

Mark Rabideau

Gather

On January 20th we saw a different kind of gathering for the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States, Joe Biden and America's first female, first Black, and first Asian American Vice President, Kamala Harris.

Under the crushing weight of the pandemic and the unsettling threat of violence from domestic terrorists, the National Mall was populated not with supporters from across the country, but rather by nearly 200,000 U.S., state, and territorial flags symbolizing the (at that moment) nearly 400,000 Americans killed by the coronavirus. *Field of Flags* set the tone for an inaugural message of unity, hope, and reconciliation: a message voiced through artistic expression.

Art replacing chaos.
Music inspiring promise.
Poetry untangling histories.

Lady Gaga and The President's Own Marine Band delivered a metrically complex performance of [The National Anthem](#) that hinted at the unevenness of our times, while (recent CMS webinar guest) Shelby Ressler wove together a star-studded cast of Broadway Artists who inspired us with a mash-up of [Seasons of Love](#) and [Let the Sun Shine](#). But it was [Amanda Gorman](#), the nation's first-ever youth poet laureate, with her poem "The Hill We Climb," who captured the complexities of the moment and inspired millions:

Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:
That even as we grieved, we grew
That even as we hurt, we hoped
That even as we tired, we tried
That we'll forever be tied together, victorious

A gathering reimagined by artists demonstrated that which art uniquely offers: a path for healing the past, even as we shape the future.

This month, I want to share a few ways in which we as a community of leaders will gather in 2021 to shape the future.

Our [Regional Conferences](#) are underway, with virtual gatherings happening across the country and throughout the Spring.

Registration will open soon for CMS's 2021 National Conference in Rochester, New York. Our Program Committee and staff continue to build a robust hybrid experience that prizes safety and connection, while leveraging the reach of the digital world. Program Chair, Tracy Cowden shares her enthusiasm: "I am delighted with the work of the 2021 CMS Conference Planning Committee, who have created a remarkable conference that will challenge and inspire those in attendance! We have made a strong commitment to providing unique opportunities to build community within our membership during the conference, and we look forward to welcoming you in Rochester in October."

Here's a short list of reasons why this occasion is one you won't want to miss.

The opening ceremony will feature a performance by Iroquois dancers and Thanksgiving Address in Seneca and English, by members of the Seneca Nation.

The Trotter Lecture will be delivered in Kilbourn Hall at the Eastman School of Music by world-renowned pianist, Awadagin Pratt. Transforming his provocative podcast [Take Five, Season 1, Episode 2](#) into a live, concert-length, multi-media performance, *Awadagin Pratt: Black in America* fuses music arranged for and performed by Pratt, original still and moving pictures by filmmaker Alrick Brown, and a Pratt-authored and delivered narration. *AP: BIA* captures the complexities of America's original sin by chronicling Pratt's life from his time as a music student at the Peabody Conservatory

through his ascent to international acclaim through graphic accounts of police stops for Driving While Black. Immediately following this event, Past-President Dr. Eileen Hayes will guide conference-wide equity and social justice workshops.

Returning to her alma mater, newly appointed President and CEO of the [American Composers Orchestra](#), Melissa Ngan will deliver the CMS/ATMI Technology Lecture. In *Cultivating Courage and Creativity in a Digitally Connected World*, Ngan reflects upon what she has learned while developing brave new digital learning and performance content before, during, and beyond the global pandemic.

Other conference highlights include a performance by the Eastman Wind Ensemble in Kodak Hall, guided tours of Eastman's famed Sibley Music Library, and "Rochester Dine-Arounds," led by CMS Board and Committee Members. Personally, I plan on hanging out at Jim Doser's favorite local pub, [Lucky's](#) and hope you'll join me.

Posters Sessions will blend digital displays with face-to-face opportunities to engage scholars in discussion, while the Annual Business Meeting will take place online.

Webinars throughout the year will focus on four themes:

- Lessons for a Hybrid World
- Whose Music Matters?
- Repositioning Creativity
- Listening Sessions

I'd like to recommend *Music Schools for Tomorrow* (April 16-18, 2021). Envisioned and executed by student leaders of The Alliance for the Transformation of Musical Academe (ATMA) and the College Music Society's Student Advisory Council, this symposium will allow space to reflect upon the historical moment we find ourselves in as a critical opportunity to establish a national forum in which academic students, faculty, and staff can unify under shared values to reimagine the future of music academia. *Music Schools for Tomorrow* is designed to discuss practical strategies to dismantle white supremacy embedded within institutional infrastructures. Staggered registration prioritizing student participation will open soon.

Two CMS [Past Presidents](#), Dr. Harry Barnard Lincoln (1969-1970) and Dr. Arthur "Art" Tollefson (1983-1984), have passed away in recent months. Their obituaries share stories of how music was threaded throughout every part of their lives. Future spouses met during orchestra rehearsals, world adventures made possible while presenting scholarly papers, children and grandchildren embracing musical pursuits, and lifelong friendships forged with fellow members of our society. I want to extend my condolences to the family and friends who survive Presidents Lincoln and Tollefson and assure you that they are remembered fondly.

It has always been my belief that creativity resides at the thin line between hope and despair. And so, as musicians, poets, and artists we are obligated to combat the chaos brought on by a deficit of imagination, leverage our creative energies to illuminate the truth that "the norms and notions of what just is, isn't always just-ice," and to actively shape the future the next generation will soon inherit.

Thanks for joining the conversation,

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