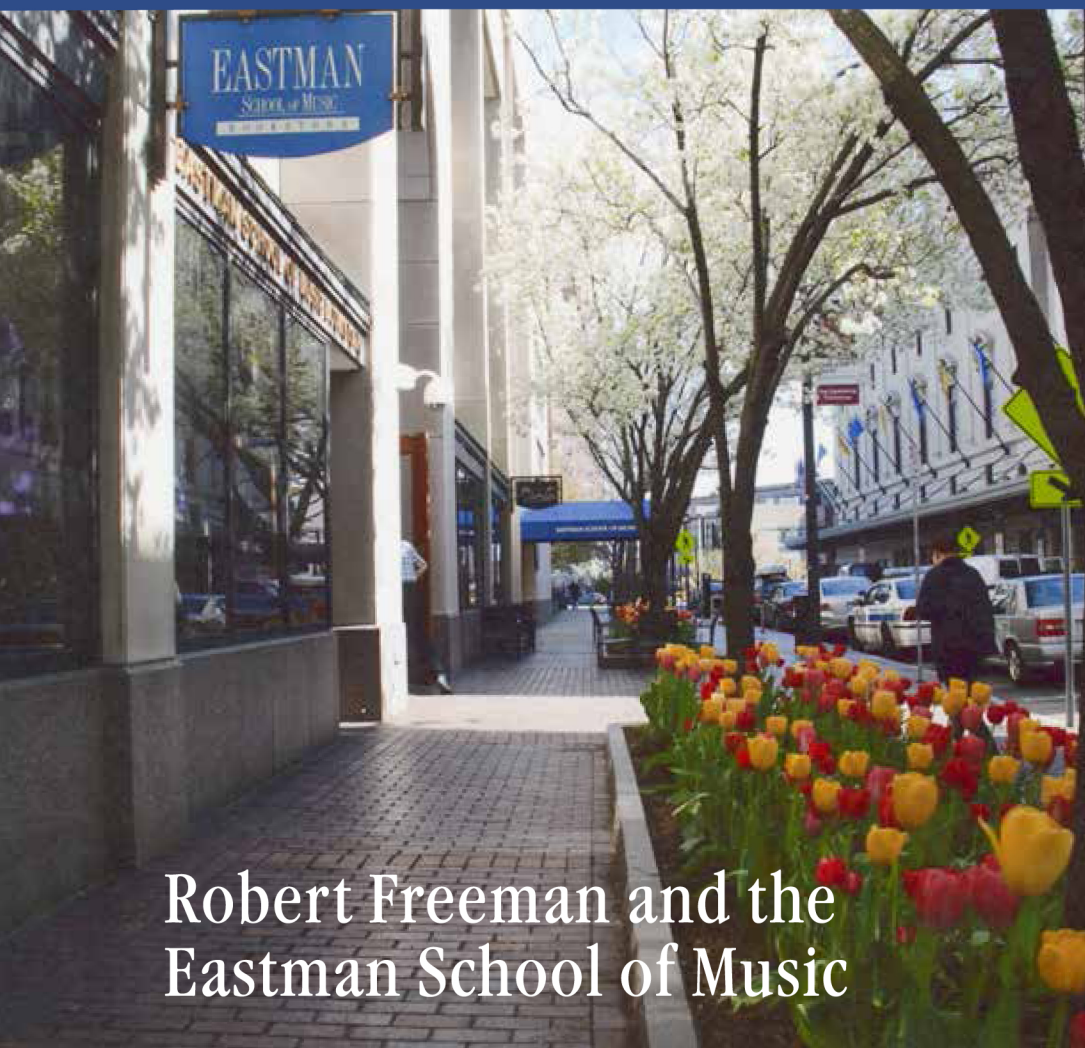


Nurturing the Love of Music



Robert Freeman and the
Eastman School of Music

VINCENT A. LENTI

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ROBERT FREEMAN AND THE
EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Vincent A. Lenti



MELIORA PRESS

An Imprint of the University of Rochester Press

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First published 2021

Meliora Press is an imprint of the
University of Rochester Press
668 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA
www.urpress.com
and Boydell & Brewer Limited
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
www.boydellandbrewer.com

hardcover ISBN-13: 978-1-64825-014-9

paperback ISBN-13: 978-1-64825-015-6

ePDF ISBN-13: 978-1-80010-362-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Lenti, Vincent A., 1938– author.

Title: Nurturing the love of music : Robert Freeman and the Eastman School of Music / Vincent A. Lenti.

Description: Rochester : Meliora Press, 2021. | Series: Meliora press ; 31 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020056198 | ISBN 9781648250149 (hardback) | ISBN 9781648250156 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Eastman School of Music. | Freeman, Robert, 1935–

Classification: LCC MT4.R6 E245 2021 | DDC 780.71/174789—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020056198>

Cover image: Gibbs Street, with Miller Center on the left and the Eastman School and Eastman Theatre on the right (photo by Adrián Sandí).

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To Paul Burgett
(1946–2018)

in gratitude for his friendship,
in recognition of his leadership at the Eastman School of Music
and at the University of Rochester,
and most especially in deep appreciation
for the inspiration he provided
to so many people throughout his years in Rochester.

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PREFACE

This book is the third volume recounting the history of the Eastman School of Music. The narrative begins following the resignation of Walter Hendl as the school's third director in 1972, an event leading to the appointment of Robert Freeman as his successor. An introduction briefly traces the history of the school from its founding in 1921 until the events of 1972. Readers who might wish to access a more complete treatment of the school's first half-century are referred to my first book, *For the Enrichment of Community Life: George Eastman and the Founding of the Eastman School of Music*, published in 2004 by Meliora Press (an imprint of the University of Rochester Press), and to my second book, *Serving a Great and Noble Art: Howard Hanson and the Eastman School of Music*, published in 2009 by Meliora Press.

The current volume is concerned with the tenure of Robert Freeman, who accepted his appointment as director in the fall of 1972 and who officially assumed his responsibilities on July 1, 1973. The title, "Nurturing the Love of Music," is a quotation from an article Freeman contributed in honor of Howard Hanson following Hanson's death in 1981. It perhaps deserves to be quoted in context:

It is my own strong conviction that, in the years ahead, *music* will need all the help we can give her. To my way of thinking, that means the development of collegiate musicians who are dedicated at least as much to the future of music as they are to the unfolding of their own careers. Certainly, it means the continuing development of young players and singers able to perform on the highest possible level. But it also implies, I think, musicians familiar with the musical literature broadly, well versed in music history and theory, and equipped to speak and write persuasively and with enthusiasm about music, and about musical coherence, to audiences of varying ages. Such professionals, we hope, will remember the importance of nurturing, throughout their careers, the love of music that brought them here in the first place.¹

Robert Freeman served as the school's director until his resignation in December 1996. During his tenure of twenty-three and a half years, he provided determined leadership to the Eastman School, exerting a strong influence on the development of the faculty and of the school's curriculum. In doing so he effected changes that were necessary to the mission of the school at a time of great challenges to the profession of music and to the training of future professional musicians. At the same time he respected the traditions of an institution from which his parents had graduated, where he had studied as a child, and where his own grandfather had been an early member of the faculty. He was also responsible for changing the physical presence of the Eastman School of Music in downtown Rochester through projects that led to important new buildings for the school.

A significant part of the story of Robert Freeman's years at the Eastman School of Music entails appointments and changes to the school's faculty. Some readers may feel that too much of the narrative is given to this particular aspect of the school's history during this period of time, but the strengths and priorities of a music school are very much reflected in its faculty. It is a central and essential part of the school's history. The faculty in 1996 at the time of Freeman's departure from Rochester consisted almost entirely of people who were appointed during his tenure. As a group they represented much of the philosophy and priorities of his administration. Not everyone who taught at the Eastman School of Music during the period 1972–96 is mentioned in this volume. This would have been an almost impossible task, and I apologize for any omission that may otherwise offend the reader.

The final two chapters of this volume perhaps need some comment. From its origins in 1921 the Eastman School of Music has maintained a commitment to providing non-credit classes and lessons to children and adults in the greater Rochester area and beyond. It is, therefore, both a collegiate institution and a community music school. The latter is presently represented by a division of the school currently known as the Eastman Community Music School. Chapter 11 provides a history of the first half-century of this commitment to the general education of the Rochester community. Except for occasional mention in the first two volumes of my history of the Eastman School of Music, this particular aspect of the school's educational mission has never really been recounted. Therefore, it deserves a place in this third volume. It was a challenge to write the chapter with objectivity, because I served as director of this program for a period of twenty-six years (1970–96). It has been

my intent in this volume to simply relate what happened rather than to personalize the narrative in any way, and I trust that I have succeeded in doing so.

Chapter 12 also needs a word of explanation. Although the current volume specifically deals with the period 1972–96, this final chapter recounts in summary fashion the major developments at the Eastman School of Music since Robert Freeman's departure in 1996. It seemed appropriate to add this information, especially in view of the forthcoming centennial celebration of the school's founding. It will be the task of some future historian to relate this information in greater detail. I need to express my special thanks to Daniel Zager, head librarian at the Sibley Music Library; James Doser, director of the Institute for Music Leadership; David Higgs, professor of organ; and Jamal Rossi, Joan and Martin Messinger Dean of the Eastman School of Music, for their assistance in compiling the information needed to write this particular chapter.

I owe a debt of gratitude to so many people. First, and perhaps foremost, I wish to acknowledge the late Douglas Lowry, who served as dean of the Eastman School from 2007 to 2013 and who so greatly encouraged and supported my continued efforts as the school's historian, and also to thank his successor as dean, Jamal Rossi, who has been a consistent friend and supporter of all my activities as a member of the Eastman community, not the least of which has been his encouragement of my work as the school historian. Also of great personal importance to me has been the assistance of Robert Freeman and the total cooperation that he has shown to me throughout this entire project. It was my privilege to serve as a member of the school's faculty and administration during his tenure as director, and I acknowledge with a sense of deep gratitude his friendship and support. I am also most grateful to David Peter Coppen, Eastman School of Music Archivist and head of Special Collections at the Sibley Music Library, without whose assistance this volume could never have been written. I am also most grateful to Melissa Mead at Rush Rhees Library, who serves as the John M. & Barbara Keil University Archivist and Rochester Collections Librarian. Like her predecessors Neil Bunker and Nancy Martin, Mead has provided support and access to archival records that have been absolutely essential to my work as historian at the Eastman School of Music. When mentioned in the notes, collections at Rush Rhees Library and the Sibley Music Library are abbreviated as RRL and SML respectively. Special thanks are also in order to Sonia Kane, editorial director of the University of Rochester Press, and to her staff. Finally, very special thanks are also due to Alice

Meyer at the Eastman School of Music, who so patiently and thoroughly served as my proof-reader and who provided highly valued advice and professional expertise throughout the process of writing this volume.

All photographs and illustrations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the Eastman School Archives, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, and are used by permission.

Vincent A. Lenti
June 1, 2019

Note

1. Robert Freeman, "On the Need for Bridging Music's Islands," in *In Memoriam, Howard Hanson: The Future of Musical Education in America*, ed. Donald J. Shetler (Rochester, Eastman School of Music Press, 1984).

INTRODUCTION

The Eastman School of Music owes its origins to the combined vision of two very remarkable men. The first of these was millionaire philanthropist George Eastman (1854–1932), whose vision for his adopted city of Rochester included a strong belief that music could be of immeasurable benefit to the community. The second person was Rush Rhees (1860–1939), who became the third president of the University of Rochester in the year 1900. His leadership during his thirty-five years as president succeeded in transforming what was essentially a small liberal arts college into a modern university. Rhees and Eastman worked together on many civic causes of common interest, and among these was a small but promising music school that had opened in 1913 adjacent to the university campus. The two men believed that the future of music in Rochester depended at least in part on the success of this music school. When its future was in question because of financial concerns, Eastman proposed to purchase the corporate and property rights from the owner and then transfer the ownership to the University of Rochester.

The school in question was known as the D.K.G. Institute of Musical Art. It had been founded in 1913 by Alf Klingenberg and Hermann Dossenbach. In 1914 it acquired a third partner/owner, Oscar Gareissen, but by 1918 both Dossenbach and Gareissen had left the enterprise, leaving Klingenberg as the sole owner. Eastman's purchase of the school in 1918 most likely prevented its demise. The following year the institute was transferred to the University of Rochester, and at about the same time an announcement was made that George Eastman was going to provide the school with magnificent new facilities on the east side of downtown Rochester, about a half-mile from the university's main campus on Prince Street. The new school building, now appropriately known as the Eastman School of Music, opened in September 1921. The adjoining Eastman Theatre opened a year later.

The theater was envisioned by Eastman as being part of his proposal to reach the broadest possible audience by using motion pictures as a vehicle for promoting the enjoyment and appreciation of good music. Motion pictures were the most popular entertainment at the time, and the silent films of the day needed to be accompanied by music. In smaller theaters pianists were hired to do this. In larger theaters movies were accompanied by theater organists and, in the largest theaters, by orchestras. Going to the movies in those times involved more than just seeing the featured film, since the “show” was supplemented by instrumental music, singing, dancing, and other stage presentations. George Eastman proposed using these stage presentations as a means of exposing movie audiences to very high quality music.

The movie shows took place six days a week, with Thursdays being reserved for concerts. The hope was that movie patrons would be stimulated by the music they heard at the movie shows, and then be interested and anxious to return to the theater for a concert. It was a grand experiment with a lofty goal. It was also financially unfeasible and consistently lost money. Therefore, after operating the theater for only a little more than six years, the school leased it to Paramount Picture Corporation. But even Paramount could not run the enterprise without financial loss, and the history of the Eastman Theatre as a movie palace came to an end in 1931.

Alf Klingenberg was named the first director of the Eastman School of Music, but his resignation was requested after he had held that position for only two years. The 1923–24 school year witnessed efforts to identify a suitable new director, and in September of 1924 Howard Hanson arrived in Rochester to assume directorship of the school. He was not quite twenty-eight years old and would remain as the school’s director for the next forty years. Hanson brought to Rochester a vision for a comprehensive music school that functioned as an integral part of a university, a school that welcomed equally the scholar, the performer, the composer, and the educator. Above all he was committed to a leadership that would develop the new Eastman School of Music as an institution that was thoroughly American in its outlook, goals, and methods.

At the time of Hanson’s arrival, a basic bachelor of music curriculum was already in place. However, a majority of the students were enrolled in a certificate program rather than pursuing an academic degree. This was somewhat of the norm for “conservatory” training of music students. Hanson, however, was thoroughly committed to the idea of eliminating the certificate program of study and developing a strong undergraduate program. The Eastman School quickly

became a leader in national efforts to establish, promote, and regulate the curriculum for the bachelor of music degree. In future years it would similarly exhibit leadership in promoting graduate study through the awarding of the master of music degree, and through the creation of a new professional doctorate, the doctor of musical arts degree. Hanson was also a passionate advocate for supporting the work of American composers. The annual American Composers Concerts were inaugurated in 1925, to which was added in 1931 an annual Festival of American Music. These events, which continued throughout Hanson's lengthy tenure, gave countless numbers of American composers an opportunity to hear their works performed at a time when such opportunities were severely limited.

The Sibley Music Library, now the largest and most comprehensive academic music library in North America, and the overall third largest music collection in the United States, has been part of the Eastman School of Music from the founding of the school in 1921. Its origins, however, predate the school. In 1904 Hiram Watson Sibley donated approximately 2,000 music-related volumes to the University of Rochester library, and the collection was named "The Sibley Musical Library," a name that persisted until the 1930s. When the Eastman School opened in 1921, the collection was moved from its location in the university's library building on the Prince Street campus to new quarters on the ground floor of the new music school building.

During its earliest years, the Eastman School was involved in pioneering efforts to broadcast live music. The first such broadcasts were in the summer of 1922 and involved the newly licensed Rochester radio station WHAM. Eventually concerts and educational programming from the school would be aired nationally by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). Through Howard Hanson's leadership the school also championed the cause of American music through recordings. This involved recordings issued by RCA Victor and Columbia in the late 1930s and 1940s, and then at later date a much larger and more comprehensive series of recordings issued by Mercury.

It was during Hanson's tenure that the Eastman Wind Ensemble was formed, giving its first concert on February 8, 1953. The concept of a symphonic wind ensemble was a product of the leadership and vision of Frederick Fennell, who served as the group's leader until he left Eastman in 1962 and was succeeded by A. Clyde Roller. The Eastman Wind Ensemble directed by its founder Frederick Fennell made a celebrated series of recordings that were issued by Mercury Records. In 1958 Howard Hanson founded the Eastman

Philharmonia, bringing together about sixty players drawn from the best talent available at the school. Three years later the United States Department of State selected the Eastman Philharmonia to make a three-month tour of Europe and the Middle East under the auspices of the President's Special International Program for Cultural Presentations. The tour extended from November 24, 1961, until February 25, 1962. In that period of time, Hanson and his orchestra of Eastman students presented forty-nine critically acclaimed concerts in sixteen countries, including the Soviet Union.

Walter Hendl succeeded Hanson in 1964, becoming the third director of the Eastman School of Music. The selection process that led to his appointment as the school's new leader was not without controversy, since Hendl had not even been among those candidates considered by the official search committee. He was personally selected for the position by W. Allen Wallis, then holding the title of president of the University of Rochester, who followed the recommendation of a number of people from outside of the university community, people in whom he had great confidence. Hendl was a man without any significant experience in higher education, but he successfully addressed a number of issues that needed leadership and a change in direction for the good of the Eastman School of Music. Unfortunately, Hendl also brought to his new position a history of personal problems that increasingly affected his ability to lead the school. In early 1972 the students rose up in opposition to his continued leadership, demanding his resignation. This occurred in the middle of the school's gala celebration of its fiftieth anniversary.

In an attempt to quell the rising opposition to Hendl's leadership, W. Allen Wallis, now holding the title of chancellor of the University of Rochester, proposed to create a new senior administrative position at Eastman entitled dean of faculty. Presumably much of the actual day-to-day administration of the school would be transferred to this new person. A faculty committee was appointed to search for an appropriate person to become the school's first dean of faculty. However, the chancellor's proposal did little to quiet the rising opposition to Hendl's continued leadership. On May 23, 1972, it was announced that Hendl had resigned as director for reasons of health. His resignation brought an end to the crisis in leadership at the Eastman School of Music. The search for a new director of the school could now begin.

Chapter One

THE NEW DIRECTOR OF THE EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

The process of searching for someone to replace Walter Hendl as director of the Eastman School of Music was unusual in that a faculty search committee had been in place for two months prior to Hendl's resignation. Although the committee was initially charged by Chancellor Wallis to seek someone to accept the newly proposed position of dean of faculty, it was understood from the beginning of their deliberations that they were seeking someone qualified to ultimately become director of the school. The members of the search committee were Samuel Adler (composition), Edward G. Evans, Jr. (musicology), Robert Gauldin (theory), Eugene List (piano), Verne Reynolds (French horn), and Zvi Zeitlin (violin).

The committee worked carefully to develop an initial listing of fourteen candidates for the position of dean of faculty. On May 15 they communicated to Chancellor Wallis that their listing had grown to sixty-five names, a number that they then reduced to twelve. Of these, eight were deemed to be of the highest interest, and these had been thoroughly reviewed. Their comprehensive report to Wallis identified the top four prospects. The first of these was Grant Beglarian, dean of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Southern California, and the second was Leonard Meyer, professor at the University of Chicago. However, in a separate communication on the same day, the committee indicated that it was difficult to choose between Beglarian and Meyer, commenting that they "... were impressed with Leonard Meyer's brilliant mind, scholarship and intellectual prowess."¹ There was much to admire about the man. Born in 1918, he had studied at Columbia University, where he received a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy and

a master of arts degree in music. This was followed by studies at the University of Chicago, leading to a PhD in history of culture. But Meyer was also a composer and had studied with Stefan Wolpe (1902–72), Otto Luening 1900–96), and Aaron Copland (1900–90). In 1946 he became a member of the music department at the University of Chicago and was appointed professor there in 1961. The committee's only concern was Meyer's lack of experience in a conservatory environment.

Negotiations between Wallis and Meyer ensued, but much to everyone's disappointment, Meyer wrote to the chancellor on May 26, 1972, indicating that, "despite the strong attraction of the challenge which the position offers, and despite the generosity of your terms and the persuasiveness of your arguments, I have . . . decided to decline."² By this time Walter Hendl had resigned as director, and the committee's efforts could now be openly focused on seeking his successor. Attention was now directed towards Grant Beglarian. Born in 1927 in Tsibilisi, Georgia (Soviet Union), Beglarian had come to the United States in 1947 and studied composition at the University of Michigan, where he earned a bachelor of music degree in 1950, a master of music degree in 1952, and his doctor of musical arts degree in 1958. He had also studied with Aaron Copland at Tanglewood and had become an important and respected composer. At the time when the Eastman search committee was considering him for the Eastman directorship, Beglarian had been dean of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Southern California for three years, ultimately holding that position until 1982. Of particular interest to the search committee, perhaps especially to Samuel Adler, Beglarian had been director of MENC's Contemporary Music Project from 1965 until 1969.³ In that capacity he had visited Eastman on several occasions. There was a general feeling that this was a person who could equally satisfy the expectations of both the Eastman community and the university administration. With the chancellor in agreement, Beglarian was invited to Rochester for a comprehensive interview. At the end of his third day of interviews and meetings in Rochester, he was offered the position of director of the Eastman School of Music. Several weeks later, Beglarian contacted Chancellor Wallis and requested a second visit to Rochester, this time accompanied by his wife and two children. At the time, he also indicated that he would be able to give a final answer to the offer of becoming director of the Eastman School of Music by the middle of September. The Beglarians arrived in Rochester on August 5, 1972, for another look at the city, university, and school. Yet the matter was not so simply concluded. Although

everyone felt that the search for Hendl's successor had concluded, they were to be disappointed. Beglarian sent a letter to W. Allen Wallis near the end of September, writing as follows:

With deepest regret I must decline your offer to head the Eastman School of Music. There are very few greater opportunities and rewards open to an administrator than the directorship of your distinguished school. In the end I had to choose to remain here at USC because of the responsibilities I feel towards realizing the great expectations we have created in the minds of all elements at USC and the community.⁴

Attempting to salvage the situation, the university chancellor flew to California to try to get Beglarian to reconsider the offer, but it was to no avail. Another candidate had declined the Eastman directorship.

When the search committee next met with W. Allen Wallis, there was general disappointment and a sense of frustration that the search process needed to start all over again. Moreover, there was a feeling that perhaps the committee should look beyond the eight finalists that they had selected from their original list of sixty-five. Accordingly, they turned to three applications that they had previously received but had not opened because they were unsolicited. The third of these letters, which they now proceeded to open and examine, was from a young man whose name was Robert Freeman. At the time, Freeman was associate professor of musicology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He had been born in Rochester in 1935 and received his earliest music education in the Eastman School of Music preparatory department. His grandfather, Henry (Harry) Freeman, had been the first trumpet teacher at the Eastman School, serving in that capacity from 1924 to 1927. Robert Freeman's parents were both Eastman graduates. His father, Henry S. Freeman, became a member of the bass section of the Rochester Philharmonic following his graduation in 1930. He studied at Eastman with Nelson Watson, who was the first double bass teacher at the school when hired in 1924 and who continued in that post until his death in 1945. Robert Freeman's mother, Florence Knope, was a fine violinist and had been born and raised in Rochester. But in 1945 the Freeman family left Rochester so that Henry S. Freeman could accept an offer to become a member of the bass section in the Boston Symphony Orchestra. However, Robert Freeman still had a connection with Rochester through his aunt, Gertrude Guerin, who was a kindergarten teacher in the area. It was his aunt who

happened to bring him a copy of the Rochester daily newspaper, the *Democrat & Chronicle*, which included an article discussing the resignation of Walter Hendl as director of the Eastman School of Music and the university's search for his successor. Although Freeman had never previously thought of a career in administration, the idea of applying for the position at Eastman intrigued him. With a self-confidence typical of Freeman throughout his career, he sent in his application, which was finally opened by the search committee following their failure to recruit either Meyer or Beglarian.

Freeman's recollections concerning his application letter provide valuable insight into his character and thought process. Part of the vision that he articulated with special boldness concerned the Sibley Music Library:

My second paragraph had to do with defining the Eastman School as something radically different from a Juilliard imitator in the Snowbelt. Here I argued that the Eastman School had a huge sunk asset of already-committed funds in the Sibley Library, then by far the largest collection of any music school in the world and the third largest music collection in America, exceeded in size only by the music collections of the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library. I suggested that, if the Eastman School really wanted to compete with Juilliard on its own Lincoln Center turf, one ought to cut the Sibley Library budget by three quarters, putting the funds saved into faculty salaries and student financial aid. As an alternative, I proposed the strengthening of the musicology and theory faculties with men and women better able to exploit Sibley for the good of the school as a whole.⁵

His thoughtful, well-prepared, and perhaps even somewhat provocative application prompted the search committee to recommend that Freeman be considered for the director's position. He was then invited to Rochester for a series of interviews and meetings. Apparently, he made a good impression on everyone. But Robert Sproull, the university's president, had been out of town at the time of the interviews. Therefore, he arranged to visit Freeman at M.I.T. His visit also provided Sproull with an opportunity to speak to various colleagues at M.I.T. about what sort of person this young applicant for the Eastman directorship might be. Freeman made a request to come to Rochester for a second time, this time with his family. This took place November 17–19, 1972. It was a rigorous schedule, entailing meetings throughout each day with members of

the faculty and administration, as well as with students and members of the Eastman School Board of Managers.

The final day included a 10:30 a.m. visit to Hutchison House on East Avenue, which served at the time as the residence of the school's director, followed by a luncheon at the Country Club of Rochester with Chancellor Wallis and President Sproull. After Freeman's luncheon meeting, Samuel Adler, who was chair of the search committee, received a call from Wallis indicating that he and Sproull were convinced that Robert Freeman was the man to whom they should offer the position of director of the Eastman School of Music. That offer already had been made to him at the luncheon meeting, and Freeman accepted it by telephone after he had returned to Boston.

On November 21, 1972, the university issued a news release announcing the appointment of Robert Freeman. A week later, the Executive Committee of the university's Board of Trustees passed a resolution that stated, "The President with the approval of the Chancellor recommends that: ROBERT FREEMAN be appointed Professor of Musicology with unlimited tenure in the Eastman School of Music, effective February 1, 1973; and Director of the Eastman School of Music from February 1, 1973 to June 30, 1978."⁶

Eastman's new director came to the school with impressive credentials. Following his family's move to Boston, he had been educated at Milton Academy in Milton, Massachusetts, and then attended Harvard University from 1953 to 1957, graduating with a BA degree *summa cum laude* in 1957. From the time of his arrival in Boston until his graduation from Harvard, Freeman had studied piano at the Longy School. At the time he entered Harvard University, he studied piano with Gregory Tucker (1908–71), but subsequently took summer lessons with Artur Balsam (1906–94) in 1955 and with Rudolf Serkin (1902–91) in 1956. But piano was not his only interest as a performer, for Robert Freeman was also a serious student of the oboe. He pursued his oboe studies in Boston with Fernand Gillet (1882–1980), who had been principal oboe of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1920 to 1946, as well as being a long-time and highly respected teacher at the New England Conservatory of Music. In addition to his studies of piano and oboe, Freeman also became interested in conducting, studying conducting at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) and Lukas Foss (1922–2009) during the summers of 1952 and 1953.

Following his graduation from Harvard, Freeman was selected to receive a Harvard Sheldon Traveling Fellowship for the 1957–58 academic year, and then entered Princeton University in September