Syllabus conference, 29.7.2003, San Jose

The talk of: Matti Ruippo Senior Planner, Sibelius Academy, Finland

"I have a few thoughts, which have arisen during this process. First I would like to outline what have been the attitudes of students, and secondly how the role of a music teacher is changing.

In all interviews that Philip made, the students were very positive. They are of course polite, but still I believe that their enthusiasm was authentic. They feel themselves very comfortable in the conferences and the tool itself was for them totally transparent. The possible technical limitation did not seem to bother. Of course the possibility to meet fellows from the other side of the world is fascinating.

Actually there is nothing very special about this? Frank's students were born at the same time as the first personal computers and our own student is hardly older than the first web-pages. What kind of feelings do we have towards copy-machines, except hate? They are just part of every-day life.

Another interesting point I have learnt was the quality of interaction of teacher and students at both ends. Common view is that there should be a face-to-face meeting at first before any real interaction in videoconference. When I started to use those units six seven years ago, I thought the very same. But nowadays I'd disagree - at least a bit. I have had several courses, where I haven't physically met or even seen my students. From those experiences I have learned that meeting in flesh is good if we can arrange an encounter, but it is really not necessary. To me the question is: how do I teach within this restricted environment? When we start teaching in a group, which we don't know beforehand, it will take time to become familiar with each other but this is not because of using videoconferences or resorting to good old classroom teaching. Philip and I have never met with Frank Clark, but I don't think that this fact has diminished the intensity of our collaboration.

So, I would like to touch upon the role of a teacher and her/his position in distance learning. We discussed about that after the last session, Fred would you kindly show our last clip.

To me these past years have taught me a lot. I have had to learn much more about the real essence of teaching and learning and I do

think that this has made me a better teacher. I recommend this process also to you, well after all there should be little bit of crazyness and not at all lazyness - which is our motto.

This work process of the Syllabus Music Theory special group has given us quite a lot of material which we should study careful. And this may lead to the third phase of Fred's conception for our work: continuing collaboration. Maybe we should even found a forum of exchanging expertise, or could there be a possibility to establish an international graduate school of videoconference pedagogy.

Anyway, this has given us a good kick, and we want go on. Thank you Fred, thank you dear audience."