

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

## 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

November 22–26, 2024

### Oral Report of the President

**Michael D. Wilder**

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And now for my president's report.

I've chosen this year to take a somewhat unique approach to this report. You see, you can take a bit of risk because in just over 24 hours, I will be your Past President. This morning, I would simply like to share three items with you: a thank you note, a brief tribute, and a letter. The thank you note is written to you, the tribute is to the piano teacher of my children, and the letter is one that I have composed to the President of NASM in 2124. First, the thank you note.

This note of thanks is written to you—to each of you in this room today and to every person who has joined with colleagues in the National Association of Schools of Music since 1924. Why did you choose to engage with those in NASM, as have so many others before you? I realize that you may have more a sense that someone else volunteered you or that maybe you just took a wrong turn somewhere along the way. But I would guess that you chose first to invest in music and musicians at your institution and then you found your way to this organization, many of you recently. Maybe some of you were even surprised to discover all that NASM would offer in gathering those in this room as we strive together to contribute to our mutual cause—a most honorable cause—that of music and those who create it.

You know, there is much at stake and so much to be gained in the contributions that you offer to this association and to its members. On behalf of all who benefit from your involvement, I write to thank you and to thank the many who have gone before us now for 100 years—as we serve those in our institutions and as we join in serving each other in the broad array of our collective offerings.

We join Kenneth McPherson Bradley when, in 1924, he became our first NASM president. As we join with President Bradley and that group of seven individuals who first met to consider what would become NASM, we continue to build on their vision that resulted in the ever-evolving standards of our association, in the development of new music curricula in our music schools, in the encouragement of our professional development, and in expanding our institutions' resources and opportunities. Thank you for joining this group of institutions and their leaders in our shared commitment to programs that respond to not only the needs of those who are currently enrolled and serving in our institutions, but to the tens of thousands of our music graduates as they engage nearby and around the world in music teaching, service, research, music therapy, performance, music industry, ministry, recording, and so much more. For this, I thank you—each of you.

Speaking for all of us, I also offer a sincere word of thanks to each presenter and moderator at this annual meeting. Thank you to the elected representatives of NASM past and present, including our regional officers and the members of our Board of Directors. Heartfelt thanks to every evaluator and to our Commissions on Accreditation as they review every curricular offering and operational condition in our member institutions. Thank you for the leadership of those who serve and have served on our Executive Committee and for your treasured friendships these many years. By the way, each person I have mentioned serves as a volunteer, each of them hoping to contribute directly to the thriving of your institution and music in higher education. A very special thank you to our three keynote speakers as they have challenged us with such compelling questions and

insights. And a heartfelt word of appreciation, on behalf of all of us, to our beloved NASM staff and our remarkable Executive Director, a team that works as tirelessly as any I know. Without the investments of all those I have mentioned, and every person in this room, we simply could not carry on this vital work so effectively... and certainly would not do so with such impact. You are each a gift to the people of our schools and to this association as it celebrates the initiatives, the creativity, and the accomplishments of each of our member institutions.

And speaking of the broad range and the countless people who are attached to this association, I hope you will allow me a few minutes to share a more personal story of just one of those individuals. I would like to offer a tribute to the piano teacher of my children. I share with you a few details of her life, in part because her story is unique, but also because it offers a good example of our combined strength when we consider the stories of so many who are woven into our rich NASM history.

The piano teacher of my children, Miss E. Marie Burdette, was born in 1901, well before the founding of NASM. She graduated from a small college in the Midwest—a school that was accredited by NASM in 1929. Regular engagement with NASM would influence that music school's offerings in many ways in the next years and Miss Burdette would teach at that school for several decades, continuing then to teach privately for many more years.

Miss Burdette began teaching our oldest child in the mid-80s, and as our 11 children came along, she would add them to her studio just as soon as we would allow it. Before retiring, she taught piano to all of our children but the youngest, who was only two at the time and not quite ready to begin. In those days we lived just a few blocks from her home, and we would devote Wednesday mornings to piano lessons with Miss Burdette. She didn't watch the clock too closely, so each child would just wait for the next oldest sibling to return home before being tagged for their lesson.

Still teaching when she was 102 years old, the Governor honored Miss Burdette as the oldest working woman in our state. She loved teaching, she loved music and music-makers, and she was devoted through and through as she invested in the lives of our children and so many others. Studying with someone who has lived a century brought special opportunities in Miss Burdette's direct knowledge of such a range of history. Think of it—she witnessed ragtime to hip-hop, two world wars, the depression, space travel, the emergence of antibiotics and x-rays, electric typewriters, cell phones, laptops, and so much more.

She might not want me to tell you this, but in all those years of teaching our children, Miss Burdette never accepted a dime from us as payment. Some years after her passing (at 104 years of age!) that small college started a Hall of Fame in Performing Arts. Among the privileges of my life was being asked to accept the honor—for Miss Burdette—of her induction into that Hall of Fame.

You have your own versions of Miss Burdette, don't you? Those who cultivated music in you. And amidst your faculty and alumni are so many who similarly invest sacrificially in developing the musical potential in others. For each of these generous teachers, we are so truly grateful, aren't we? Thank you to each of them. Thank you to every teacher in this room. Thank you, Miss Burdette.

The last portion of my report is a letter I have written to the President of the National Association of Schools of Music in 2124. You know, I suppose it is unlikely that any of us here this morning will actually attend that 2124 annual meeting. So let us think together about what we might want to pass along to those who assemble 100 years from now for the Bicentennial Annual Meeting.

To the NASM president in 2124:

On behalf of those assembled here in Chicago this November morning in 2024, we offer you our collective deep conviction that music is among the most powerful and most engaging of human endeavors. In 2124, we are confident that you know much more about music and how it works—it's astonishing potential and why it is so compelling.

You have, no doubt, witnessed breakthroughs in the facilitation of music learning and creating and teaching music. It is hard for us to even imagine the exponential number of new melodies and harmonies that have been created since 2024, along with so many new instruments and ways of producing sound, of recording it, and of sharing music with others. And at the same time, I am confident that you are nearly as far away as we are from fully understanding the mystery and the miracle of music. I would guess that you stand with us in awe of music's boundless capacity to inspire, challenge, celebrate, proclaim, comfort, teach, heal, connect, distract, elevate, and calm us.

Speaking today from this diverse and influential group of hundreds of institutions, we share with you our conviction that every person has a powerful voice to speak in and through music. That every musical voice matters. And that if we are to understand and engage humans, we must fully embrace their musicalness and do all that we can to unleash and empower it.

And yet, we quickly acknowledge that we sometimes encounter obstacles and competing priorities that can marginalize music in educational and other settings. This may result in music resources and opportunities that are diminished or even inaccessible for whole groups of people in 2124, just as they are at times in 2024. We must continue to champion the cause and the vital place of music in the fabric of each of our institutions, in our broader culture, and in the life of every person—that each one would be assured of opportunity and be welcomed into the nurturing of their own musical development.

I write to you with confidence that the National Association of Schools of Music in 2124 continues in this vital work, as it brings together institutions and their leaders to encourage each other in the cause of music in higher education, while continuing in maintaining vital music standards, the professional development that equips our music leaders, and in hosting a national forum for consideration of all things musical. I have no doubt that this work is every bit as much needed in 2124 as it is for us today.

We are confident that those who have come after us have continued to find many improvements and to correct what we didn't get right or get finished. You, no doubt, live in a world that we could have never imagined in 2024. So much has surely changed for you in matters of transportation, fuel, food, communication, medicine, technology, community engagement, world diplomacy, energy, and so, so many more important aspects of life. We recognize that we hand you a world with plenty of challenges and with countless unanswered questions.

And yet, we are a hope-filled people. Dare we dream that, in 2124, barriers to musical engagement have been reduced or some even eradicated, and where music resources might be more widely available? We even hope that you might live in a time that is more peace-filled, welcoming, and encouraging. We cheer you on as we invest today in that which we deeply hope will aid you in your significant work in music and the people who make it.

To those meeting in 2124, congratulations on the occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NASM. Standing between these two centuries, as I am here this morning, one hand reaching back to our founders in 1924 and the other to you in 2124, I am deeply hopeful that music continues to rise, while celebrating and bolstering human flourishing in every corner of our world.

And now, back to you—my friends assembled here this November 2024 morning in this Chicago ballroom. On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the National Association of Schools of Music, maybe we each pause to

offer a word of thanks, maybe a tribute to those who invested musically in our lives and in our schools, and maybe we take a moment, as we dare to dream of tomorrow—looking ahead to all that has yet to be realized, and seizing today that which each of us might contribute to this noble cause. May each of you find encouragement, fresh ideas, inspiration, new challenges, collaborative engagement, and warm friendship in this association and in our shared commitments.

Let us celebrate life, as we honor the voices of the nearly countless people in our world, as they speak truth—musically, as they share of life’s joys and challenges—through music, and as they enable each person to discover and fully cultivate who they are—as music-makers and as humans. May our voices—our very lives—continue to proclaim that which matters most to each of us, and may music continue to powerfully serve as a mighty and precious gift to every person, to each of our schools and communities, and to our world.

Thank you.