I am so grateful and humbled to introduce myself as the 36th president of one of the strongest and exciting organizations in New York State. When I look back at my career in music education and all of the leaders and colleagues who have shaped me, I can only say thank you all for getting me to this moment. I am excited and nervous to take this journey but mostly I am ready! I will do everything in my power to be successful as your president and continue the great work of the presidents before me.

I have been told I am the first NYSSMA® President from Zone 8 and the first sitting superintendent. But no matter where I work and what I do, I am fundamentally a music educator and will always be a music educator. I will bring all of these experiences into my work as your president.

I have had the opportunity to work in rural, suburban, and urban schools. I have gained an important understanding of the needs of each community and bring that to my leadership. I speak of being a superintendent and president because those afford me the ability to advocate for music education. What about the thousands of others who don’t have my positions? How do you advocate for your programs? I will share ideas and experiences in the next two years through my articles and other venues to help with that.

Music for life

As I considered a theme for my presidency, many things came to mind. While I will continue the important and incredible work of President Salzman, I find myself seeing an important aspect I want to move forward, which is the impact of music education on every musician’s life.

When children study music education, it becomes part of building their character and creates lifelong learners who are better citizens because of their education in music. So often we hear great leaders in the world talk about their ability to lead because of their music education.

When I had the privilege to sit at the New York State School Board Association conference representing NYSSMA®, people would walk past our booth and say, “OMG, I did NYSSMA® and remember it so fondly,” “NYSSMA® made me who I am today,” or “NYSSMA® gave me the education, experience, and ability to thrive in my career.” None of these people were in music education as adults, but it shaped who they are today. Therefore, I want to pursue this impact throughout my presidency and theme my presidency - NYSSMA®: Embracing Music Education for a Lifetime!

Diversity remains a goal

So that gives me the ability to look at the impact NYSSMA® has on every child from the first moments a child experiences music continuing through to adult life. Working with our committees on community music, collegiate, and other aspects of lifelong learning in the arts I will continue our work with emerging ensembles, diversity, and urban schools to make sure every child who wants to participate in music has the same opportunities as those in the rest of the state. Children can’t embrace music for a lifetime if they never have a first chance to experience music.

Finally, I want to thank Michael Salzman, who has been president these past two years, for paving the way for my presidency. He has taught me so much, and I look to his sage advice in the next two years. Reading his final article, I would like to speak to his priorities and my vision and how they coordinate. I am so grateful for the work, time, dedication, and love he gave to this organization.

In regard to “access,” this is one of my largest platforms. I will continue to look at the needs and the gaps in rural, urban, and suburban districts. As stated earlier, I have had the privilege to work in each type of district and have experienced the dichotomy in the needs of the musicians. I will bring these experiences to move this forward as best I can.

We all must focus on diversity and we have just begun to scratch at the surface. What we know, what we do not know, what we have learned, and what we need to understand are the tenets of success in this regard. Stay tuned and anyone who wants to help please let me know.

Membership is so important in every professional organization. Professionals should always find the importance of being a member. I am a member of six different professional organizations so I know what is happening and can lend a voice while learning about new initiatives. We professionals have a responsibility that we cannot ignore.

So, as you can see I am creating a large platform to facilitate growth, continuity, and new horizons in my presidency. I am not kidding myself that there are limits to what one leader can do in two years but know I will be giving 110% to do what is needed so every child CAN be afforded a sequential, well-rounded, music education that will last a lifetime.

Thank YOU for your trust in voting me into this position and I look forward to the next two years. David

"Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.” –Victor Hugo