

The question I hear most these days is, "How are things going at the Groton site?" My answer? "Things are going well. Progress is fast, but slow!" Fast because the foundation is 70% poured! Slow, because 2020 seems a long way off. But then I remember how quickly the last three years have gone by:

Three years ago, we were looking for land. It got discouraging. The options we explored were *not* working out. It would take until the summer of 2015 for it all to come together in Groton on Old Ayer Road.

On **November 5, 2015** we had our first Design Team meeting. Literally we were just meeting one another. Alan Joslin, our principal architect who is with us tonight, said: "This project will change your organization. Tell us what is unique about you? What must you absolutely preserve?" Our answer was clear: We must be the same organization at our core – our mission and values, welcoming culture and generous spirit cannot waver.

One year ago, we were in the throes of the Site Plan approval process with the Groton Planning Board. We shared our vision of a musical destination – a world class facility in a magical, compelling setting where students, faculty, orchestra members, guest artists, and audiences will be together, under one roof. A place where the guiding principle in all our work – the integration of music education and performance - will be fully realized. We talked about our key programs: orchestra, chamber music & jazz concerts, private lessons, ensembles, lectures, and our music philanthropy, like our Bach's Lunch concerts.

Mostly we spent a lot of time in the weeds: reviewing detailed site plans, renderings, traffic studies, parking plans, drainage, building size/footprint, lighting designs. A small but vocal group was quite unhappy with our plans. It was disheartening. Though *that* feeling was *counterbalanced* by the support of our many Groton friends, some of you in this room, who wrote letters to the Planning Board, packed the room at critical hearings and spoke up when it really counted. The support inspired and comforted us and made a difference to the Planning Board members, too. We got our approval.

And just over a week ago, we received our final Building Permit from the Town of Groton. We are full steam ahead!

While over 150 people are hard at work on our project - on Old Ayer Road and all over the country - here on King Street, we are working every day to live into this vision. We're taking steps to become the organization we will *need to be* in three short years by growing our student body,

our audiences, and our donor base. You may have noticed some of our new program offerings: Ukulele Club, Suzuki violin & guitar, the New Horizons Concert Band, Kids Musical Revue, Songs in Motion and our Full Youth Concert Orchestra and a happening Jazz and Contemporary music series.

And I hope you've noticed the change in our marketing materials – lively and vibrant – just like us!

Clearly, the efforts are paying off. In Fiscal 2017, the Music School had 1,384 students. Those students performed 1,752 times in 127 events. Over 6,000 people attended our orchestra and other professional concerts. And we served over 6,000 people through our outreach programs. Our Threshold Singers doubled their impact, singing at 65 bedsides in 20 different towns, as well as 15 hospice memorial services in the community – in total serving over 700 people.

More good news: After 10 years offering afterschool lessons in Band instruments in the Ayer Shirley School District, we achieved our original goal: The district has reintegrated instrument instruction into their elementary curriculum. While we will continue to offer *violin* there, we have reallocated our resources to provide band instrument and guitar instruction to students in grades 5-8 at the McKay Arts Academy in Fitchburg, a Title 1 School. Lessons started on Thursday!

On Monday we learned we will \$10,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts to support our work with composer David Amram whose piece *Greenwich Village Portraits* is being premiered by the Orchestra in February. The grant also supports a concert at Fitchburg Art Museum featuring Indian Hill jazz faculty and Fitchburg High School jazz students performing with Amram himself.

Alan said: "This project will change your organization." Yes, and change is not easy. We will be much larger. Our budget, staff, IT systems, infrastructure, and our programs will grow, *a lot*. The climb from here – to there – is steep.

And above all: We must be responsible stewards of our new world-class Music Center and the stunning land that has been entrusted to us.

And we will do just that.

Two weeks ago, our Board of Directors and Senior Staff took on the challenge at our Annual retreat. Lisa Fiorentino, our exceptional COO, presented the first iteration of a 6-year Business Plan that takes the organization through 2023. It projects the increased expenses and the increased revenue streams we will need to support and sustain our operations in Groton. Also at the retreat, the Board voted unanimously to move forward with a substantial fundraising campaign that puts us in the same league as other major cultural institutions in Greater Boston. We are so fortunate to have Jon Panek as Chair of the Campaign, bringing his energy, enthusiasm and considerable experience to this important initiative!

Our work going forward is to tell everyone about what we are creating: A world-class concert hall to showcase our wonderful orchestra – where Bruce can program works like *Carmina Burana*, or Holst’s *The Planets* with NASA photos, or the Saint-Saens *Organ Symphony*. Imagine busloads of school children coming to hear a live symphony orchestra for the first time. A place for music of all kinds, all year round including summer Pops concerts with lawn seating, blue grass, jazz and folk festivals. And a modern music school with 35 studios, including 8 ensemble rooms for our growing programs, and a café for parents. Who wouldn’t want to be part of this exciting journey?

I am confident of our future success because of all of *you*. *You* brought us to this point. *You* made who we are today, possible. And we cannot thank you enough. Now, with building permit in hand, it is time to bring more people into the fold. *Together*, we will build on this strong foundation by sharing our amazing story with like-minded people in our communities *who hardly know us now*: people who will hear our story, engage with us, fall in love with the organization, and want to be on the ground floor of our exciting and inspiring future.

Last Sunday at church, a mother tearfully lit a candle of gratitude for Indian Hill Music’s impact on her son. This past spring Charlie, a high school sophomore and tenor sax player, declared his intention to commit to music studies after high school. His vision: to attend Berklee College of Music. To get there, he needed an accelerated level of instruction, guidance and mentorship that were unavailable at his school.

Indian Hill Music School has been that vital resource. He has found a caring environment that supports risk-taking and creativity—evidenced most recently by the November 3 jazz jam. It was Charlie’s first jam session playing with total strangers and he felt welcomed and supported by the other musicians on the stage (nearly all adults). The crowning moment? Being invited to join one of our adult jazz ensembles!

*Here are Charlie’s words: “I had never received professional instruction on saxophone. And even though I started late in the school year, my instructor Frank Bonanno listened to my goals, gave me his full attention, created a plan, and **pushed** me at every lesson. In a few weeks I’d learned more about my horn, theory, and musicianship than I ever had. This summer, even though he wasn’t teaching, Frank made himself available via phone and email as I was prepping for a jazz ensemble audition for the UMass Lowell Summer Band camp. With his help, I passed my first-ever audition and was placed in the octet—the camp’s highest-level jazz group. Without Indian Hill, I wouldn’t be the musician I am now, and I wouldn’t be getting the opportunities or meeting the people I am now. Indian Hill is opening up my world, personally as well as musically.”*

I sincerely thank you for making it possible for us to open up Charlie’s world. Over the coming years, working together, let’s open the world of music to everyone in our region.

Susan Randazzo
Executive Director, Indian Hill Music