

WELCOME LETTER



Meredith Willson had it right when he wrote, “Oh, there’s nothin’ halfway about the Iowa way to treat you.” And we plan to treat you to an exciting conference filled with good food, fun and fellowship. The last time Iowa was able to greet you was when the then “Tri-Cities” hosted the 1921 Biennial convention. It’s time to update and upgrade. The Tri-Cities added one more Iowa river town, Bettendorf, to make the Quad-Cities an example of congenial collaboration to explore and enjoy.

The Isle, our conference hotel, is located on the banks of the Mighty Mississippi river. A buffet BREAKFAST IS INCLUDED in the cost of your hotel room this year. Calling all state presidents to come on Tuesday, June 11, and participate in a day set aside just for them to share, interact, and learn from each other. Everyone else—come a day early on Tuesday and enjoy a unique experience of an evening dinner cruise on the Celebration Belle, an authentic paddlewheel boat designed for cruising the waterways of the great Mississippi River. (<https://www.celebrationbelle.com>)

Wednesday morning officially begins the conference. Our emphasis this year will be on life-long learning, whether adult or junior. We’ll be hearing from some of our Festival Bulletin composers and pedagogues. Inspiring us to explore ways to use sound, physical gesture and imagination will be Dr. Helen Marlais, Melody Bober and new NFMC Stillman-Kelly and Thelma Byrum awards chair, Dr. Jason Sifford. We hope to highlight some compositions in the new 2024-2028 Festival Bulletin and present ideas to inspire and ignite interest in repertoire. Our Festival Chorus director, Dan Andersen has ideas to help our voices age better and continue singing throughout our life!

You’ll enjoy special performances by our NFMC Young Artists on Wednesday evening and performances by some of our award winners as Musical Moments are sprinkled throughout our meetings. The Bix Beiderbecke Museum is located in downtown Davenport and the director of this museum will share more insight into the world of jazz in the 1930’s at our Rose Fay Thomas luncheon along with a pre-luncheon concert by a small jazz combo.

Thursday evening is a special Iowa treat. We will journey a few blocks down the street to Asbury Methodist church where is housed an historic

Pleyel Double Grand piano, the only working piano of its kind in this hemisphere. The Happy Dog Duo enjoyed playing on this unique instrument at the 2019 Iowa Conference and we are thrilled to have them back bringing humor and joy to classical music! BUT FIRST—we will enjoy an Iowa hog-roast (well, we won’t actually roast a pig) supper at the church with smoked pork or chicken, baked beans, coleslaw and all the trimmings needed for a summer night’s picnic in Iowa.

The final concert on Friday will be an extra special presentation by Audrey Johnson entitled “We’ve Come a Long Way, Ladies! A Musical Celebration of the 19th Amendment.” This program brings the Women’s Suffrage Movement to life through historical music, projected images, onstage costume transformations, a spoken narrative, and audience participation.

The Channel Cat Water Taxi will help you explore the Mighty Mississippi without the need to drive. It stops at 4 different landings including the Village of East Davenport where you can walk the streets and shop the boutiques. Unique and memorable Isabel Bloom sculptures are handcrafted in Davenport. Then perhaps continue on to the John Deere Commons Landing. The John Deere Pavilion is an attraction and museum located in Moline, Illinois that details and highlights the beginnings of one of the leading tractor companies in the world. In Davenport, visit The German American Heritage Center & Museum, located in a former hotel that hosted thousands of immigrants in the 1860’s. This museum details German immigrants’ journeys by sea, train, and foot to Iowa. Also in Davenport is The Figge Art Museum, a landmark glass building on the banks of the Mississippi River with expansive galleries and a premier art exhibit and education facility. If you are a Civil War history buff, you may want to find your way to The Rock Island Arsenal Museum in Rock Island, IL. This island was the home of Fort Armstrong, a Civil War Prison, and a mighty armaments hub. Today it is an essential part of Quad-Cities manufacturing and employment.

“So, what the heck, you’re welcome—glad to have you with us. You really ought to give Iowa, Hawkeye Iowa, ought to give Iowa a try!” Thanks, Meredith and see you on the banks of the Mighty Mississippi!