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## **VanderCook College of Music Receives \$2.5M "Challenge Gift" for Performance Center**

*Largest donor gift in college's history depends on matching funds*

Chicago, IL – Wednesday, April 26, 2017

Chicago's VanderCook College of Music — the only college in the nation dedicated solely to music education — has received the largest donor gift in its history, courtesy of Keith Mardak, CEO and Chairman of the Board of Hal Leonard LLC of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the world's largest educational music publisher.

The \$2.5M challenge gift requires the college to raise an equal amount from other donors, with all funds designated to help the college complete renovation of its performance center. The center, located on the college's campus at the Illinois Institute of Technology, will be the college's first dedicated performance space in its 100-plus-year history.

"This opportunity is unprecedented in VanderCook's history," said Dr. Charles T. Menghini, President. "We will soon be embarking on raising the \$2.5M necessary in order to realize Mr. Mardak's gift. Once we attain this goal, we have will have an incredible space to continue our work in preparing music teachers."

In announcing the challenge gift, Mardak noted that he chose VanderCook College of Music both because of its role in music education and because of his association with Menghini. Mardak is also close with Herman Knoll, a former longtime Hal Leonard employee, and George Quinlan, President of Quinlan & Fabish Music Company, one of the nation's leading school music retailers, and a longtime Hal Leonard supporter, both of whom are members of VanderCook's Board of Trustees.

"VanderCook is the leader in the preparation of music teachers," said Mardak. "And that allows my gift to go where it will do the most good," said Mardak. "Over the years, my work at the Hal Leonard Corporation has been widely supported by those in music education, and I want to help music education continue to flourish," he said. "Hal Leonard has been, and still is, the leading publisher in the educational music market, and through this gift, I want to give back and say, 'thank you.'"

VanderCook currently leases two Mies van der Rohe buildings from the Illinois Institute of Technology, and has been renovating one of the buildings to serve as the college's

performance center. Phase one of the project began five years ago and included classrooms, teaching studios, practice rooms and storage areas. Approximately half of the 22,500-square-foot space has been renovated and is currently in use. The focal point of the project, however — the “Great Hall” that will be used for performances, concerts and events — remains ahead, and is contingent upon the college successfully meeting Mardak’s challenge.

The performance center will not only accommodate the growing needs of the college's students, but it will also allow VanderCook to play a larger role in the community and increase its outreach to school music programs in Chicago and around the globe. Some in the Chicago area may have never heard of VanderCook, but its influence is felt in music classrooms worldwide. Thousands of music teachers have earned a VanderCook degree or enrolled in one of the college’s many continuing education courses.

“We estimate that on any given day, more than a quarter of a million students are influenced by a teacher who studied at VanderCook,” said Menghini.

In addition to preparing music teachers, the college co-founded what is now the largest annual music educators’ convention in the city of Chicago — the Midwest Clinic: An International Band and Orchestra Conference. Seventy years later, the college is still integrally involved in producing and participating in the event, which recently drew 18,000 people to McCormick Place.

For more information, please contact Dr. Charles T. Menghini, President, VanderCook College of Music, at [cmenghini@vandercook.edu](mailto:cmenghini@vandercook.edu) or (312) 788-1129.

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## **ABOUT VANDERCOOK COLLEGE OF MUSIC**

VanderCook College of Music was founded in Chicago in 1909. The college was one of the first three schools to offer a degree in instrumental music education, and is the only independent college dedicated solely to music education. It remains at the center of the profession today, attracting over 10,000 music students and teachers from around the world to Chicago’s near-south side for degree programs, continuing education, clinics and concerts every year.

Students attending VanderCook earn either the Bachelor of Music Education or Master of Music Education degree. Over 2,000 VanderCook graduates are teaching in classrooms across the world, many in the greater Chicago area.