

## Let the light in

Spoken column at the opening of the academic year 2023-2024, Prince Claus Conservatoire, Hanze Hogeschool Groningen

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*[Silence of 1'00"]*

In the late 1940s, John Cage held a 'one-minute-of-silence talk' at New York University. In 1952, his three part composition 4'33" went into première. For 4 minutes and 33 seconds, nothing was played.

John Cage later tells that the audience thought they heard silence. But they were wrong. Cage says: "What they thought was silence, because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds. You could hear the wind stirring outside during the first movement. During the second, raindrops began pattering the roof, and during the third the people themselves made all kinds of interesting sounds as they talked or walked out."

You will all start your new study year here, in this building. A building well isolated from the world. The sounds we make are not meant to leave this building. Unless we want it. And the sounds from the world are not supposed to enter this building. We don't want to be distracted from our music by the world around us.

We start our year in this building. You may come to think that what matters is what sounds in this building. That studying music is about you. About finding your voice. About discovering your music.

That is not the case. Studying music is not about listening to our own sounds, to each other. Studying music is about connecting your voice to the world. The endless complex world we live in today. Studying music is about learning to enter the dialogue with others. With other musics, other voices, other people. Those endlessly different, endlessly incomprehensible, endlessly fascinating others.

My name is Evert Bisschop Boele. I am one of the persons in this building doing research. My colleague, professor Karolien Dons, is professor 'Music in Context'. I am professor of Arts Education. Together with staff members, with teachers, we do research about what it means when musicians enter those dialogues with others. Don't hesitate to contact us if you are curious about what that may mean. Curiosity is the core business of researchers.

Leonard Cohen wrote the lines: "There is a crack in everything, That's how the light gets in". Let us try to find the cracks in this building, the cracks in our curriculum, the cracks in our music this year. So that the world may come in. So that we can connect our music to that world. So that we may offer some light to some people. I hope that is what you will learn here. I hope that is where my research, Karolien's research, and the research of all these staff members active in research, can make a meaningful contribution.

And most of all: I am looking forward to your contribution. Remember that an education is not something we offer, and it is not something you take from us. Your education is shaped by you. Shape your education in such a way that your music becomes a crack that makes some light get into the world.

John Cage wrote: "Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death. One need not fear about the future of music."

I think he is right. The future is yours. So much more people than you may realize out there would love to listen to you. As long as you are able to listen to them. So here's my wish for you, and for the conservatoire: that we may open our doors and windows, in order to listen to the call of the world we live in.