

September 20-21, 2023

ITEM 208-2001-R0923

Request for Authorization to Award an Honorary Doctorate to Eric Funk; Montana State University

THAT

In recognition of his many career achievements and the distinction he has brought to the Montana University System, the Board of Regents grants Montana State University the authority to confer an Honorary Doctorate of Arts to Eric Funk.

EXPLANATION

Eric Funk was born in Deer Lodge, Montana and currently resides in Bozeman, Montana. Eric is an American contemporary classical composer and conductor who recently retired from a 20 year career teaching in the MSU School of Music in the College of Arts and Architecture. He taught courses to nearly 19,000 students and received numerous awards, including the 2013 James & Mary Ross Provost's Award for Excellence in Teaching, the 2009 Distinguished Service Award from the MSU Honors College, and the 2007 President's Excellence in Teaching Award. He has also hosted the Emmy-winning Montana PBS program "11th and Grant" for 14 seasons, interviewing and performing with artists across numerous musical genres.

Eric was the conductor of the Helena Symphony Orchestra in Helena, Montana and the conductor of the Gallatin Chamber Orchestra in Bozeman, Montana. Past performance venues for his works include Dvorak Hall [Prague], Lutoslawki Radio Hall [Warsaw], Symphony Hall [Riga], Carnegie Hall [NY], the Renda Theater, and the Gaudeamus International Interpreters of Contemporary Music Festival (Rotterdam). His 144 major works have earned him numerous awards and commissions, including 13 ASCAP Standard Awards, the 2001 Governor's Award for the Arts (Montana), a 2011 Innovation in the Arts Award, a 2012 Humanities Hero Award (Humanities Montana, NEH), and three Arts Commission Fellowships.

In 2020, Funk released "Requiem for a Forest" after the Bridger Foothills Fire, which was performed in October of that year by the Intermountain Opera in Bozeman, Montana. The Acappella vocal composition was set to lyrics by Richard Powers, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his novel, "The Overstory."

Eric Funk recently gifted an extensive collection of papers from his decades-long career to Montana State University's Renne Library. Funk said any future music he writes will also ultimately make its way to the MSU Library. He also generously gifted a Steinway grand piano from 1878, on which Funk composed most of his original compositions over four decades, totaling some 170 pieces. He considers it his way of connecting with further generations of the MSU community.

Eric's legacy at Montana State is indelible, and his musical creation and commitment to welcoming and meaningful music education have impacted future generations. He shared, "I wrote the music for the world. It's been a great journey, and I hope this will keep the journey going long after I'm here."

For these and his other extraordinary contributions, the Board of Regents is pleased to confer the Honorary Doctorate of Arts at Montana State University to Eric Funk and wishes him well for many years in the future.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Letter of Nomination-President Cruzado