

Creativity Matters

Scholars across fields of study as diverse as neuroscience, cognitive psychology, education, molecular biology, and design thinking work to map the creative process, articulating the scaffolding and brain functions that help us understand what we've otherwise thought of as an elusive mystery, an unexplainable gift, a bolt of inspiration from the heavens.

We, too, can gain research-rich insights at the nexus of musical creativity and fields as disparate as psychology, gender studies, computer science, and the law when reading *The Improvising Mind: Cognition and Creativity in the Musical Moment* (Berkowitz); *Gender, Age, and Musical Creativity* (Haworth and Colton); *Computer Models of Musical Creativity* (Cope); and *Steal This Music: How Intellectual Property Law Affects Musical Creativity* (Demers). Learning from these perspectives can help foster our creativity, further disentangle the creative process (or processes), and introduce new applications of creativity into our art and into our life's work.

My own non-scientific definition of creativity has always focused on the exploration of the wondrous space between that which we know and that which we do not yet know. Composers take this up as they lean on conventional forms while stretching the boundaries of common practice: always testing the durability of what we know against that which surprises and delights. Scholars do this as they dive deep into the archives of human knowledge searching for answers to questions yet asked, meaning not yet clear. Performers arrive curious about what they can achieve on their instruments, whether technically mastering complex passages through multiple approaches in practice, or breathing life anew into works by crafting interpretations that acknowledge tradition while also asserting their unique voices. Within all of our professional activities, creativity becomes the defining line, one that distinguishes the careful from the courageous, the impressive from the impassioned, and the memorable from the indelible. Creativity is the secret sauce.

Common to all of these frameworks and practices is the need to spend time wildly divergent in thought, the period of time when creatives ask the questions, "How might we...?," "What if I were to...?," and the more defiant, "What stops me from...?"

Also inherent in the creative process is the inevitable need to pivot from divergent thinking to convergent action, a requirement for operationalizing imagination into reality.

The challenge for some is to make the pivot from the dreaming mind to busy hands. And for others it is to carve out enough time amidst the onslaught of grading, committee work, and administrative duties so that there is room to be curious (the prerequisite for creativity).

Here within The College Music Society we've been dreaming about a more clearly articulated organizational structure that better utilizes the talents of our professional staff and positions our organization to accomplish its work more efficiently, creating membership options that invite broader and more equitable participation, with special attention to contingent faculty and faculty abroad, and developing a stronger case for robust philanthropic efforts that support new initiatives through the CMS Fund. We, too, are moving ideas to action and look forward to soon sharing concrete outcomes resulting from our creative thinking.

Across our profession faculty are busy realizing the outcomes of their hard work serving students. Juries are being adjudicated, papers graded, theses defended, and graduations commenced. My hope is that the summer will be a time for us all to rejuvenate, play, dream, and be creative.

Thank you for moving through the divergent and convergent work of making music and preparing students to thrive in a world that needs their art.

Thanks for joining the conversation,

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