



FROM THE
CHAIR OF
LIBERAL
ARTS

It's all there in the letters.



TO UNDERSTAND WOMEN in leadership, consider the correspondence of Mary Louise Curtis Bok. Her words reveal a leader in action: generous, creative, fierce, humorous, and humble. She writes to a correspondent: “Many thanks for your very kind note about Sam Barber, but really you are too generous to the Curtis Institute, and to me in this case. He is a very real talent” (Founder’s Records, Curtis Archives, 1935).



Not every visionary manages to realize her dream *and* establish that dream as a reality for future generations. Not every visionary dedicates herself to clearing a space for young artists to flourish. What a gift to us that Mrs. Bok was that visionary leader.

As we prepare to mark Curtis’s centennial, it is a perfect moment to salute women in leadership. Norman Rockwell caught the intelligence, strength, and shy smile of the founder of Curtis. Her portrait, on display in the Common Room, reminds us of the power and the possibility of leadership.

When pondering strength in leadership, I look to see who is serving students most keenly, celebrating them as Mrs. Bok celebrated Sam Barber.

Gifted teachers elicit my admiration as they pore over essays with students or listen to the same phrase over and over, somehow pulling the sublime from the quotidian. Applause is due to women prepping the salad bar in Lenfest Hall or cleaning practice rooms so that their freshness clears the path for music-making. Women across campus lead with integrity and dedication to the mission while managing family commitments and, in many cases, artistic careers of their own.

In this issue of *Overtones*, we invite you to read about contemporary women leaders changing the landscape of the arts, including Jennifer Koh (Violin ’02), artistic director of the Kennedy Center’s Fortas Chamber Music Concerts, discussing mentorship (p. 7), and opera director Omer Ben Seadia, offering her take on the relevance of Handel’s *Ariodante*, with conductor David Stern (p. 26). Writer Heidi Waleson highlights efforts to overcome gender disparities in orchestras (p. 18), while other features explore music’s role in healthcare settings (pp. 14 and 30), wellbeing for musicians (p. 22), and management decisions (p. 10).

We marvel at leadership and generosity in letters, on stage, and in classrooms. But how do we translate our encounters with the marvelous? I learn from students, gathered around the hand-hewn seminar table, a gift of Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest, in the Rock Resource Center. This semester, students pondered Emily Dickinson’s luminous words, “I shall keep singing!” The poems gained resonance as students inspired one another with their interpretations. At last, and at the beginning, the work is to make room for artists to speak with one another about how best to sing. Of the unsung leaders among us, perhaps, with Dickinson, this is the moment to “bring a fuller tune.”

Jeanne Minahan McGinn, Ph.D.

RUTH W. AND A. MORRIS WILLIAMS JR. CHAIR OF LIBERAL ARTS
SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN OF ACADEMICS