

Shining a Spotlight on Optimism

Optimism is a quality inherent in all innovative ventures. Without it, we would lack the foundation of belief that allows us to convert our entrepreneurial dreaming into actionable strategies and tactics that lead to meaningful change.

As 2022 comes to a close, there is reason to be optimistic that the College Music Society is pointed in positive directions for organizational growth and financial stability. We, too, know there is more work to be done. I'd like to take this moment to spotlight some of the initiatives underway and the people who are making them happen and solicit your feedback about how we can better serve you.

As a membership organization, CMS relies on revenue from annual dues and engagement by our members that advance the initiatives taken up by our [Councils and Committees](#) and serve our [Common Topic](#). CMS membership, however, has experienced significant decline since 2014 when membership was 7,377. In 2021, we were able to slow decline, which then reached an historical membership "low point" in April of 2022 (3,883 members). Through a series of strategies and tactics, including Institutional Group Membership, we have since grown membership to 4,207, an increase of 8.4%. We are currently 193 members short of our membership goal for the fiscal year, which we aim to achieve by July 31, 2023.

This month, we are excited to launch the newly formed International Chapter, which will both serve as a home for colleagues around the globe and extend our reach across the profession and across the pond. We, too, are excited to announce our Institutional Undergraduate Student Membership. This new program rolling out in early January, will allow music units to support their entire undergraduate student population to join our community of change agents by writing a single check.

There should be no question that a trio of Executive Office Staff members are responsible for turning the tide on membership decline. Jeff Loeffert, Executive Director; Hannah Pearson, Director of Operations; and Shannon Devlin, Membership Specialist we see and celebrate your innovation and execution and are grateful for all you do for our Society.

But sheer numbers alone aren't a winning formula for leading change. CMS relies on the engagement of members to advance change. And there is good news on this front. With more certainty about how to manage ourselves within the continuing pandemic, we've seen promising numbers for future conferences. Our Summer 2023 International Conference in the Baltic States received 125 proposals, of which 80 we accepted (64% acceptance rate). We are anticipating an intellectually robust and artistically creative gathering in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia in July 2023.

Please join me in expressing our gratitude to Chairperson, Heather MacLaughlin Garbes and the [2023 Program Committee](#), who have conducted skillful work to deliver CMS' first international conference since the onset of the pandemic.

Our 2023 National Conference in Miami has received 73 more proposals than our 2022 submission process; our highest number of proposals (324 submitted; acceptance not yet confirmed) since 2019 and promises to be our most playful, global conference to date. Mihoko Watanabe, we are excited to see your [Program Committee](#)'s vision and execution come to life in South Florida.

Of course, none of this happens without the seasoned leadership of Peter Park, CMS' Director of Professional Activities since 1993. For many, Peter is the face of CMS. This fall, Peter shared with Executive Director Loeffert that he has accepted a position at Washington State University. Peter will serve our Society as a consultant for the coming months, as we allow the work to unfold of a Board-approved external consultant charged with right-sizing our staffing. The Executive Staff is planning a celebration of Peter's accomplishments to be held during our Miami conference: yet one more reason to [register for our 66th national gathering](#).

Optimism, like life itself, is a continuing act of reinvention. And while we prize the co-creation and dissemination of transdisciplinary knowledge experienced during our national conferences, we too know that we must revisit issues of access and equity, reduce financial risk by the Society, and acknowledge the impact on the global climate crisis. As such and as announced last month, I have formed a Presidential

opportunities afforded when living in a hybrid world, thinking and acting collaboratively beyond the boundaries of our own Society, and addressing the escalation of challenges facing us in the 21st century. Solutions will be co-created by engaging regional presidents, the Board of Directors, CMS staff, and Society membership. New scaffolding may well include greater hybridity, cross-institutional partnerships, investments in connecting regional and national conferences, re-imagined presentation formats, and beyond.

Outcomes: The Presidential Task Force will deliver to the President a recommendation for change in advance of the 68th National Conference. There is an expectation that ideas will be tested and iterated during gatherings in Miami and Washington D.C. and perhaps within regional conferences.

Scope: The Task Force will explore new scaffolding of conferences. The Conference Program Committee will continue to shape the vision of conference content. Executive Staff will continue to operationalize the logistical planning.

As we enter the new year, we want to ensure that The College Music Society continues to offer services that are relevant and engaging to our membership and that reflect the Society's commitment to serve as leading change agent within the field of music in higher education. To assist, we are asking each of you take 5-minutes to [complete this survey](#).

CMS' more than 4,000 artist-educator-scholars represent the breadth and diversity of the collective work underway within music in higher education and by independent musicians from across North America around the globe. Scholars reimagining the ways in which their research can deepen our understanding music and music's role in society, performers and conductors engaging audiences from the stage and within our communities, composers ushering new works into the repertoire, and educators instilling a love of music within the lives of our children and adult learners are just some of the ways in which CMS members are shaping our profession's best possible future. So, we thought we would like to spotlight some of the incredible folks within our Society and learn why they call CMS home.

Check-out our inaugural Spotlight Interview (contained within this announcement) conducted by Director of Operations Hannah Pearson and [let us know what CMS member you believe is inventing a better profession](#) so that we might, too, spotlight their work.

Wishing you a rewarding and joyful new year. And as always, thanks for joining the conversation.

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