



FROM THE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Curtis **Curtis** **Curtis**
Institute of Music



New Century, New Look



AS CURTIS'S CENTENNIAL season approached, my colleagues and I began to examine how the school communicates its place in the world, including through its brand, which involves our messaging and visual identity. Our last brand redesign occurred in 2009, a whole different era in media consumption. Students were getting their first smartphones. Social media was in its infancy. Streaming was still a novelty. Today, most people are introduced to Curtis through digital channels, with more than half of those newcomers arriving through mobile devices. To remain successful in a crowded and fractured media environment, we recognized that Curtis needed to modernize its brand identity.

Curtis began its brand refresh project in October 2022 with Sametz Blackstone Associates and Prescott & Associates, research agencies that work with leading arts and educational institutions. We conducted competitive research and engaged with some 1,300 people—alumni, parents, donors, faculty, students, staff, presenters, and audience members—to better understand how the school is valued and perceived today.

Our findings were clear: Curtis is beloved by those who know the school, but despite ongoing efforts in recent years to raise awareness of Curtis, significant opportunities remain. Further, the brand must not only reflect Curtis's creative energy and artistic excellence—with teaching and learning at its core—but also its many institutional components: Curtis on Tour, the Curtis Studio label, Curtis Artist Management, and community engagement. We also crafted a concise positioning statement for the school: **Curtis is where the world's great young musicians become the leading artists, creators, and innovators in classical music.**

As part of our rebranding process, we developed a new visual system with preeminent design firm Pentagram. After more than 18 months of research, development, and design, we are proud to share a new visual identity and messaging that communicates the artistic excellence of Curtis. Based on a custom font inspired by musical gestures and concepts, and featuring a bold, red-and-black color palette, the new system will be dynamic across digital and traditional media. You'll be seeing the new brand and campaign "Curtis sounds like this" on Curtis's website, in mailings, advertisements, and signage this summer, and in the Fall 2024 issue of *Overtones*.

As for the present issue, Heidi Waleson explores the growth of chamber music at Curtis over the decades (p. 16), Patricia K. Johnson introduces us to Curtis musicians on a recent *Star Trek* cruise (p. 5), and Brian Wise speaks with the science-minded composer Nokuthula Ngwenyama (p. 12). Also read how musicians manage stage fright, about Curtis alumni working in legal careers, and how classical music has inspired Olympic athletes.

Vince Ford

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