

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

100th Annual Meeting

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Oral Report of the NASM Executive Director

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Good morning. Happy Anniversary.

Thank you for joining us here in Chicago. It is an honor and privilege to be with you as you continue your efforts and pursuits to advance the cause of music. Your contributions and those of your colleagues will serve to broaden the reach and effectiveness of this organization as it begins its second century of service in support of its accredited institutional members, the tens of thousands of music students they enroll, and the field of music.

There are long-standing traditions in play at each Annual Meeting. One such tradition that took place yesterday is the raising of our voices in song during the First General Session. Another is the placard before you. This placard, often considered a badge of honor, confirms that, as an accredited institutional member of NASM, an entity recognized and highly regarded as part of a nation-wide system dedicated to self-regulation and focused on peer review, your institution continues to comply with a rigorous body of consensus-based national standards, and further, that representatives from your institution have been involved in advancing the initiatives of NASM and its members since accreditation was initially granted to your institution. Each placard symbolizes the commitment, contribution, and support provided not only by the representative who sits before the card today, but as well, those who have occupied this seat in previous years. Collectively, this amounts to over 31,000 years of service—one for each year of membership held by each accredited institution. The efforts expended and accomplishments achieved by institutions on behalf of their colleagues result in a firmly established solidarity that serves to bind the members of NASM in common cause and purpose.

In celebration of its hundredth anniversary and serving as a record of many of these efforts and accomplishments, NASM published and sent to members earlier this month its 100th anniversary *Historical Perspectives 1924-2024*, and a commemorative lapel pin. As mentioned in the document, “these historical perspectives celebrate the members of the National Association of Schools of Music and their continuing and unflinching service to music, learning, and civilization”. Further, it should be noted that “this set of short papers tells the grand story, captures points of essence, and presents a representative number of major achievements.” We hope you will take time to read through this document, to explore the history of NASM—a history created by your contributions and those of countless numbers of individuals representing the member institutions of NASM throughout the century.

I would imagine that what is observed from this podium today (sans hats and spats) is much like that observed 100 years ago during the first convening of the members of the National Association of Schools of Music and Allied Arts who gathered at the Hotel Schenley in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania October 20-22, 1924. As the archival minutes of meetings held by the association throughout the years show, the individuals attending the first meeting of NASM, much like you today, arrived purpose-filled, ready to discuss both the current status and future of music in higher education.

While we celebrate the successes achieved throughout our history, we also note that the members of NASM have faced and lived through events such as war, disease, financial crisis, natural catastrophe, and the mere challenges brought about by everyday living, which are not to be minimized. Any of these challenges could easily

result in heavy burdens being placed upon music executives and their institutions. All of these challenges must be addressed and resolved. This said however, it is clear that the severity of the challenges faced by music administrators coupled with the relentless pace of each day can dull passions, dampen enthusiasm, and exhaust energy stores. Noting such conditions, it begs the question, what drives the members of NASM to engage, to contribute, to persevere, and to prevail.

As evidenced by indications described throughout the history of the association, it is clear that the driving force is a common and abiding purpose shared among members—a purpose intended “to advance the cause of music in American life and especially in higher education.” This purpose has remained enduring, durable, and resilient throughout these ten decades. The members’ fealty to this purpose has been unwavering. It has served as a beacon guiding members as they raise their heads in pursuit of the next accomplishment and lower their heads in determination as they face the next challenge. It has served to coalesce the members as they work to advance the education and training of music students and music as an indispensable field of study.

This in large part is the reason that NASM is one of the longest serving and most consistently operated advocacy efforts dedicated to the advancement of music and the education and training of music students in existence today. Each Self-Study, Visitors’ Report, and Optional Response; each Response and Progress Report; each new curricular application opens a conversation that seeks to explore with institutions possibilities that not only serve the institutions themselves, but in all probability, extend the boundaries of the field. Every Commission Action Report is a discussion among experts intended to engage participants in the consideration of ideas, realities, and possibilities. This work proceeds without fanfare, as evidenced by NASM’s efforts to consider issues with thoughtful care, understand the pressures facing an institution, and establish trust. NASM holds a deep and abiding respect for the institutions with which it works—honoring at all times both institutional autonomy and independence.

It is clear that the field of music has advanced in many ways. The artform has become more sophisticated, the subdisciplines within music have grown in number, the capacities and capabilities and thus expertises of our students have expanded, the technologies that support music have burgeoned. Aware of changing dynamics, the work of NASM and its members remains forward thinking and forward moving. This is evident, for example, in the approach taken by NASM as it pertains to standards review, creation, and application—an approach that enables institutions to consider the existing, create the new, and test the next. It is also evident in the care NASM takes to embrace the “old and traditional” while at the same time, welcome the “new and innovative”.

NASM is an entity that is:

- Open to possibilities. An entity that promotes intellectual curiosity, engages in dialogue, welcomes ideas, and listens intently.
- Interested in consensus. An entity that values the voices, thoughts, and the contributions of all.
- Supportive of the development of competencies. An entity that promotes expertise which it understands may be defined in different ways for different courses of study.
- Interested in authenticity. An entity that understands that accomplishment in the arts prevails only when conditions are present that support and promote commitment, focus, and study.

How fortunate are we to have the opportunity to come together to celebrate this auspicious occasion? How fortunate are we to be a part of and belong to a family of professional colleagues that share a common and well-defined purpose? How fortunate are we to have the opportunity to contemplate, shape, and guide the future of music study? Simply put, we have been given a gift, and with it, offered a responsibility—a responsibility that requires us to protect, defend, and advance the artform—an artform that is a critical aspect of the lives of the citizens of this and other nations. With regard to professional engagement, what higher honor might there be?

Although we pause for a moment here in Chicago to celebrate the achievements of our first 100 years, accepting this responsibility, we as the architects of progress know that much work remains before us. We also know that attributes such as leadership, organizational prowess, financial acumen, and the like, while staples in our administrative toolbox, can leave us unprepared to effectively address the plethora of human-centered issues that reach our desks. We have come to learn that traits such as humility, empathy, and resilience guided by trusted intuition can be immensely helpful if not essential in establishing connections which enable conversations to remain on topic and move forward. It would be an understatement to suggest that today's music administrator is a jack of many trades.

Our 100th anniversary *Historical Perspectives 1924-2024* offer to us not only a recounting of salient aspects of our history, but as well, a roadmap—not one that specifically lays out any exact route—rather, and at very least, one that assists us to understand the role virtues such diligence, patience, and humility have played and must continue to play in our path forward. As observant readers will surmise, your predecessors, in the recounting of your history, offer to you in these pages, examples of their diligence, patience, and humility—as well as the results of these efforts. In short, your predecessors have offered yet another gift—the gift of wisdom honed by the sum of their collective learning acquired throughout these ten decades—wisdom that has been shaped by the knowledge and experience gained which has in turn enabled informed decision-making.

Wisdom, it turns out, exists in various forms, and for those seeking it, in abundance. If I may share a story. Just before leaving for this meeting last week, I had the opportunity to sit a spell and visit with my mother. As we do often during our visits, we swapped stories and remembered together many of the sweet moments our family has shared. Toward the end of our conversation, my mother, as she has done for as long as I can remember, reminded me that life is precious—that it is imperative for the human soul to do what it loves to do, and equally imperative that the work to be done is done well. She suggested that, without ego or hubris, it is appropriate from time to time to “stop and smell the roses” and to take pride in worthy accomplishments. She offered that it is always appropriate to give thanks for gifts received—both those realized and those unrecognized. Given that just one month ago, my family gathered to celebrate my mother's 100th birthday, the symmetry that exists between these two century-long stories is poetic. It would be fair to say that my mother's “historical perspectives” to this day serve as a guiding light in my life.

As we set our sights on the future, let us remember three of our many basic tenets:

- It is our duty to nurture and advance this stunning national initiative that for 100 years has worked tirelessly to advance the cause of music as an artform and an indispensable aspect of human life.
- The outcome of our individual and collective decision-making will have consequential effect on the nature and disposition of education in music today and for years to come.
- NASM is an organization of accredited institutional members. NASM is your organization; its accomplishments are yours.

As you continue your work, should you need assistance, support, or the comfort of colleagues in the coming days, don't hesitate to turn to those who now sit beside you to seek help and find guidance in their wisdom and expertise. The intellectual and empathetic capacity of this community is true, real, and genuine, and should not be underestimated or left untapped. To this end, don't hesitate to develop professional friendships. These connections are valued for many reasons—one among them is the immediate connection that is re-established regardless of the amount of time that has passed in the interim. Another is the willingness of these individuals to share wisely and thoughtfully their insights, which speak to the greater good rather than personal gain.

Congratulations on your formidable accomplishments many of which are highlighted in the *Historical Perspectives 1924-2024*, specifically, those that ensure the place of music study in higher education and those

that extend the reach of music beyond the academy to those who otherwise would be unable to experience and take advantage of such opportunities.

Thank you for your stalwart and unfailing efforts expended to date to advance education and training in music, and music as a necessary and indispensable aspect of human life. What you do each and everyday matters—to so very many people on so very many levels.

Tomorrow we will disperse having established and nurtured existing professional friendships—friendships you may find will last a lifetime. May the spirit of fellowship that has guided our work accomplished here in Chicago travel and remain with you. As well, during this season of thanksgiving, may you continue to relish our gifts, in particular, our great good fortune at this moment in time to be the stewards of this great cause of music.

Thank you.