

In Conversation with President Mark Rabideau



Reason to be Optimistic

Our gathering in Miami was filled with joy, connection, and hope as we grappled with some of the most pressing challenges and promising opportunities facing our profession. Many thanks to Mihoko Watanabe, Jeff Nytech, Gabriel Alegria, Mayco Santaella, Rachel Roberts, Charlie Chadwell, and the entire CMS Executive Staff for the great vision and thoughtful execution of our national conference.

The Presidential Task Force for Reimagining How We Gather in 2025 and Beyond, under the leadership of Tracy Cowden, delivered its report, and painted a vision for and piloted in real-time future conference formats. Michael Buchler led a Think Tank session on strategies and tactics for combating attacks on academic freedom. Tayloe Harding focused our energies on the inseparable connection between art, artist, and audiences. Suzanne Hall challenged us to imagine pedagogy, curriculum, and music schools centered upon creativity. Trotter Lecturer Omar Thomas invited us on his personal journey of discovering his artistic voice as a first-generation Guyanese-American and offered ways forward for creating more inclusive, creativity-rich music schools of the future. And Gabriel Alegria's Afro-Peruvian Jazz Sextet lit up Miami with their one-of-a-kind artistry at the intersection of Peruvian rhythms and American Jazz. Wow!

During our time together, I heard from longtime friends and new acquaintances that CMS is inspiring hope for the future of our profession, has become their academic home, and has instilled within them pride as we position ourselves as the leaders of positive change.

And there's so much to look forward to as Rachel Roberts and the 2024 Program Committee map how we will gather in Washington D.C., including welcoming Trotter Lecturer and D.C.-born, Quechua/Latinx composer inti figgis-vizueta, who heads the [Boulanger Initiative](#)'s Gender Diversity Council: an initiative that promotes music composed by women and non-binary people as a path for achieving greater inclusivity in new music.

The enthusiasm of these sentiments was echoed during the Annual Meeting on November 5, in reports delivered by the Executive Director and Director of Operations, each anchored by positive metrics of the health of our organization.

Engagement is up. Most recently, this was evidenced by a substantial increase in national conference attendance.

2021, Rochester, 318 registrants

2022, Long Beach, 322 registrants

2023, Miami, 454 registrants

Membership is up. As of this month, CMS has 4614 members. This represents a 20% increase since our historic low of 3,883 in April 2022 and a 14% increase year-to-date. CMS Membership Specialist, Shannon Devlin we are grateful for your leadership in growing membership.

Finances are on a more stable footing. Fiscal Year 2022-2023 resulted in a net profit as did both the 2023 international conference and 2023 national conference.

Our operations are becoming more efficient and effective, staff have returned to 100% salaries after being furloughed for 31 months, and I have heard directly from colleagues at the Executive Office how workplace culture continues to improve under the leadership of Director Pearson and Executive Director Loeffert.

There is so much to be thankful for. Yet, we know that colleagues among Ethnic and Religious Jewish communities and Arab nations and the Muslim faith, in the Middle East and around the world, are suffering. As director of the 21st Century Initiative, I partnered with Yo-Yo Ma, Mike Block, and the Silkroad Ensemble to launch

the Global Musician Workshop: a gathering of musicians from around the world – from Israel and Lebanon, Ukraine and Russia, and from red states and blue states here at home.

At this workshop, I witnessed how learning from people whose experiences are unlike our own is a solution for some of the problems we face in 2023 and beyond. When you make music with someone from a different tradition, learn something about their culture, it changes you. It changes them. And when you pick up the newspaper and read about lives lost in war-torn countries far away, or hospital systems at the brink of collapse, or communities embattled over the question about WHOSE LIVES MATTER, our differences no longer feel so different, so distant, so foreign. It is closer to home. Closer to our own understanding. Part of our shared humanity.

No, I do not believe that music-making will bring the wars underway around the world today to a close. I do, however, believe that a life dedicated to ushering beauty, a life dedicated to imagining something that does not yet exist and bringing it into existence, a life of curiosity, creativity, and collaboration will have very different results than does the rhetoric of hate we can witness escalating across the globe.

Thank you for the music you make. Thank you for the empathy you exude. And thank you for joining the conversation.

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