple musical journeys we make through life. I am reminded of an old African custom where travelers, passing by each other on foot to a distant village, stop to share greetings and songs from their tribes. Perhaps weary from our travels, let us stop to be refreshed as more than 1400 performers, teachers and researchers from across the globe promise to dazzle and mesmerize us with their gifts of musical, philosophical and pedagogical gems. As we delight in our commonalities and honor our diversities, the renewing of old friendships and forging of new bonds lead us to destinies unimagined. Indeed, who would have imagined my own destiny...a child born in Southern Africa, who as a young mother presented at her first ISME conference in Korea, later was offered a university position in the USA, becoming an unusual looking of African American and, in the uncanny circle of life, serves you now as ISME President in the city of Glasgow, just a few miles from the small town of Greenock...the beloved home of both my parents, and generations before them. I am grateful for my Scottish cousins who have joined us this evening and for my children who bless me with their presence.

Nelson Mandela believed that education is the most powerful weapon to change the world. In the shadows of our celebrations here, we remain ever cognizant of the sorrows suffered by so many in recent times. The worldwide cries of poverty, oppression and violence scream into our consciousness. Scottish poet Robert Burns declared "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn!" May the peace and reconciliation we share through music and friendship bring comfort to sustain one another. We remember the words of Ellie Wiessel, Austwich survivor, that "if we deny the humanity of others, we betray our own." Released after 27 years in prison, Mandela declared that "to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others..." He recounted learning that "courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." The antidote to prejudice and violence, as June Boyce Tillman so eloquently reminds us, is maintaining a sense of wonder toward others. This week, as the earth vibrates with the songs of our communities, let the music making that is essential to our humanity give rise to the voice of a global people united across borders, promoting wellbeing and chanting positive forces for social change. And finally, when we return to our homes, may the warmth and radiance of this remarkable gathering spread light, hope and peace across the world.

**Sheila C. Woodward**  
**ISME President**