

## In Conversation with President Mark Rabideau



### Staying curious

I grew up in a loving, but chaotic household, alongside my eight siblings, all born within 9 years of one another. And fell in love with music while listening to my Mom play our janky upright piano at the end of a family room. Her repertoire was limited. She knew most of Clair de lune, and happily played it over and over again, and the opening 20-or-so measures of a Scott Joplin rag that remains unknown to me. Even as a child, it was clear to me that music meant something more to my mother beyond the remnants of childhood piano lessons: It was an escape.

Works of art invite us to step out of the busyness (and sometimes chaos) of our lives and step into space built for questioning elements of the human experience. To do so, every work of art separates itself from the world in which we live, creating a universe all its own, where we can challenge worldly constructs and normative perspectives. Films rely on cliff hanging openers and closing credits to transition us in-and-out of their universes. Curtains rise and curtains fall as our applause marks the curvature of a ballet's orbit. The world of a painting is contained within a literal frame, separating the complexities of each viewer's life from centuries of insights captured in a moment still and infinite.

Yet the power of art cannot be contained even within its own confines.

We experience this as we rewind stories long after theaters bring up the house lights, interrupt dance companies with our spontaneous cries, and relive picturesque scenes once relegated to canvas. And by doing so, we witness art's transcendence of the temporal, tangible world.

As many of us welcome students back to our campuses, we are afforded the opportunity to remember the importance of our work: ushering beauty into the world matters; unpacking complexity through art matters; developing empathy, celebrating difference, and experiencing connection through music matters.

My hope is that this, too, the start of the semester, will serve as a reminder of our obligation to prepare our students to invent the future they will soon inherit. This is unlikely to look like the education we received. But we, too, are afforded the opportunity to continue learning. To remain curious.

I'd like to recommend Chris Jenkins' newly authored book as a resource to spark your learning. *Assimilation v. Integration in Music Education: Leading Change toward Greater Equity* unpacks the historical racial assimilationist constructs within conservatories, offering strategies to deconstruct systemic white supremacy in classical music education so that we might create equitable infrastructures that position Black and Latinx students to thrive. Most powerfully of all, Chris humanizes his argument through the inclusion of recent music graduate testimonials that make clear the need for administrators, faculty, and students to lead change.

And I've fallen in love with Ayana O. Smith's book *Inclusive Music Histories: Leading Change through Research and Pedagogy*, in which Ayana challenges us to move beyond increased representation when reimagining pedagogical frameworks so that we might advance musicology as a discipline that is decisively antiracist. While mapping a new approach to teaching music history to Bloom's Taxonomy, Ayana unpacks how "othering" signals inferiority, illuminates how "origin myths" eclipse "shadow histories" in traditional historical narratives, and exposes the harm caused by mimicry and mockery of identities and cultures in earlier musical repertoires and primary resources.

More importantly, she offers flexible scaffolding, case studies, and classroom activities that are driven by inclusivity, informed by Critical Race Theory, and crafted in deep expertise that will guide faculty to choose structure, and present all aspects of each course taught within a Post-George Floyd music history curriculum.

And as you plan for opportunities to stay curious a little further down the road, please consider responding to Rachel Roberts' and the 2024 Program Committee's [call-for-proposals](#) for our national conference in Washington D.C. Constructed around the theme of *Advancing Democracy: Empowering Action Through Music*, the call "aims to explore musical leadership through the broad lens of democracy in action through our teaching, research, performance, and lives, now and into the future."

This past month, we learned of [the passing of CMS Past-President Barbara Lundquist](#). As we mourn her loss, let us find inspiration from her teaching legacy and remind ourselves of the privilege and responsibilities obligated within our own.

*For her, music was a manifestation of the human essence that is shaped by people's cultural communities, a window into culture, and a way to connect with people and their values.*

Our hearts and prayers go out to all those embraced within President Lundquist's many definitions of far

Music creates space that allows us to experience that which is most fundamental to the human experience: a desire to feel connected to something true and beautiful, something timeless and of-the-moment, and know that we have shared that experience with another person.

Thank you for all you do for our profession and thanks for joining the conversation.

Mark Rabideau  
Associate Dean for Faculty and Student Affairs  
University of Colorado Denver  
President, College Music Society