

# indian hill **music**

## **Evening of Gratitude – November 14, 2020** **Remarks – Lisa Fiorentino, Chief Executive Officer**

Good evening everyone and thank you for being with us tonight. While I know we all wish that we could be gathered together in Blackman Hall to enjoy each other's company, I am quite happy that we get this opportunity to see all of you – virtually at least.

I must tell you that we miss you all. We miss seeing you when you come for lessons or rehearsals. We miss catching up with you at concerts, recitals and special events. Indian Hill Music is a community where relationships, connections and personal interaction are at the core of who we are. One of the most special aspects of our organization is our warm and welcoming environment and the sense of belonging that we all feel when we are gathered together. The need to switch to virtual, rather than live experiences has led to a real feeling of loss for all of us and has certainly created challenges for our organization.

Through February, we were very successfully implementing our growth plan, expanding our programming, broadening our marketing and development efforts and feeling lots of energy, enthusiasm, and momentum. We were growing our community and welcoming new students, concert-goers, and patrons. As we now manage through this pandemic, private lesson enrollment is at about 85% of last year's figures. All large ensembles like youth orchestras, choruses, and big band are on hold indefinitely. And, with the suspension of our live performances, it is more difficult to introduce new people to who we are and to stay connected with you and others in our community.

With that said I am so proud of the way our staff, faculty, musicians, students, and patrons have risen to the challenges created by this pandemic and have shown resilience and perseverance. Sometimes, it is a crisis that inevitably shows us a new dimension to what we do and why we do it. We have always known that our work and our music are essential. Music connects us. It inspires us. It allows for self expression and growth. It brings joy. Now, in addition to all of those necessities, our work is also lessening the feeling of isolation. It provides critical structure for our students during uncertain times. It offers a feeling of normalcy in a currently abnormal world. It offers hope and as one member of our community told us, it provides "much needed relief from these trying times".

We entered this pandemic as a strong organization and I am confident that we will continue to be a strong organization when we are on the other side of this crisis. So, while we do face our challenges, tonight I want to celebrate our successes and give you a sense of how we continue to make music an integral part of people's lives – especially now when we most need the comfort, inspiration, and energy that music provides.

Our music school remains an active, lively, and bustling learning community. We have always said that we have the best faculty around and they have clearly demonstrated this again with the way that every faculty member has reinvented their teaching techniques and migrated to an online private lesson model. And our students have shown their dedication and the importance of music lessons in their lives by rising to the challenge of this new learning method. As one parent told us "My son's piano lessons never stopped and were a much needed constant in all of our lives. Having that outlet and that continuity has been a real comfort to him during an unsettling time."

And we didn't stop at online private lessons. We are holding virtual classes, lectures, workshops, and mock auditions. We have celebrated our student's accomplishments through virtual recitals and soirees. We are using technology so that small student ensembles can share their progress through video. We held our annual Free Class Day – virtually and had over 100 individuals sign up to attend the event. Our format for all of these educational initiatives may be different this year but the learning has never stopped!

We also know that those most vulnerable within our community need special attention during such challenging times. Residents in assisted living facilities are feeling extremely isolated and anxious right now. We, therefore, took our Bach's Lunch concert series on the road and held outdoor concerts while following all appropriate safety protocols. One assisted living staff member summed it up best by saying "The concert was amazing. Residents were head bobbing, toe tapping and singing. We even had residents stay who normally do not stay for concerts. It was so wonderful to have Indian Hill musicians here."

And, we also understand how incredibly difficult it is right now for students and their families from underserved school districts to stay the course with their education. Many families are struggling to balance their commitments to work, school, and family. Children are keenly aware of the grown-up realities of our current environment and children, just like adults, are feeling the stress and anxiety of the world around us. To address this, we are offering free virtual private lessons to students from our Fitchburg band and strings programs to give these children a critical outlet during this time of unrest. These lessons may be the only time during the day that these students are able to receive one-on-one instruction, attention, and guidance from a caring teacher and the comfort received through these lessons will have a profound impact.

We also know that as families struggle these days, the need for scholarships has grown. A quality music education should be within everyone's reach so we held our annual Performathon virtually. Many of our students created uplifting performance videos and we are so thankful for their participation to support this important cause.

On the performance side, the need to cancel and suspend our live Orchestra, Blackman Hall, and Kalliroscope Gallery performances has been deeply disappointing. The Orchestra means so much to all of us and, for this reason we created "Virtual Connections" where Bruce offers up close and personal ways to interact with our wonderful orchestra musicians and enjoy classical music. We have also created "Live from Indian Hill" live stream concerts where headliner artists perform in Blackman Hall for a virtual audience. After our first "Live from Indian Hill" concert one attendee told us the artist "was amazing. The sound, video, and lighting were stellar. I felt as if I were there." Overall, all of our performance content is designed to be engaging, fun, and uniquely Indian Hill.

Even with these virtual offerings, we acknowledge that the lack of live performance has left a void for all of us and has reminded us that there is nothing quite like attending a live performance and bonding with the musicians and the enthusiastic audience members around us. This is why we are even more excited about our future home in Groton. With a projected opening in the fall of 2022, we are still two years away but we are already longing for the day when we can enter our incredible state-of-the-art studios and walk onto our grand stages in superbly designed, acoustically engineered concert halls and share live music with all of you. We already knew our opening would be special and now, I think the level of anticipation, enthusiasm, and sense of possibility has grown even greater.

As we prepare for this remarkable future with the current absence of live performances, we ask that you help us by being ambassadors for our organization. Please tell others about us and share your enthusiasm for who we are, what we do, and the exciting future that awaits us all.

In closing, Indian Hill Music may be remote right now but we are focused on doing the things we do best: providing quality music education and vibrant musical content, reaching out to those in need, and maintaining high-touch relationships with our community. It is because of you that we are able to remain a strong organization meeting the critical needs of our region. We cannot thank you enough for your amazing generosity and for being such valued members of the Indian Hill community.

I would now like to share with you our new video tour of the stunning Music Center at Indian Hill. Thank you so much!