



December 9, 2022

Commissioner Clayton Christian
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
560 North Park Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-3201

Dear Commissioner Christian:

This is a request for the Board of Regents to confirm the recommendation of an honorary degree to Mr. Eric Funk, to be awarded at Montana State University's (MSU) commencement ceremony in the Fall 2023. Eric Funk was recommended by the MSU Honorary Degree Committee and MSU Faculty Senate leadership voted affirmatively on this recommendation Dec. 7, 2022.

Eric Funk (Honorary Doctor of Arts):

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 Funk has accomplished so much since he joined the music faculty over 20 years ago," said a former colleague and nominator. "He has taught more students in a single year than any other professor, hosted an Emmy-winning program on Montana PBS, won many awards and endeared himself to students and his colleagues by always being caring, nurturing and inspiring."

One former student wrote in his nomination, "Eric is the epitome of who every educator should strive to be. He is a master, if not a genius of music, and is also well versed in literature, philosophy, and rhetoric. He presents ideas and information in ways that inspire creativity and progression. Most importantly, he connects with every student on a personable and purposeful level. Erik invested in me wholeheartedly, and often believed in me more than myself at times. Erik's authentic optimism and mentorship is something I've never experienced with anyone else. Eric has poured the same energy and optimism into hundreds of other students."

Eric was conductor of the Helena Symphony Orchestra in Helena, Montana and the conductor of the Gallatin Chamber Orchestra in Bozeman, Montana. Past

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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.

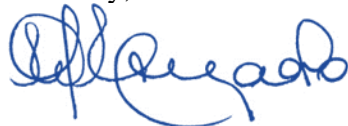
In 2020, Funk released "Requiem for a Forest" after the Bridger Foothills Fire, which was performed in October of that year by the Intermountain Opera in Bozeman, Montana. The a cappella vocal composition was set to lyrics by Richard Powers, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his novel, "The Overstory."

Eric Funk recently gifted an extensive collection of papers from his decades-long career to Montana State University's Renne Library, and 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 own original compositions over four decades, totaling some 170 pieces. He considers it his way of connecting with further generations of the MSU community. Funk shared, "Education for everyone is a part of that mission. It inspires a certain behavior, a shift and a pivot to doing things differently," he said. "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."

Eric's legacy at Montana State is indelible, and his musical creation and commitment to welcoming and meaningful music education made him a presence and personality that will be missed on MSU's campus.

In closing, Montana State University wholeheartedly supports the nomination of Eric Funk for an honorary doctorate degree from Montana State University. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration as the students, faculty and staff of Montana State University would be so proud to honor him at MSU's Fall 2023 commencement ceremony.

Sincerely,



Waded Cruzado
President