A Memorable and SAFE First Year

I hope this finds you healthy since you last received our Iowa Music magazine! It is a distinct privilege to write my first welcome letter for this publication. A lot has happened since I assumed the role of director of the School of Music on July 1, 2019.

As you will read in the pages ahead, the UI School of Music has not only survived, but thrived during the global pandemic. To pivot to 100% online instruction in March 2020—with minimal warning—was an epic feat of music community commitment, resourcefulness, flexibility, tenacity, and grit. But we got it done.

To embark on a summer-long research study that brought in recognized medical, scientific, and engineering experts to devise the safest-possible return-to-learn protocols in the Voxman Music Building was challenging and inspiring. Special thanks are due to our team of scientists and medical doctors (Drs. Schwalje, Hoffman, Stanier, Nonnenmann, Sheffield), and our team of engineers (Dwight Schumm, Tom Slaubaugh, Katie Rossmann) who helped create COVID-19 risk mitigation protocols that kept us safe and productive. The work was relentless. But we got it done.

To not take the “easy way out” by canceling in-person ensembles, lessons and performances this fall, but rather let science, data, and facts guide our decisions was brave. Student safety and educational impact remained the driving forces behind every decision and there were many challenges along the way. But we got it done.

To surface from the fall semester not having canceled one class, not having veered from our educational mission, and not having had a COVID-19 outbreak in the School of Music was remarkable, but not surprising. Our faculty, staff, and students were 100% committed to the science, following our strict protocols, and controlling what we could control within the Voxman Music Building. When faced with an unprecedented landscape, we got it done.

Enjoy the pages ahead as you read of inspiring achievements in the midst of a pandemic. Beyond our aerosol research, we forged new paths in music technology, won a national competition and national dissertation award nomination, won a Guggenheim Fellowship, had faculty and students chosen for conference performances and presentations, had faculty and alumni chosen for state- and nation-wide achievement awards, had students accepted into a national music leadership academy, broadened our horizons with a large number of virtual guest artists and lecturers, formed new connections at the veteran's hospital, launched a new music resource website, hired new outstanding faculty, and celebrated our exceptional alumni. The strength and resolve of this department is remarkable. Learning, creating, and connecting cannot be stopped in the School of Music. We will continue to get it done.

While this was not the first year I expected as director, it has only confirmed for me how vibrant, resilient, and committed the University of Iowa music community is. It is an honor to lead this department.

Stay well and stay in touch,

Tammie Walker, D.M.A.
Director, School of Music