

"If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music... I cannot tell if I would have done any creative work of importance in music, but I do know that I get most joy in life out of my violin."

Albert Einstein



Music, the Arts and Science are inextricably linked. The early philosophers and astronomers were beguiled by the idea of the 'Music of the Spheres', at the heart of our cosmos, while composers throughout the ages have incorporated mathematical principles of proportion into their work. Haydn's Creation was inspired by Astronomy, while contemporary composer Terry Riley's Sun Rings incorporates NASA recordings from the Apollo moon landings.

The distinction between the Arts and the Sciences is in fact a rather modern invention - in earlier ages, thinkers of all cultures instinctively and intuitively recognised that these disciplines are not hermetically sealed but in fact owe much to each other. Now in the 21st Century, interdisciplinary collaborations across the arts and sciences are enjoying somewhat of a renaissance and more and more artists and scientists are actively seeking out new ways to work together. The results can be dramatic and ground-breaking.

In just a few short years, Marvão has established itself as an international centre for Music and the Arts. Our ambition is to create something that does not yet exist in Portugal and which will contribute significantly to its cultural and educational reputation: an International Academy of Music, Arts and Science. The idea is rooted in the success of the Marvão International Music Festival so far, but more importantly, in the sense of place that makes it so authentic and irresistible. The Academy aims to offer an educational experience of the highest level to students from all over the world, in a range of disciplines and with a particular emphasis on cross-disciplinary learning and collaboration.

In terms of Music, our vision is to provide a safe yet challenging environment for the 'best of the best' of young artists to develop their personal artistic vision and learn from some of the world's greatest teachers. We intend to offer residential masterclass courses year-round to students who have already achieved a level of excellence, for example winning international competitions, and whose 'formal' musical education has ended. The Music 'department' of the Academy would offer the people of Marvão and the Alentejo a unique opportunity to hear world-class concerts by young performers all year round. These concerts have the potential to become a local cultural reference point and thus to help attract more Portuguese and foreign visitors.

In terms of the Sciences, Marvão is situated within an area of great archaeological, historical and environmental interest. We are located within a natural park, where Biology and Geology are particularly relevant and important. We can easily imagine a series of seminars and other educational initiatives, combined with field-work, based at the Academy. The

emphasis would be on encouraging cross-disciplinary activities, both between the different Sciences but also with artists and performers. Celebrating and exploring the extraordinary biodiversity of the area, with musicians and other artists working alongside geologists, chemists, environmental scientists and others, makes perfect sense and is in tune with contemporary thinking around cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Key to the success of the Academy will be to find the right Partners. We are currently creating a circle of Higher Education Institutions (Universities and Polytechnic Institutes) and Foundations - Portuguese and from abroad - which, headed by the Municipality of Marvão, will form an Association for the purposes of setting up the Academy.

Current potential partners for the project include the Universities of Évora, Aveiro, Minho, Nova de Lisboa and from Extremadura (Spain); the Polytechnic Institutes of Porto and Castelo Branco; and the Foundations Anja Fichte Stiftung (Germany), Ammaia and Robinson (Portalegre). Their reactions have been very positive so far and we look forward to building a model for collaboration that works for all involved.

We have already identified the perfect building in Olhos d'Água, which is easily accessible and could certainly be adapted to the needs of the Academy. The international archaeological camp of Ammaia and the Fundação Ammaia are only walking distance from this unique building and would naturally be key founding partners for the Academy.

Clearly, such an ambitious project requires a significant investment of time and financial resources. We will seek to establish a funding model that draws on a range of sources of income, from grants through to tuition fees, in order to maximise our ability to deliver the most innovative programmes in a financially sustainable way.

We invite all of you to attend a public discussion at 11am on Thursday 27th July, at Quinta dos Olhos d'Água, to hear more about this exciting vision and to contribute your thoughts on the development of this ground-breaking initiative.

Prof. Christoph Poppen
Artistic Director of Marvão International Music Festival

with

Prof. Manuel António Assunção
Dean of Universidade de Aveiro
and President of Orquestra Filarmonia das Beiras