

In Conversation with President Mark Rabideau



Musicking in Long Beach

The essence of music lies not in musical works but in taking part in performance, in social action. Music is thus not so much a noun as a verb. To music is to take part in any capacity in a musical performance, the meaning of musicking lies in the relationships that are established between the participants by the performance. Musicking is part of that iconic gestural process of giving and receiving information about relationships that unites the living world, and it is in fact a ritual by means of which the participants not only learn about, but directly experience, their concepts of how they relate, and how they ought to relate, to other human beings and the rest of the world.

- Christopher Small

CMS' 65th National Conference was brimming with unbridled creativity, challenging conversations, connective moments, and joyful musicking. Here are but only a few highlights for me.

Opening our time together, Kelly Caballero connected us to the Tongva territorial lands through song and poetry, while Cambodian American filmmaker/rapper praCh Ly took us on a difficult journey from the Kill Fields of Cambodia to life on the streets of Long Beach to creating community through narration and rap. Both artists unpacked complex histories best told through art, story, emotion, and music and you could feel their impact on everyone in the room: centuries of weight pressing down on our chests.

Sponsored by the CMS Fund, and jointly hosted by Fund President Bill Pelto and CMS Books and Monographs General Editor Todd Sullivan, this year's conference hosted a new session that celebrated CMS authors. Not only was it an opportunity to mingle with recently published writers (I was elated to meet Timothy Cheek), but it too was a chance to learn more about CMS pathways for disseminating new knowledge.

Responding to my February 2021 charge for conducting a yearlong examination of the state of the profession in and out of the academy and recommending a bold, inter-institutional project that tests and implements strategies for leading systemic change in 2022 and beyond, Mary Javian reported the Task Force's findings. Addressing the question: "How might we imagine a bold future for music in higher education that is centered on equity, relevance, and creativity?," members shared projects co-created with their communities, each of which involved students, challenged systemic racism, explored the power of interdisciplinary work, and focused on inclusion. The projects were as distinctive as the diverse institutions that served the Task Force. For now, you can click [here](#) to learn more about these efforts, but keep a lookout for an invitation to share your story about the projects you are leading that nourish ourselves and our communities, through music.

Of course it is the many opportunities to engage with our colleagues through Dine-arounds, Affinity Group Mentoring Sessions, and informal huddles that are impossible to replicate in the virtual space: experiences that deepen our friendships, expand our networks, and allow us to know that we are part of a community dedicated to reinventing our profession as one that prizes creativity, fosters inclusivity, and champions music's role in society.

Here are a few quotes from attendees that offer insights into our time together in Long Beach.

The conference provided me with many personal benefits, including conversations that nourished my soul both musically and non-musically. On a professional level, I enjoyed learning so much about what my colleagues are doing to impact change in their respective fields. In exchanges like these, silos are dismantled, and all members of the music profession are at the "table" to share, imagine, and design new ways for innovative change within the profession.

The most important thing is the reminder that I am but one part of a beautiful whole and as I lead change within my parameters, I have colleagues across the profession who can support me along the way.

- Suzanne Hall, Associate Professor of Music Education, Temple University

At Stanford, I hear music that the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA) the Department of Music choose to present. So, I live in a location filter. At this conference, I heard compositions from all over the US, highly varied, and all well-composed, with superb performances. There were various imaginative strategies presented regarding how to turn new music students' oftentimes incipient interests from an abstraction to concrete learning. I felt liberated from my Stanford location filter!

The openness and willingness of all the participants with whom I had an opportunity to talk — and I mean many — to engage at a substantive level. In fact, there were several participants who asked me for advice, one on one, that resulted in a couple of hours sharing thoughts about life and living, following one's passions in an academic world that is too often obscured by those whose goals are climbing ladders rather than helping younger colleagues build them.

- John Chowning Professor of Music, Emeritus, Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA), Stanford University

As a newcomer to the CMS conference, I was immediately welcomed by colleagues in the friendliest way. This convivial company was a great starting point from which to learn about CMS's strategic objectives to drive positive change in higher music education.

On a professional level, I have come away understanding the trends in higher music education in the USA and how CMS members and leadership are responding to them. I have learned about cutting-edge initiatives driven by CMS such as academic citizenship, as an example. This information will inform my own ideas and will be relayed to my colleagues in Europe.

On a personal level, I have made new friends, expanded my network of support, and felt heard and accepted.

- Deborah Kelleher, Director, Royal Irish Academy of Music, Vice-President, European Association of Conservatoires

Historically, the Board of Directors convene the Sunday following the conclusion of the annual national conference. Among the agenda items to be discussed on September 25, 2022 were the ethics and sustainability of in-person gatherings as a society in the face of global climate crisis, antiquated conference business models, and the inequities of access for a growing contingent professoriate. Throughout 2023, an ad hoc committee will engage regional presidents, CMS staff, and society members to explore the challenges and opportunities of hosting hybrid conferences, developing new models and new partnerships investing in connections across regional conferences, and more. This conversation will be driven by the question:

How might we continue musicking together - experiencing the joy, connection, and intellectual, artistic, and personal growth - amidst a changing world?

As we look out past the horizon of [Miami \(2023\)](#) and [Washington D.C. \(2024\)](#), our discussions about conferences will be research-based, transparent, Board-driven, and inclusive, as we consider 2025 and beyond.

It is with great sadness that I share news of the passing of Dr. Robert J. Werner, who served as President of The College Music Society between 1977-1978. Dr. Werner was a proud alumnus of Northwestern University, where he earned three degrees in music (Baccalaureate, Master's, and Doctoral). His career was defined by academic posts at the University of Arizona and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where he served as Dean. He, too, served as Director of the Contemporary Music Project: a Ford Foundation project dedicated to exploring the good the arts can do in society.

During his tenure as President of CMS, President Werner worked tirelessly to advance the mission of the organization, champion music in higher education, and to make central the importance of the performing arts in our communities and society writ large. Beyond his presidency, Dr. Werner shared his wisdom as a loyal member of our Society throughout his career.

On behalf of our Society, I would like to express my gratitude for his many years of service and offer my condolences to his family during this difficult time. Read his [obituary](#) to learn more about President Werner's achievements and love of family.

Thanks for joining the conversation,

Mark Rabideau

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