

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**  
**Annual Meeting 2008**

**Oral Report of the Executive Director**

**Samuel Hope**

All of us recognize what an enormous privilege it is to be here together and to be living with music. Music is far more to us than a way to make a living. It is a way of life and thought. Each of us feels and speaks about the depth of our connection with music in different ways. I expect most of you are like me; your words and even your feelings do not seem to contain or get to the end of what music means to you.

Although in music we are always in the presence of mystery, some things are clear. For example, our work, our schools, and this Association all serve music and its connections with the human spirit. This service is our foundation, and this foundation is the basis for expecting even greater things in the future.

We are confident that a positive future will be realized because we work daily to achieve it. As we all know, music requires great patience and persistence. It is what we do every day that adds up to spectacular achievements. The deepest spiritual connections between music and us and our audiences come not in spite of this work but because of it. We rejoice with institutions achieving at levels that come to our common notice. But also we need to rejoice in a fact: the daily effort on behalf of music represented by the people and institutions in this room is simply astounding. None of us can comprehend it all.

In this season, each of us should take a moment and reflect in thanksgiving, not only on what we have, but also on the work of our neighbors, our colleagues all across this land. This work and the potential it represents is a beautiful thing, a precious thing. It is something that we are all pledged to support in every possible way. In a few minutes, Alan Fletcher will lead us in a much deeper consideration of these and other themes associated with music and its meaning.

I want to turn now to several specifics, and I ask you to join me in thinking about them in light of the statements just made about music, spirit, daily work, and spectacular achievement.

Everyone is concerned about the economy. No one knows exactly what will happen next. As an organization, NASM is in a good position to be resilient. In our peer-review process, there is great sensitivity about the impact on member institutions. Members of the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and Commissions on Accreditation are deeply concerned. As our President pointed out yesterday, NASM has over 80 years of experience in dealing with financial situations as they develop. As in the past, this Association will work with this one as sensitively and effectively as possible, and will do whatever it can to assist member institutions.

Even though we do not know what will happen, the financial crisis has brought home to all of us a critically important lesson. Trust is key, in part because trust is the basis of our credit system. The system works when trust is general and mistrust is limited to specific situations or cases. The system cannot work when mistrust is general and trust is limited to specific situations or cases. In other words, there is a point at which lack of trust becomes destructive, and as we have just seen, there is another point where it becomes awesomely destructive. Accountability systems and numbers are not substitutes for trust. Accountability systems and data are important, but they can't serve their usual functions when trust is missing.

Perhaps you join me in thinking that the trust principle I have just articulated is not confined to the economic sphere. We musicians know this by the very nature of our art. So much in music depends on trust in each other, in each other's daily practice and work for example. The great historic ensembles become that way in part because as players work together over the years, the level of musical trust rises and rises and rises, and this trust added to technical perfection enables those ensembles to produce the deep connections between music and spirit that we spoke about before.

Looking back over the last two years, NASM has accomplished several critically important things, either on its own, or in cooperation with others. Two major foundational documents that are expressions of our trust in each other are our Standards and our Procedures for the peer-review process we call accreditation. We have worked together through hearings and comment periods and consultations to revise these documents so that they might better serve our daily work and contribute in their own special way to the creation of spectacular achievement.

We have seen the Higher Education Opportunity Act reauthorized with language that protects the freedom of institutions and programs to make independent academic decisions. The higher education and accreditation communities prevailed here because they stood on principles based in the value of trust. In other words, our principles reflect generic trust in the faculties and administrators of each institution. We recognize that there is a vast difference in identifying problems or areas of improvement and mistrusting the individuals and institutions involved. We recognize the difference between discipline-specific assessment and the secular religion of assessmentism. Assessment used wisely is an instrument of building trust; assessmentism destroys it.

Now that NASM has reached a new plateau with Standards and Procedures, what are we doing together to advance the cause of music study in higher education? Here is a quick overview. We are engaged in a multidisciplinary working group on the future of multidisciplinary and multimedia. We have another working group looking at the issues of teacher education in music. Along with our colleagues in dance, theatre, and the visual arts, we have just published a policy brief on connections among creation, performance, and research. We are monitoring further developments in the struggle over evaluation policies and institutional freedom. We are monitoring, in a coalition with others, tax policies associated with the economic health of non-profit organizations. And yesterday, we saw the beginning of a multi-year effort to improve advocacy for music and music study.

Thank you for your many supportive comments about the advocacy sessions yesterday. Many are asking, "What should we do starting next Monday morning?" Many are asking about resources from NASM. With regard to resources, we will do the following. First, we will send you a text of the talking points from the 9:00 a.m. session yesterday, followed a bit later by a full text. Second, we will communicate about advocacy resources already available. Third, we will plan the next steps in NASM's service to a cumulative advocacy strategy.

We ask you to do the following. Begin by using the talking points we will send you and encourage other musicians to do the same. You should also use the tests for advocacy approaches and proposals contained in the handout from yesterday's session. You should start working toward applications of the information in the President's report and the principles articulated by the Ying Quartet as you plan in various curricula, student development, and promotional contexts. Lastly, we suggest you get and use materials in the NASM publication *The Basic Value of Music Study*. It contains talking points, sample advocacy copy, and templates for local advocacy planning. Just these things can advance our efforts a great deal over the next few months.

I want to conclude by connecting the theme of trust to the theme of creativity. NASM has been created in part to be an instrument for building trust both internally and externally. But it has also been built as a secure base for encouraging institutional and individual creativity. The Standards and Procedures are frameworks, not blueprints. The projects that engage us are centered in creativity and productive advance. Our recent work in Washington is about protecting the conditions necessary for creativity, including trust in dedicated expertise and professional judgment.

Given our times, we must create our way forward with new intensity. We need to work together with renewed dedication. At times, we need to protect each other. And as always, we will need to teach, and lead, and provide the greatness of music, all as we nurture these capabilities in future generations. These are truly beautiful reasons to be alive, to serve music, and to be here together.