

*Robert Blocker*  
*Administrative Bio*

Robert Blocker is now in his fifth five-year term as the Henry and Lucy Moses Dean of Music at Yale University, a position to which he was first appointed in 1995. He is widely acknowledged as being one of the nation's most respected arts administrators, one whom Yale University President Peter Salovey has described as "a transformative leader."

After completing his second term as the Dean of Music at Yale, Blocker served in 2005-2006 as Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He returned to Yale in 2006 to continue positioning the School of Music for success in the 21st century. Former Yale University President Richard Levin said Blocker "is praised as a superb and visionary leader with a tremendous commitment to students, faculty, and staff at the School." Blocker holds a tenured appointment as Professor of Piano at the School of Music and is also an affiliate Professor of Leadership Strategies at Yale University's School of Management.

Prior to his Yale University appointment, Blocker was the founding Dean of the UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture and Professor of Piano. He also held a joint appointment in arts management at the Anderson School of Management. He also served as Dean at the University of North Texas College of Music, the Baylor University School of Music, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Following baccalaureate studies at Furman University (BA, 1968), Blocker earned graduate degrees in piano performance (MM, 1970; DMA, 1972) at the University of North Texas under the tutelage of the eminent American pianist Richard Cass. He also studied with renowned concert artist Jorge Bolet. He was a Fellow at Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management in 1986 and is the recipient of three honorary degrees.

Dean Blocker's leadership initiatives, with particular success in securing substantial endowments and considerably improving facilities, have consistently elevated public and private institutions to higher plateaus of excellence. Under his leadership, the Yale School of Music's endowment has grown from \$29 million to \$365 million, including a transformative \$100 million gift that made the School tuition-free. During Blocker's tenure as Dean, there have been unprecedented improvements to the School of Music's campus. These include a complete renovation of Sprague Memorial Hall and the recent completion of the remarkable Adams Center for Musical Arts, which connects a newly restored Hendrie Hall to the previously renovated Leigh Hall by way of a new, state-of-the-art facility.

Other such endeavors include establishing and procuring an endowment for the Institute for Church Music at Baylor, conducting the first curriculum review and administrative reorganization at the University of North Texas, which resulted in the School of Music becoming the College of Music. At UCLA, he established the Department of World Arts and Cultures, and the Center for Digital Arts, and won approval from the University of California board of regents for a doctor of musical arts degree program. With colleagues at Yale, he reimagined the UCLA Center for Digital Arts as the Digital Media Center for the Arts.

One of the hallmarks of his administrative career is a longstanding commitment to racial and gender equality. He founded Hispanic Friends Pro-Musica while at the University of North Texas and has co-chaired the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration in New Haven. During his tenures at UCLA and Yale, women have received major administrative appointments, and salary equity has been achieved in senior ranks. Under his leadership, minority student recruitment made notable gains at the University of North Texas and UCLA, as it has at Yale.

Frequently sought as a consultant on leadership strategies and the management of cultural assets, Blocker has been retained by educational institutions, nonprofit arts organizations, government agencies, private foundations, and a wide range of businesses. His work includes being a facilitator, mediator, and author of strategic-planning documents.

While at Yale, Blocker has assumed a wide range of committee assignments. Among these are seats on the Fulbright Scholar Selection Committee, *Yale Alumni Magazine* board of directors, Faculty Committee on Athletics, Tercentennial Steering Committee (chair of major events), Information Technology Services Committee, University Budget Committee, Committee for the City of New Haven Initiatives, and University Church Council. He is also a member of the University's Cabinet Steering Committee, a select group of advisors to the Yale University president.

Deeply committed to community, Blocker began the ArtsCorp program at UCLA, a venture in which students, faculty, and alumni volunteer to provide arts instruction at public schools where such programs have been eliminated. Shortly after his arrival at Yale, the New Haven Arts and Business Alliance was organized to reclaim and renew the commercial and artistic life of the city — an enterprise that is now in place and enjoying success. Blocker also forged a coalition with the Yale School of Music, the Yale College Class of 1957, and the New Haven Public Schools to launch the Music in Schools Initiative, in which graduate-student teaching artists from the School of Music support the work of certified public-school music educators in the New Haven Public Schools. Blocker also recently oversaw the expansion of the School of Music's jazz offerings.

Blocker's many contributions to the music community include service on the advisory boards of the Avery Fisher Artist Program and the Stoeger Prize at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Gilmore Artist Board, Chamber Music II, and the Curatorium of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. He was appointed by Gov. Richard Riley (later President Bill Clinton's secretary of education) to serve as the first Chair of the Board of Visitors of the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities and is a former Director and executive committee member of the Cliburn Foundation.

In 2000, Steinway & Sons featured Blocker with Van Cliburn and Billy Joel in a film commemorating the tercentennial year of the piano. More recently, Blocker facilitated a partnership between the Yale School of Music and Naxos resulting in a series of recordings by the School's students. In 2003, Blocker was inducted into the Grolier Club, a society of bibliophiles in New York City. In November 2004, the Yale University Press published *The Robert Shaw Reader*, a collection of Shaw's writings edited by Blocker. The book garnered

immediate acclaim, is in its third printing, and is currently being translated into Chinese. He is currently working on a book titled *Music: The Currency of Hope*.

In addition to contributions that he has made to the music profession as an administrator, advisor, and educator, Blocker has enriched the lives of many through internationally acclaimed performances on the concert stage. Blocker has been described by the *Los Angeles Times* as a pianist of “great skill and accomplishment” who performs with “a measurable virtuoso bent and considerable musical sensitivity.” *The Korea Times* has lauded the “great vigor” of his performances, and *The Straits Times* (Singapore) has recognized the “beauty and sincerity” of his playing. According to the Mexican newspaper *La Provincia*, “He is a pianist of purified technique – one could say perfect ... he has an enormous sensitivity, the ability to recognize the emotional message of the work and pour it out in the performance.”

Blocker’s travels have frequently resulted in strategic and lasting connections between institutions in different parts of the world. Internationally, he has been highly selective in terms of institutional affiliations, which have included the establishment of a Cultural Olympiad in collaboration with the Central Conservatory of Music of Beijing, where he is an honorary professor and an honorary fellow. An agreement between the Yale School of Music and the Central Conservatory of Music provides for students and faculty from each institution to live, work, and perform together for extended periods of time. Other international programs he has established are located in Paris, Vienna, London, Mannheim, Milan, Seoul, and Shanghai. Blocker curates a music series at the Yale Center Beijing and is the Senior Artistic Advisor for Global Affairs for the National Youth Orchestra of China. He is an inaugural member of the Mariinsky Foundation of America’s Board of Advisors, having been appointed by Valery Gergiev.

Blocker has received numerous awards and honors for his work, including the Seton Elm and Ivy Award (Yale), outstanding professor awards for teaching at Brevard College (North Carolina) and Baylor University, the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Brevard Music Center, the Distinguished Alumni Award at Furman University, and the President’s Citation for Extraordinary Service at the University of North Texas. He has received South Carolina’s Order of the Palmetto (the highest distinction awarded for service) and was made an honorary Texan by Gov. Mark White.

Blocker is a member of Furman University’s Board of Trustees and a member of Connecticut Public Broadcasting’s Board of Trustees. He has been a member of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra’s Board of Directors since 1995.

He appears regularly on national radio and television programs as an artist and commentator.