

indian hill **music**

Evening of Gratitude – November 13, 2021 **Remarks – Lisa Fiorentino, Chief Executive Officer**

Good evening everyone and thank you for joining us tonight. We are so happy to have this opportunity to gather together and celebrate all the ways that music continues to inspire, energize, and connect us.

While tonight I want to focus mostly on the present and the future, I would be remiss in not touching upon the past. The last year has certainly been difficult for all of us personally and for our organization. It was a time of uncertainty, isolation, frustration, and stress. But, it was also a time of perseverance, resilience, flexibility, and creativity. Long time voice faculty member Susan Bonito expressed how we all felt during those months when she said: “I am honored to be part of such a wonderful, talented, and intelligent group of artists, staff, and music lovers who have pulled together during an unprecedented time in our history.”

Private lessons were remote but the learning and one on one interaction continued. In person concerts were cancelled but we treated our audiences to live streams with wonderful artists and an up close view of their fabulous performances. The orchestra was silent but we had the chance to learn our musician’s stories as they shared aspects of their journeys and we also enjoyed video performances of small groups of our musicians. One patron remarked that these performances “provided much needed relief from these trying times.” I am proud of the fact that throughout the pandemic, we have remained a strong organization dedicated to being the premium music education and performance resource for our community.

Looking at the present, while we decided to hold tonight’s event virtually, I want you to know that we have resumed organization-wide in-person activities with appropriate safety protocols in place. I am pleased to report that things have been busy and going very well!

Our teachers are back in their studios teaching our students in private lessons and it has been wonderful for them to connect directly with each other and to hear our building filled with music again. Our large ensembles such as youth orchestras, youth wind ensemble, and youth choruses are gathering again and students are busily preparing for their winter concerts and recitals. Our adult ensembles like Big Band, Ukulele Club, and our Flute Orchestra are playing and learning together and reconnecting with each other through their music making.

While enrollment in our school is not where it was pre-pandemic, we have a solid student base and new students are coming to our school every week. We held our Free Class Day in person at the end of September and also held our first Free Traditional Music Day to welcome many new students to our school so they could try out a class and see what making music at Indian Hill is all about. We are holding meet the instrument classes to help students pick the right instrument to begin their musical journey. We offered open ensemble rehearsals to give our community a sense of what it is like to make new friends and make music with each other. We

know that human beings crave social interaction. Sharing live music again has truly helped to fill the void created by the pandemic and is helping us all to heal from the troubling recent past.

On the performance side, live performances are back! We resumed our Headliner concerts with a season opener featuring GRAMMY winning jazz pianist Sullivan Fortner who wowed the audience earning a standing ovation - and an encore! We have a Headliner season featuring several amazing artists performing everything from traditional music to jazz and global music to bluegrass. These entertaining and fun evenings give a taste of what is to come from us in the future.

And, I am thrilled to share with you that our orchestra performed live on stage in September for the first time in 18 months. When Bruce walked out on the stage, the applause lasted a bit longer than usual, the volume was a bit louder, and I must say that the excitement was palpable. It was an emotional moment for Bruce, our musicians, our staff, and our audience. While attendance is lower than we would like, we understand that it will take time for all of our subscribers and concert-goers to join us again but we are here when they are ready. We already saw a healthy increase in attendance from the September to the October orchestra concert when audiences were treated to a fabulous and varied program including some wonderful solo performances and an incredible performance of Scheherazade which earned a much deserved standing ovation and cheers from the audience. Overall, it was a night of energy, inspiration, and visible joy. I was so pleased to be part of such an uplifting evening.

I am also delighted that our outreach programs have resumed in person. Through our scholarship program which provides financial support to families in need, our free concerts to seniors in assisted living facilities and our Threshold Singer's hospice choir, we remain committed to sharing the transformative power of music to individuals in need of such inspiration. And, as schools have reopened, our free public school programs are in full swing. Middle school students in Lawrence are taking music production, drumming, and percussion classes. It is wonderful to know that our programs are making a difference in the Lawrence public schools and I thank Ryan Solero for sharing with us tonight some of the ways that music has touched the lives of the students in his district. Students in the Fitchburg middle schools are also growing through violin instruction and children who attend the Boys and Girls Clubs of Fitchburg, Leominster, and Gardner experience the joy of making music through our ukulele and bucket drumming classes. Through these programs, students are gaining the vital skills of creativity, flexibility, concentration, collaboration, and respect for all. Music has a way of reaching deep within us to provide growth, happiness, solace, relaxation and community. Tim Kane, our teacher at the Boys and Girls Club, referenced the benefits we provide when he commented "These kids are learning to drum, but much more importantly they are learning about themselves."

While we continue, every day, to offer vibrant music education and performance opportunities to our community, we are also setting our sights on our amazing new home, Groton Hill Music Center, coming to life in less than a year. We are becoming the talk of the region! Our organization and new home have been featured in the Boston Globe, Lowell Sun, Boston

Business Journal, and many other media outlets. In a survey conducted by Boston.com we were voted in the top 5 of most anticipated new and upcoming venues. One voter commented that our new venue is “sure to be a landmark in terms of acoustics and visual beauty.” Certainly, we couldn’t agree more! What we are creating is sure to be a destination like no other – a place where we will enhance the quality of life and become a gathering place for the community centered around personal growth, social interaction and, of course, excellent music.

We do acknowledge that our new home will bring changes and challenges. As you can imagine, our vision for the future is bold and ambitious and we are hard at work to make the dream a reality. We are resuming the growth plan that we had in place pre-pandemic in order to bring more students, concert-goers, and friends to our organization. We are planning for the much bigger organization we will become by adding staff, purchasing instruments, and expanding our marketing efforts. We are considering the endless programming possibilities for our new home and laying the groundwork for our expanded education, outreach and performance offerings. We are continuing our campaign efforts to raise the funds that we need to bring our new home to life. We still have much work to do on the fundraising front but we have a great deal of momentum. In fiscal year 2021, we significantly exceeded our individual annual giving goal by \$140,000, including 86 new donors, \$169,000 in increased donations from current donors and an 82% donor retention rate. This tells us that you are not only generous individuals but also that you trust Indian Hill Music to use your gifts wisely and prudently. We are forever grateful for your support and your vote of confidence in our organization.

While we will have a new name that honors our return to our Groton roots and our commitment to inclusivity as we expand outward, building our musical community and growing and elevating our programming, we will always be the same organization at our core – an organization that provides high-caliber, vibrant music experiences that foster personal growth and offer meaningful connections in a warm and welcoming environment.

There is much to be done over the next year and beyond but we are a strong organization with all the tools we need for success – a strong and vital mission, superb faculty and musicians, an extremely dedicated and hard-working professional staff, a committed Board of Directors, enthusiastic students and concert-goers, and, of course, all of you – our family of supporters. It is your encouragement and vote of confidence that keeps us going. It is your love for our organization that inspires us. It is your generosity that makes our impact on those we serve possible. We are a strong organization because of you and we are committed to this incredible new chapter in our evolution when Groton Hill Music Center becomes a lively musical hub that will be a treasured and valuable asset to our region and beyond.

Thank you for being with us tonight to celebrate all the ways that Indian Hill Music enhances people’s lives and thank you for all that you do for us! I look forward to seeing you in person in the coming weeks and months and to welcome you to our new home next fall! We can’t wait!