

January, 2022

Celebrating Our Past, Present, and Future

Studying composition (as a minor) with Paul Zonn while pursuing my doctorate at Illinois in the 1990s changed the way I think about music. Composition lessons might have been more aptly described as life lessons. And our discussions about composing music most often focused on composing a life within music. Our time together still influences the way I think about the changing nature of our work and about the ways in which our art remains unchanging.

Amidst change we can often feel as though there might not be a place for us on the other side. Leading change, however, is not about erasing the past. Nor is it about erasing ourselves from within the present. It is about giving ourselves permission to be the inventors of our own future.

The work of meaningful change requires agility. It begins by carrying forward the traditions of the past that are worth fighting for in the present. It, too, requires us to grapple with our own complex histories and to know that not all past traditions have a place in 2022. And to acknowledge that not all traditions worth celebrating made it into the history we've recorded. The good news is that we get to expand upon those histories. We are the authors.

Today, some of these changes are framed within the embrace of equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives. Here is another way we might consider thinking about change: What if we were to reposition creativity at the center of all we do? What we would likely discover is that the creative center would prove big enough to hold inclusive and affirming space for all creative voices. Because in the real world game of musical chairs, no one has to give up their seat. There are enough chairs, if we are open to everyone having a seat at the table. Music is not a zero-sum game.

What remains unchanging is the need to prepare student-musicians as one-of-a-kind artists-to-the-world, equipped with the requisite skills to create a lifetime of artistic moments, one after the next. That, after all, is the very definition of a musical artist. For our students to thrive in 2022 and beyond, they will need to have studied the many histories of music, be vulnerable enough to know something about themselves, and brave enough to share the sum of their experiences with others through music. Leoš Janáček did that. The Beatles did that. So did Bessie Smith. And Paul Zonn, too.

Optimistic that CMS will continue to invent a more inclusive, creative profession, it is with great enthusiasm that I announce Dr. Jeffrey Loeffert as The College Music Society's third Executive Director, beginning June 1, 2022. Dr. Loeffert currently serves as Professor and Director of the Michael and Anne Greenwood School of Music at Oklahoma State University. He is a graduate of Northwestern University, earning Bachelor of Music degrees in both Saxophone Performance and Jazz Studies, and Michigan State University, where he earned his Master of Music in Music Theory Pedagogy and Master and Doctoral degrees in Saxophone Performance.

Asked about the honor of being awarded the role of Executive Director, Dr. Loeffert said, "Having attended College Music Society conferences since the earliest stages of my career, the organization has a special place in my own professional development, and I am absolutely thrilled for the opportunity to serve The College Music Society as Executive Director. I have great admiration for CMS's role in music in higher education, the lines of communication it facilitates between subdisciplines in music, as well as the many ways in which CMS is acting to expand its reach—to be more inclusive in who the organization serves and more forward-thinking in how it serves them. I am excited to work closely with so many brilliant people who wish to make a meaningful and lasting difference in music. I cannot think of a better organization to serve, and I am truly grateful to work collaboratively with the CMS leadership, CMS membership, and CMS's professional partners to impact the field and those we serve."

On behalf of the Board of Directors, CMS Fund Board, and the CMS Executive Staff, we thank and congratulate Dr. Loeffert, and we look forward to his leadership of our organization.

2022 begins with uncertainty. The Omicron Variant is ravaging much of the globe. And we again will need to make difficult decisions about the modes by which we deliver our courses, protocols we will need to put in-place, and precautions we will need to take to keep each other safe. We have, however, proven our agility, creativity, and resourcefulness throughout the pandemic. My hope is that you will take comfort in knowing that music, even during these dark times, instills joy, hopefulness, and connection.

Wishing you happiness in the New Year. And as always, thanks for joining the conversation.

Mark Rabideau
President, The College Music Society