

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC**  
**Annual Meeting 2017**

**Report of the President**

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Just inside the main library at Iowa State University is a beautiful clay sculpture titled *Shoulders of Giants*. This sculpture characterizes a teaching and learning setting. The sculpture's theme of mentoring is expressed by a team of Percheron draft horses, where the older, more experienced horse is teaching the younger horse to work in harness. The sculptor, Nina de Creeft Ward, derived her title from a statement offered by Sir Isaac Newton (1675-76), "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." The artist's inspiration also came from the observation of horses depicted in a mural designed by Grant Wood, which is also installed in the University Library.

I worked for thirty years at Iowa State and had the opportunity to view this work of art often. I love this life-size sculpture, partly for its raw, powerful beauty, but most especially for the generosity of its sentiment – the giving of credit to those teachers and mentors who held us up so that we could see further. This statement, about standing on the shoulders of giants, has been traced to the 12th century and attributed to Bernard of Chartres. However, its most familiar expression in English is the one offered by Sir Isaac Newton. The importance of this statement is also witnessed in Stephen Hawking's compilation of works by Newton, Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Einstein, entitled *On The Shoulders of Giants: The Great Works of Physics and Astronomy*. And further, for those of you who watch *The Big Bang Theory*, you may recall the episode with Professor Proton, who is frustrated that no one takes him seriously because of his previous role on a children's television show. In one of those rare moments when Sheldon Cooper actually says the right thing, he tells his mentor that he was inspired to go into science because of Professor Proton's influence, and suggests that an entire generation of young scientists stands on his shoulders. The metaphor expresses two important thoughts: (1) the meaning of discovering truth by building on previous discoveries, and (2) the role of a mentor helping the younger inexperienced learner.

I have been thinking about teaching, mentoring, and being mentored in recent months, for a couple of reasons: (1) I will be doing more teaching beginning this January, having stepped down

recently from administration, and (2) my college undergraduate piano teacher, who was one of the most important early mentors in my life, died last July. This man made a huge difference in my life and in the lives of many others. He was a wonderful, kind, and inspiring (if slightly eccentric) teacher.

The day I learned that he had died, I took out my Beethoven sonatas and Bach French Suites to see, again, his handwriting in the scores - the phrasing marks, the suggested nuances, the arrows and circles and breath marks, and of course, the many fingerings. I'm sure that everyone in this room has a story of someone who encouraged you, someone who took a chance on you when you weren't sure about the path you should take, and someone on whose shoulders you now stand. During the November 2016 NASM Annual Meeting, Jake Hegge inspired us with his keynote address speaking about magical teaching he received and the people who supported and befriended him. I doubt there was a dry eye in the room as Jake talked about the flame of music that is ignited, shared, and passed along through the power and expertise of a teacher. While administrative work can be stressful and our days are often filled with tasks that are anything but inspirational – still, it is good to be together and to be reminded of the ways that our work helps to keep the flame alive for those who follow.

I am nearing the end of a long career in higher education, and I am more grateful than I can say for Mr. Chilton, Mr. Grey, Mr. Karp, Mrs. Ross, Mr. Hervig, Mr. Benward, Mrs. Cole, and all the others. Carroll Chilton, my undergraduate piano teacher wasn't effusive in his praise – but I never felt the lack of encouragement, and I thrived under his tutelage. I'm so grateful for his guidance which helped me to believe that there was something inside me that was worthy of being ignited, shared, and passed along.

Not long ago a student wrote to me to tell me about her life and to thank me for helping her when she was struggling in piano class. I actually didn't remember this particular student, although there were certainly plenty of students who needed an extra lesson or a bit of encouragement over the years. But it was very nice to hear that those extra minutes spent with her made a difference in her life.

One of the great joys of administration is to be surrounded by kind, student-centered, generous, excellent teacher-scholar-artists. We, in music schools, tend to have many such colleagues. I would venture to say that music programs attract faculty who find great satisfaction in teaching

and mentoring more than might be found in the average university department. I also believe that our most important work as administrators relates to recruiting, mentoring, supporting and promoting the work of such faculty. At our NASM Annual Meetings, we have many opportunities to discuss this work – and the larger issues of music in society. We naturally focus on “sticky” issues and problems: how to mediate personality conflicts, how to handle complaints, how to evaluate teaching fairly, and how to motivate the occasional faculty member who has “retired-on-the-job.” Still, I think it is worth being reminded of all that is positive and the many ways in which our work, and that of our faculty, make a difference in the lives of others.

We definitely stand on the shoulders of giants in NASM. This organization was founded in 1924, initially by representatives of six music schools who met to discuss the challenges associated with the transfer of credits between and among institutions. As often happens when insightful leaders gather, these individuals came to realize that they shared and faced many common and similar problems beyond those associated with credit and time. It was this realization that led to the creation of an association which would be dedicated to dealing with issues related to the education and training of music students. Sixteen institutions were represented at the first organizational meeting of NASM. By 1928 NASM had established standards for the Bachelor of Music degree, and requirements for institutional membership. Thirty-two schools were granted charter membership in NASM at that time.

As you know, NASM has embarked upon a multi-year review of our standards and guidelines. This review has involved comment periods and hearings at this and previous annual meetings. The Board of Directors reviews the submitted comments and suggestions. The *NASM Handbook* is the result of the work of many individuals over our 93-year history. There is great wisdom in the *Handbook*, and it has served us well. But I do not doubt that there are things in this 270-page document that could be clarified, simplified, revised, and improved. The changes that were voted on yesterday were mostly clarifications, rather than significant changes to the standards. Your elected leaders and NASM staff will continue to consider whether more significant changes would serve the field. It is certainly never too late to offer suggestions, and we look forward to your best thinking about the standards that guide our work.

We share our expertise, our joys and concerns, and our ideas and questions. One key pillar of NASM’s purposes (professional development for music executives) is fulfilled through our annual meetings and through this generous sharing. I am very grateful to all who have

participated in this meeting – for organizing and presenting sessions, and for contributing your ideas and questions. We all are also grateful for the many volunteers and elected officials who dedicated countless hours to NASM’s accreditation efforts and the many initiatives of this association.

From NASM’s early beginnings 93 years ago, we have grown to a membership of approximately 650 institutions. As well, we have been joined by sister organizations of Art and Design (1944), Theatre (1965), and Dance (1981). These four organizations collaborate through the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations, which oversees the Accrediting Commission for Community and Precollegiate Arts Schools (ACCPAS), among other responsibilities. We stand on each other’s shoulders and we learn from each other.

I mentioned the Grant Wood murals, which were part of the inspiration for the *Shoulders of Giants* sculpture at Iowa State. Grant Wood (1892-1942) was a famed Iowa regionalist artist, best known for his iconic painting *American Gothic*. He designed and created these murals in the Iowa State University library with support from the federal program which in the 1930’s provided work for unemployed artists. As the newly appointed head of the Public Works of Art Project for Iowa, later named the Civil Works Administration, Wood welcomed this opportunity to employ artists, choosing from those who had exhibited at the Iowa State Fair that year. The murals use as a theme a quotation from remarks of Daniel Webster’s in 1840 celebrating the nation’s agrarian heritage: “When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilization.” We stand on the shoulders of giants in many ways. Certainly, leveraging the power of federal and state support for the arts remains important. We were honored to have Jane Chu, eleventh chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, with us yesterday. I encourage you to read the report of Chairman Chu’s signature leadership initiative, *Creativity Connects*, available on the NEA website. The inspiring work being done at many NASM institutions is addressing several points in this report, but there is much more to be done. I hope that you will leave this meeting with new ideas and with renewed energy to face the challenges ahead, as we continue to serve and educate students, and plan for the needs of future generations.

As always, thank you for attending this Annual Meeting and for your dedicated leadership which helps to advance music in our communities and the world. Best wishes for a successful year and appreciation for all that you do to support the work of music and NASM.

Thank you.