

# In Conversation with President Brian Kai Chin



The College Music Society has undergone massive changes and restructuring in the five years that I have served on this national board. From pandemics to leadership changes, I am continually impressed by this organization's ability to pivot, hold meaningful and challenging conversations with civility and optimism, and professionally make decisions that can greatly impact the future of CMS's ability to serve our membership. This organization has amazing leaders, from Bill Pelto's excellent stewardship as Executive Director, and now the director of the CMS Fund; to Past President Mark Rabideau, who was instrumental in hiring the new staff team with Jeffrey Loeffert (Executive Director) and Hannah Pearson (Director of Operations). I hope to rise to the standard as we shepherd CMS into the next era.

This past academic year, The College Music Society hired an external consultant to take a 360-degree look at the organization from the angles of efficiencies, physical spaces and assets, conferencing, budgets, and our messaging to our members. At this past national conference in Miami, the board received a full report and list of recommendations from our consultant, Mike Wolfe. We have concluded that we will lead a full strategic planning process for this year to move forward on four primary modalities:

## 1. Messaging & Words

We have many members in CMS and while we all have our own words for the value CMS can bring to our communities, it has become clear that we need to update and reauthorize our values, mission, and vision statements. Our mission statement, while accurate and inspirational, is also so broad and lengthy that very few people could recite it in an elevator. We want to ensure our membership can make a unified and compelling case for why one ought to become a member of this organization as we aspire to expand our membership to the whole of music academe.

Here, I am appointing a new, small task force made up of elected leadership positions across the organization. Their first charge will be to conduct a full inventory from all of our stakeholders, mostly from our members-at-large. I will discuss this committee and the coming survey with you all in my letter next month.

## 2. Programs & Conferences

The *Task Force For Reimagining Conferences 2025 And Beyond*, led by Tracy Cowden, was formed by Past President Mark Rabideau. They have done amazing work thus far and will continue to meet and strategize to fully reexamine how we do conferencing in a post-pandemic era.

We also see a need to amplify our virtual presence. As such, the CMS board and the staff are moving forward with launching a new website creating additional resources for administrators, faculty, and students, and creating a platform for virtual community.

## 3. Governance Structures

With the exception of our paid staff, CMS is a volunteer organization with the leadership and board rotating on and off every several years. We are examining the systems of getting work done in CMS through better methods of onboarding and clear, well-defined roles. Most urgently, we are forming a much-needed Financial Committee that will be instrumental in defining our organization's annual budget structures.

## 4. Finance & Operations

Here we will propose a full five-year strategy that involves a full audit of our budgets, staff structures, and use of physical space. We are proposing a strategic plan that will move us toward maximum efficiency, starting with our next annual budget being developed now for FY25. Jeff and Hannah have already led a staff retreat that resulted in

a proposed strategy that is currently in front of the board for discussion and approval in May. Thank you both for your speedy and powerful work!

I am so proud to be representing and serving this wonderful organization. It is our plan to move quickly and intentionally this year to be able to move forward with a new strategic plan to launch in time for our next fiscal year, August 1, with a new mission, values, and vision to impact new marketing strategies by the 2024 CMS National Conference in Washington, DC in November. Mark the date now, and don't miss this one! It will be exciting!

BC

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'B', a lowercase 'k', and a cursive 'C' followed by a period.

Brian Kai Chin  
President, College Music Society