

April, 2021

Mark Rabideau

Creating Shared Spaces

March 2021 has proven to be a difficult month.

Violent hate attacks in Atlanta, Georgia that targeted our Asian American and Pacific Islander community have resulted in eight lives lost and once again exposed the centuries-old racism and misogyny that confront our AAPI colleagues. The Boulder, Colorado shooting that has stolen ten yet-fully realized lives occurred just 2 miles from the offices of our University of Colorado Boulder music colleagues, confronting us with the inescapable truth that, within the seconds it takes to unload a Ruger AR-556, our realities can be forever changed.

As the world crosses the one-year threshold of a global pandemic, which at times seems without end, even the most optimistic among us question what's next.

Where do we turn to find hope?

Hope is at the heart of what art uniquely offers the world, whether for a packed symphony hall or for one other person: art creates spaces to experience our shared humanity.

One way we see this unfold is through a powerful lyric. Songwriters have a way of demonstrating the rich opportunities of crafting ideas that are ambiguous enough for each of us to find ourselves within, yet concrete enough to learn from their message.

*Step out the front door like a ghost
into the fog where no one notices
the contrast of white on white.*

*And in between the moon and you
the angels get a better view
of the crumbling differences between wrong and right.*

"Round Here" – Counting Crows

I imagine each of us has felt, at some moment in our lives, the feeling of being invisible, inconsequential, and confused. I have. This haunting lyric opens up a space that all of us can occupy when unpacking its message. Lyricists, poets, dancers, choreographers, filmmakers, artists, and musicians create worlds that can isolate extremely personal emotion. That is what art can uniquely do: create spaces to experience our shared humanity. In so doing—and this is the great mystery of our work—we may express that which is fundamental to all of us.

And when this happens, when we have a shared experience, it is then that we can begin to take on the bigger challenges we see in the world and within our communities.

CMS, above all, is a collection of individuals brought together through a shared belief in music's power to unite us. Our 4143 members come from all academic disciplines of music, every state in the US, every province in Canada, and dozens of locations abroad. We are increasingly multi-racial, multi-ethnicity, multi-gender, and multi-orientation. This is our strength. As I often hear Executive Director Bill Pelto say, "Our diversity of disciplines within music gives CMS the agency to speak and speak out on the international stage. Our agency then affects our responsibility to act."

Collectively, we are a society of creative-minded change agents, busy inventing the future of our art form and building its capacity for making a difference in a world in need.

In February, I announced the formation of a Presidential Task Force for Change Leadership charged with conducting a yearlong examination of the state of the profession in and out of the academy and recommending a bold, inter-institutional project that tests and implements strategies for leading

systemic change in 2022 and beyond.

Today, I am pleased to announce, among the nearly 100 applicants, the members of that Task Force.

Co-Chair, Awadagin Pratt (Concert Pianist, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music)

Co-Chair, Mary Javian (Curtis Institute)

Jenn LaRue, Student Member of the CMS Board (University of Georgia)

Charles Rochester Young, CMS Board Treasurer (Baldwin-Wallace University)

Gwyneth Bravo (New York University, Abu Dhabi)

Abra Bush (Peabody Institute at the Johns Hopkins University)

Andre Chiang (Oklahoma State University)

Alyssa Grey (University of North Texas)

Taylor Harding (University of South Carolina)

Mark Hijleh (The King's College)

Chris Jenkins (Oberlin Conservatory)

Phyllis Lewis-Hale (Jackson State University)

Rachel Roberts (Eastman School of Music)

Reynaldo Sanchez (University of Miami)

Amr Selim (Lebanese American University)

Michael Stepniak (Shenandoah Conservatory)

Beverly Vaughn (Stockton University)

Tammie Walker (University of Iowa)

I am grateful for the Task Force's service to CMS and to our profession, and the change they will lead. And I am grateful for our society for the many ways, seen and unseen, that we are shaping a more hopeful future.

Thanks for joining the conversation,

Mark Rabideau

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