

Brooklyn
Conservatory
of Music



Strategic Plan

2019-2024

MIDPOINT REFRESH

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Section 1: Preamble

In the fall of 2018, the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music's Board of Trustees embarked on a rigorous strategic planning process to identify our organization's goals and priorities and to chart our future.

Over the following year, dozens of stakeholders and community members contributed to a thorough examination of the strengths and opportunities of our organization as a whole and each of our four divisions (the Community Music School, Suzuki, Music Partners and Music Therapy). Led by a strategic planning committee composed of parents, staff, faculty and board members across all four of our divisions, we developed a report reflecting the aspirations of the Conservatory's entire community.

Our 2019–2024 Strategic Plan was just under a year into its implementation, and then Covid hit.

The pandemic placed significant operational, financial, logistical and mental health demands on our programs and our people. But the strength, energy and momentum with which BKCM entered the pandemic enabled us to adapt to a virtual world as quickly and effectively as possible.

As new, entirely unanticipated needs and obstacles arose, we continued to serve the vast majority of our students and clients in remote and, subsequently, hybrid and socially distanced in-person formats. Critically, we didn't just try to survive the pandemic. We continued to invest in strengthening and improving our organization, tapping into our creativity and agility to develop innovations that would set us up for the future—no matter what it may hold.

We are a stronger, healthier organization than we were at the outset of our Strategic Plan.

Our total budget has grown to \$5.8 million, from \$3.8 million in 2019. We have learned a great deal about our organization and community over the past two years, and we continue to evolve. With new experiences and knowledge to guide us, in the fall of 2021 we embarked on a process of refreshing our 2019–2024 Strategic Plan to incorporate our key insights, emerging priorities and most valuable Covid-era adaptations.

In the following pages, we will illustrate how the overarching objective of our original 2019–2024 Strategic Plan, investing in the organizational capacity and infrastructure of the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, has remained highly relevant. We will describe how three pre-Covid priorities—strengthening our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, investing in our people and expanding our physical space—gained new urgency, even as other goals were temporarily de-emphasized. And we will outline how we have refined our conception of the core goals that formed the backbone of our original Strategic Plan, while continuing to emphasize excellence and quality at every level of our operation.

Our mission, transforming lives and building community through the expressive, educational and therapeutic powers of music, is the bright, anchoring North Star that guided us through two turbulent years. It is no coincidence that BKCM is an organization built around music: The skills that music requires and fosters—resilience, flexibility, hard work, improvisation, connection—are the precise qualities that have enabled our organization to thrive.

Thank you for allowing us to share with you this update to our 2019–2024 Strategic Plan. And thank you for your continued partnership, as we embark on this exciting next phase together.

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Section 2: Overview

Our original 2019–2024 Strategic Plan was built around six core goals. As the pandemic extended, our original conception of these goals evolved. Some plans and priorities became more urgent than ever, while others were temporarily put on hold as brand new, unanticipated needs emerged.

In this overview, we will describe how we have refined our understanding of each goal. The first three goals listed below are our organization's top priorities for the immediate future.

The events of the pandemic, and our learnings throughout this challenging period, clarified our understanding of what it will take to fulfill BKCM's mission in the years and decades to come. Based on this understanding, we will prioritize 1) investing in our people, 2) strengthening our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and 3) enhancing our infrastructure and capacity by increasing our physical space.

INVESTING IN OUR PEOPLE

Our remarkable staff and faculty enabled us to thrive during the pandemic, while so many other cultural and educational institutions throughout NYC and the nation struggled. We have retained our talented people, largely because we have supported and invested in them; even so, the stresses of the past two years have taken their toll. Moving forward, we will invest further in attracting, retaining and supporting the people who make BKCM a beacon of excellence.

Even during the darkest days of 2020, we did not lay off, furlough or reduce wages for any of our 165+ staff and faculty.

In fact, we put in place a guaranteed income program, something other organizations are just beginning to offer. We created, and continue to create, hundreds of paid performance gigs.

BKCM's investment in our people, before and throughout the pandemic, has paid off in spades. Our staff and faculty have given deeply and generously of themselves. Turnover has been low, and we have been able to attract incredible new talent.

While as of this writing we have escaped the effects of the "Great Resignation," we are mindful of the burnout that our people are experiencing. We know it will take time to recover. We are currently developing new strategies, such as instating paid sabbaticals, to ensure that our people feel valued, energized and taken care of.

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

We cannot overstate the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion to our organization. This is a priority within every program and across every facet of our operation. We have devoted significant resources to integrating DEI principles throughout BKCM and will continue to do so moving forward.

DEI was a clear goal in our original Strategic Plan, but the strategies and roadmap were not defined. Over the past two years, BKCM has dramatically stepped up the urgency and focus of our DEI work, amid a growing national conversation around social justice and racial inequity arising from the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and countless others.

The pandemic laid bare inequities in our society that BKCM has long struggled to address. Indeed, it impacted our programs unevenly, as our offsite community engagement programs experienced steep declines due to a model based on partnerships with public schools and community-based organizations.

Over the past two years, our DEI work has become one of our most important undertakings, and we are beginning to make meaningful inroads. In FY21, we invested \$100,000 to build a substantial DEI infrastructure to engage our students, parents, faculty, staff and broader community. We recently hired a Director of DEI, who will lead our effort to examine every aspect of our operation through the lens of DEI and integrate DEI principles throughout our organization.

ENHANCING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY BY EXPANDING OUR PHYSICAL SPACE

One of the key insights emerging from our Strategic Plan Refresh process is the extent to which space constraints are impacting our organization. To serve our current stakeholders and allow for future growth, we must invest in expanding our capacity within our Park Slope headquarters and in satellite locations in other neighborhoods.

Before the pandemic, our infrastructure was at maximum capacity. This included space in our building as well as operational and technological infrastructure. When we resumed in-person programming in October 2020, we had brand new infrastructure needs, including plexiglass barriers and extra space to allow for social distancing.

Over the past two years, we have invested heavily in physical, operational and technological infrastructure.

To address near-term space issues and facilitate the reopening of our building during Covid, we purchased the lot adjacent to our building and transformed it into an outdoor garden, complete with lit, heated tents. We renovated our offices so they could be used flexibly as studios to accommodate the growth of our student body, while also functioning effectively for staff and faculty working on a hybrid schedule. We invested in a new student registration platform, significant upgrades to our IT system and additional equipment and capabilities for remote instruction.

Because our space needs have grown and evolved so much since the launch of our original 2019–2024 Strategic Plan, BKCM's real estate committee is developing building expansion plans that are scaled to meet our strategic needs and take our organization to the next level.

DEEPENING AND BROADENING OUR PROGRAM OFFERINGS WITHIN EACH OF OUR FOUR DIVISIONS

When our building closed in March 2020, our immediate priority became finding ways to translate our programs to a virtual and, eventually, socially distanced world. Moving forward, we are building on our most successful Covid-era innovations and adaptations, including by incorporating virtual programming wherever possible, as a supplement to our in-person programming. As in-person music-making has once again become possible, each of our four programs has designed a new roadmap for deepening and broadening programmatic offerings through 2024.

Our Community Music School and Suzuki Program were able to go virtual almost immediately, because of our direct and deep relationships with students and families.

Both Music Partners and Music Therapy also adapted quickly, developing and offering innovative, engaging remote programming for the first time ever. But with the exception of our onsite music therapy sessions, these programs rely on partnerships with public schools and community organizations that were themselves seriously incapacitated by Covid. In many cases, these partner organizations are still struggling.

Moving forward, we are using remote technology to enhance our teaching, performance opportunities and community-building efforts. Other programmatic adaptations are equally important. Music Partners, for example, which has traditionally relied on public schools and other partner organizations to intermediate our relationships with students and families, is developing new ways to reach our constituents directly. Summer and Saturday programming developed during the pandemic have now become permanent, and we are moving to establish our first BKCM Community Music Center. At this center, BKCM will provide direct programming that builds on our work in nearby schools and community organizations and reaches neighborhood residents who currently lack access to high-quality music education.

BUILDING OUR BRAND AND BROADENING OUR SUPPORT BASE

Throughout Covid, we grew our brand, increased our visibility and broadened our community. We did this by expanding our marketing, development and special events team, continuing to hold more than 200 events a year and, at every stage of the pandemic, moving quickly to offer excellent, innovative programming in line with the latest health and safety constraints.

Our 2021 Spring Benefit Music Festival is an example of the type of Covid-era event that elevated BKCM's status and broadened our base. On a beautiful Saturday in May 2021, BKCM transformed 20 stoops, sidewalks and parks across Park Slope into a vibrant celebration of music and connection. It felt like a great awakening, a sign that Brooklyn was back.

Throughout the pandemic we ran our organization at a high level, communicated effectively with our stakeholders and dug deep to support our harder-hit programs. In addition to increasing awareness of our brand, we have broadened and deepened our fundraising base.

EMPHASIZING EXCELLENCE AND QUALITY AT EVERY LEVEL OF OUR OPERATION

In our original Strategic Plan, we outlined plans to rigorously evaluate our programs to ensure excellence. During the pandemic, we temporarily put these plans on hold. It is difficult to clearly assess programs in a state of flux and disruption, and certain types of classes (like group classes and ensembles) were simply less effective in a remote format.

While assessments were postponed, though, our striving toward excellence has continued. To support this, we have invested in technology platforms that enable us to make the most of online learning and sponsored professional development. Significantly, we reopened our building in October 2020 (with safety measures in place) and have kept it open continuously since, allowing us to do what we do best: create opportunities for in-person teaching, learning, therapy and music-making.

Section 3: Task Force Reports

PROGRESS, ADJUSTMENTS AND PRIORITIES

We approached the Strategic Plan Refresh process by creating seven task forces: one for each of our four divisions (CMS, Suzuki, Music Therapy and Music Partners) and three examining organization-wide issues: diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), organizational capacity and real estate/physical space.

Over the past six months, each task force has examined the goals and strategies in the original Strategic Plan to identify where we've made progress, where we encountered challenges, where we need to make adjustments going forward and what resources will be necessary as we implement these new plans.

Task Force: Organizational Capacity

ORIGINAL STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- **Improve wages** for faculty and staff
- **Enhance benefits** for faculty and staff
- **Increase administrative support** to enable excellent program delivery and greater specialization
- **Provide professional development opportunities** to faculty and staff
- **Enhance our IT systems** and tech infrastructure
- **Build out our fundraising, marketing and special events** team and infrastructure
- **Add \$500,000** to our balance sheet

PROGRESS MADE

- **We increased wages**, on average, 5% a year for all faculty and staff.
- **We grew our staff significantly**, by adding new layers of administrative support across business units and programs as well as a Director of DEI, a Conservatory-wide Financial Aid Coordinator and facilities management team members.
- **We grew our marketing and development team**, including by hiring a Director of Marketing and Development and adding about 4 full-time-equivalent positions.
- **We did not lay off or furlough** any of our people at any stage of the pandemic.
- **We increased staff professional development**, including by providing executive coaching and training in infrastructure management.
- **We invested in hardware and software** to support remote learning and virtual events.
- **We invested in building out Salesforce**; we are continuing to broaden its functionality.
- **We overhauled our registration system.**
- **We upgraded our telecommunications infrastructure.**
- **We grew our budget to \$5.8 million from \$3.8 million.** Much of this increase has gone towards investment in strengthening our organization.
- **We added \$500,000 to our capital reserves.**

ADJUSTMENTS

- Covid placed an enormous strain on every aspect of our operations. While we are enormously proud of the job we did managing this strain, this is important to acknowledge.
- We had an urgent need to establish and support robust remote learning and livestream events, which required unanticipated investment in hardware and software.
- We began modifying our hiring process, particularly as we sought to incorporate recruitment and interview practices in line with our DEI efforts.
- Due to skyrocketing healthcare costs (which have been growing 10% per year), we delayed our plan to expand healthcare premium support from 80 to 90% in year 3, and to 100% by year 5. We will reconsider this in year 4.

PRIORITIES

- Our people gave a tremendous amount of themselves throughout the pandemic, and while we have thankfully maintained high retention levels despite the Great Resignation trend, we recognize we must continue to invest proactively in our people. Among other initiatives, we plan to further increase salaries, increase paid vacation time and roll out a new sabbatical policy.
- We are projecting creating 3 or 4 more full-time staff positions in the next few years.
- We plan to add additional administrative support hours, to enable excellent program delivery and allow our program directors to focus on higher-level strategic work.
- We are launching our second overhaul of our technology infrastructure, which will focus on system integration and a top-to-bottom overhaul of our website.

Moving forward, we plan to continue burnishing our brand through a more expansive social media strategy, signature events, signage at our building and partner sites, website SEO and investment in strategic communications and PR.

Task Force: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

ORIGINAL STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- **Strengthen our commitment** to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)
- **Create an infrastructure** for infusing DEI principles and practices into every aspect of our organization
- **Expand scholarships and financial aid**, making our onsite programs more accessible and affordable
- **Diversify our staff, faculty and board**, including by examining our recruitment efforts and communication strategies, to determine how we might attract more diverse candidates and constituencies

PROGRESS MADE

- **We invested \$150,000 to build a substantial DEI organizational infrastructure** that engages our students, parents, faculty, staff and broader community, as we seek to examine every aspect of our operation through the lens of DEI and to integrate DEI principles throughout our organization. Our DEI steering committee, DEI working group and other DEI-related committees have convened in excess of 70 times since the process began.
- **We internalized the management of our DEI process through the creation of a new senior staff position: Director of DEI.** Teaching artist Uton Onyejekwe recently began his tenure as BKCM's first Director of DEI.
- **We conducted a large-scale survey** that included questions about our stakeholders' demographics and how they perceive BKCM. A total of 1,200 students, parents, faculty, staff and board members participated. The baseline data gathered from this survey will enable us to measure our progress over time.
- **We raised and distributed a record amount of financial aid, across all programs.** In tandem, we have invested in developing consistent financial aid policies and centralizing the administration of financial aid, through an organization-wide financial aid coordinator. This coordinator has helped Music Therapy families, in particular, unlock tens of thousands of dollars in government aid to which they are entitled, but which requires a significant amount of paperwork to access. In FY21 we raised \$296,000 in financial aid and assistance, benefiting 160 students and clients across our four programs. In FY22 we increased that amount to \$468,000, benefiting 214 students and clients. We are currently on track to exceed these record numbers in FY23.
- **We launched a three-part training series for all BKCM staff and faculty**, focused on developing culturally responsive and culturally sustaining teaching practices.
- **We built a stronger, more inclusive Board of Trustees**, with over half of board members identifying as persons of color.

- **We hosted or participated in events that helped advance our DEI goals**—producing our first Juneteenth Celebration (an afternoon of music and poetry in Crown Heights), contributing a movie tunes singalong to Brooklyn Pride's family programming and bringing hundreds of people together for our fifth annual World Refugee Day Music Festival (in collaboration with Catholic Charities and other partner organizations).

ADJUSTMENTS

Our DEI work has taken on new urgency, becoming one of our most important undertakings as an organization. The backdrop and context for this work has changed dramatically. The Black Lives Matter movement and the growing conversation around racially motivated violence and institutional racism have underscored the importance of our DEI efforts. Additionally, Covid exposed and heightened the deep racial and social inequities that exist in our society and within our own institution, as our four programs experienced the impact of the pandemic in dramatically different ways.

PRIORITIES

- We will continue to prioritize our DEI work and to build out the infrastructure to support the growing scope of this work. While we have made meaningful inroads, our DEI efforts remain a work in progress.
- Properly resourcing our DEI efforts, including through a dedicated annual allocation of funding from our operating budget, will be an ongoing priority. We allocated \$100,000 to support our DEI work in the FY22 budget and anticipate increasing that investment in FY23.
- We will continue to mine the data from our survey for insights that can inform programming and business decisions.
- We will evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of our communications around our DEI work (which have included multiple channels, including print, digital, in-person gatherings and Zoom forums).



Task Force: Real Estate and Physical Space

ORIGINAL STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- **Explore short-term space options**, such as leasing space outside our building, to accommodate current students and eliminate wait lists
- **Explore short-term space options to accommodate BKCM administrative and non-teaching staff**
- **Examine feasibility of long-term expansion options**, including through the renovation and expansion of our headquarters, to accommodate current demand and future growth

PROGRESS MADE

- **We acquired and transformed the vacant parcel of land next door into an inviting community garden** and gathering space, equipping it with lit and heated tents, tables, chairs and free WiFi. The garden has served as a helpful supplement to our indoor space, particularly during Covid-era utilization restrictions. Additionally, in keeping with our commitment to make our facilities open and accessible to the community, the garden is open to the public seven days a week.
- **We renovated and converted three of our offices into flex studio/offices.** While this was done to increase studio space, it had the added benefit of dramatically improving our administrative offices.
- **We have raised \$1.85 million in city funding** toward building expansion plans, as of January 2022.

ADJUSTMENTS

- Space is a more significant obstacle to our growth today than it was three years ago. After we reopened for in-person lessons in October 2020, there was a degree of equilibrium between the number of students and teachers who felt comfortable gathering in-person and the number we could accommodate at 25% or 30% utilization, to allow for social distancing.
- At this point, our space needs are acute. Our programs are routinely having to line up nearby offsite space to accommodate lessons, rehearsals and performances.
- We pared down our vision around expanding our Park Slope headquarters. Pre-pandemic, we envisioned a large-scale expansion that would add up to 10,000 square feet to the building. We are now taking a more incremental approach, revising our plans to prioritize our most essential need: the creation of 10 to 12 additional studios.
- The pared-down expansion plans are connected to our growing recognition that we need to invest in and operate programs in satellite locations throughout New York City, to reach New Yorkers living in a variety of neighborhoods and to meet our goals around diversity, equity and inclusion.
- To ease space constraints during Covid, our staff worked via remote and hybrid work models. We are examining making this adjustment permanent but are mindful of the impact on our organizational culture.

- We decommissioned five rooms, including three studios (one that was deemed too small and two without windows) and two interior offices without windows.
- Due to concerns about sound bleed from our garden, BKCM applied for and received a grant to support a sound mitigation strategy.

PRIORITIES

- As we seek to grow BKCM and expand our reach, space will remain an urgent short-term and long-term priority. We are increasingly finding ourselves bumping up against our space constraints, and limiting programs or turning away students because we simply do not have the room. We will continue simultaneously exploring short-term fixes while working toward a long-term solution.
- We will work to permanently resolve our space issues with input from our board, real estate committee, staff, faculty and other stakeholders. The path we ultimately take will have significant resource implications.
- An expansion of our building, the most likely option as of the writing of this Refresh, would meet our space needs for years to come, allowing us to enrich and expand our programmatic offerings. This should also produce significant surplus cash flows to BKCM, which we would invest in our offsite programs. This is currently the case: Surpluses generated by BKCM's onsite programs substantially subsidize our deficit-generating Music Therapy and Music Partners outreach programs, which are offered at low or no cost to participants at dozens of partner sites citywide.
- A major capital project will require BKCM to raise substantial public and private funds. While the budget is still a work in progress, it is clear that BKCM will need to undertake a major capital campaign.
- In the short term we need to rent additional nearby space, as our onsite programs are otherwise constrained by building capacity limitations.

Our space issues will continue to extend well beyond our Park Slope home. As discussed in the Music Partners section, BKCM is in the early stages of developing a new paradigm for community music centers. These centers will help broaden our reach and, in particular, allow our Music Partners program to thrive independent of school and community-based partners. Our preliminary expectation is they will be run on an "asset-light" basis, in leased (not owned) property. The space, programming and development model for BKCM Community Music Centers will evolve, presenting new opportunities and challenges for the organization.

Task Force: The Community Music School

ORIGINAL STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- **Increase enrollment** for private lessons, early childhood classes, group lessons and ensembles
- **Increase scholarships**
- **Expand summer camp, early childhood and adult learning** programs
- **Develop a unified set of core values** representing our commitment to premier music education
- **Enrich curriculum, focused on making it more consistent**, scaffolded and suited for multiple pathways to musical enrichment and mastery
- **Build out program offerings** for students of all ages and skill levels
- **Host 6 to 8 family and educational concerts** per year
- **Design and implement rigorous assessments** to evaluate programs and curricula
- **Conduct student evaluations** that document student progress, pinpointing areas for growth and accelerated learning, as well as ensuring support throughout their time with the program
- **Maximize the benefits of technological resources** to document and track student progress
- **Share evaluation findings** with the community and more broadly within the field

PROGRESS MADE

- **Private lesson enrollment is above pre-pandemic levels**, despite declining at the outset of the pandemic.
- **Simply operating consistently and at a high level throughout the pandemic** was a major accomplishment that should be noted.
- **We developed five core values** representing our beliefs as educators, students and administrators. These core values (community, joy, creativity, quality and perseverance) encourage us to reach our full potential as artists and artist-citizens.
- **We successfully introduced a student evaluation system** and were able to get faculty buy-in for this process, even during the pandemic.
- **We added a CMS coordinator** to our staff, easing the administrative burden on the program director.
- **There has been great momentum in certain programmatic areas**, including jazz, bluegrass and klezmer.
- **We developed the ability to run engaging remote recitals** and plan to continue offering recitals in a hybrid format moving forward.
- **We increased financial aid and scholarships.**

ADJUSTMENTS

- Enduring space constraints, faculty availability, and Covid-driven uncertainty have limited our ability to expand enrollment and expand adult classes.
- Due to Covid and the resultant pivot to remote and hybrid teaching, evaluations were not prioritized to the extent we had envisioned. We are continuing to standardize and build out our evaluation process.
- We are expanding our evaluation effort to include upward evaluations (evaluations of teachers and the program director) and faculty self-evaluations (to tailor professional development accordingly).
- We are continuing to work to make our curriculum more consistent, scaffolded and suited to multiple pathways.

PRIORITIES

- We are making a push towards more community-based music-making and learning, by creating programs that anyone, at any skill level, can join. Programs including drumming, singing, beginner music theory and beginner group instrumental classes will allow many more people to participate in our musical community. This will require additional physical space, the support of leadership, administrative resources and refinement of our management structure.
- We are creating departments and adding department heads/chairs. Department heads will be in charge of bringing faculty together to collaborate on curriculum, recitals, communications and events. This will help solve for the complexity of managing so many different types of programs within CMS and will bring BKCM in line with the practices of other large community music schools.
- We will continue to revamp our technology to enable faculty-student communication and online curriculum and lesson plans and to track student progress.
- We will return to our effort to prioritize evaluations. As we expand, this will be especially critical, to ensure consistently excellent quality.
- We will continue to invest in and market experimental programming in areas such as technology, songwriting, blues, global percussion, adult beginner classes and music theory and composition.
- We will continue to explore more offerings for students such as our family concert series, singalongs and student performance opportunities.

Task Force: Music Partners

ORIGINAL STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- **Establish programming on weekends, over the summer, after school and during the elementary school to middle school transition**, providing continuity and accelerating musical trajectories
- **Expand our reach to early childhood (through 3pre-K programs) and seniors**
- **Create further opportunities for faculty to share best practices** and participate in peer learning
- **Design and implement rigorous assessments** to evaluate the program and curricula
- **Document student progress** through evaluations
- **Maximize the benefits of technological resources** in conducting evaluations

PROGRESS MADE

- **We established a successful Music Partners Band Camp**, which we ran virtually during the summers of 2020 and 2021.
- **We provided scholarships** for Music Partners students to enroll in Community Music School private lesson and ensemble programs.
- **We established an offsite satellite program** that could point to a new model for our programming, giving us direct access to the students and families we serve (and making us less dependent upon our school and community-based partners).
- **Faculty morale and loyalty to BKCM were bolstered during Covid**, due to BKCM's ongoing support, including our decision not to lay off or furlough any staff members. Since our teaching artists are also working musicians, the income and support from BKCM stood in stark contrast to other earnings streams, which dried up when the pandemic hit. Many teaching artists noted that nobody came through for them in the way that BKCM did.
- **We created a robust library of videos** and other materials for virtual instruction and expanded our offerings by developing curricula for "digital arts" like music production.
- **We have succeeded in relaunching roughly 70% of our programs** despite the enormous challenges faced by schools and community-based partners. Even as soon as Spring 2020, we relaunched 12 programs by creating videos or livestreaming instruction into schools.

ADJUSTMENTS

- Music Partners was greatly impacted when public schools and community-based organizations closed in March 2020. Our faculty worked tirelessly to develop materials for remote music education, and those with experience leveraging technology did a tremendous job sharing their knowledge and expertise. Nonetheless, nearly every school and organization we partnered with was in no condition to even answer our phone calls. Many were struggling to locate families and figure out how to keep their work moving forward.
- For 34 years, Music Partners has provided music education, free of charge, to New Yorkers—primarily school-aged children—who would otherwise not have music as part of their day. The pandemic revealed how dependent Music Partners is on our school and community-based partners. This has inspired a rethinking of our overall model for programming and partnerships. Now, we are continuing to explore new ways to reach our students and families directly, without needing to rely exclusively on schools or community-based organizations to intermediate these relationships.
- Space inside school buildings remains at a premium due to social distancing requirements, putting ongoing pressure on our current model.
- Assessments remain a priority for us, but due to the challenges of the past two years we did not invest as much effort in this aspect of our work as we had anticipated.

PRIORITIES

- Exploring options for interfacing directly with the students and families we serve, instead of having these relationships intermediated by school and organizational partnerships, is a key priority for us moving forward.
- We are committed to establishing satellite programs to provide after-school and weekend music education activities. In March 2022, we launched a pilot in-person Saturday Band Academy at a location in Crown Heights (St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf). We have direct contact with parents whose students are participating in this program, and we are offering a great deal of financial aid. We plan to invest deeply in this programming model and to establish a permanent location for the first community music center (with an initial focus on the Cypress Hills and East New York neighborhoods). Based on this experience, we plan to expand to other neighborhoods over time.
- We are vastly expanding the amount of music enrichment available to our Music Partners students by offering virtual private lessons to students who would not be able to afford or travel to the Conservatory from their neighborhoods. We are now offering virtual private lessons to 30 students participating in the pilot Saturday Band Academy. We will launch a significantly larger program, reaching up to 60 students, in Fall 2022. The addition of private lessons to the MP program is a notable curricular expansion.
- While our focus on teaching students to play instruments in person and in groups remains paramount, we will continue developing our expertise in "digital arts" like music production and film scoring, which we developed during the pandemic.
- As we rethink new models for our programming and partnership, additional administrative support will be necessary. We will need to create a more sustainable and flexible administrative structure that will provide more support to our sites, our families, our students and our faculty.

Task Force: Music Therapy

ORIGINAL STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- **Grow onsite program** to serve 150 to 175 clients
- **Increase offsite program hours** 5 percent, annually
- **Design and implement rigorous assessments** to evaluate the program and curricula, aiming to measure clinical progress and increasingly establish BKCM as a center of excellence
- **Document student progress** through evaluations, pinpointing areas for growth and accelerated learning, as well as ensuring support throughout students' time with the program
- **Maximize the benefits of technological resources** to document and track students' progress
- **Share evaluation findings** within the community and more broadly within the field
- **Increase advocacy**, impacting public policy and promoting more widespread understanding of the needs of the neurodiversity community
- **Host more sensory-friendly concerts** with increased awareness to the needs of the audience, including those with autism
- **Increase performance opportunities** for our Music Therapy clients
- **Publicize the most successful aspects** of our Music Therapy model
- **Engage with the scholarly community** and publish research contributing to the field
- **Create more outreach therapist support** and increase awareness of outreach program

PROGRESS MADE

- **We have grown to 125 clients onsite**, our highest ever. We are at 100% capacity and have a waiting list. For reference, we lost 30% of our clients when we pivoted to remote in March 2020.
- **We successfully pivoted to virtual therapy** for as many clients as possible, despite the challenges of the pandemic and the fact that we had never engaged in remote therapy before. Along the way, we developed innovations that we will retain in an in-person world, including virtual singalongs, virtual music social groups and online parents meetings.
- **We onboarded a cloud-based music therapy practice documentation platform, UnitusTI**, to conduct and manage rigorous assessments of our onsite program.
- **Zoom has bolstered our professional development opportunities.** Music Therapy faculty have attended conferences and hosted continuing education workshops via Zoom, allowing us to welcome therapists from beyond the area.

- **In FY22 we increased financial aid and other funding sources to \$267,000**, including by helping families unlock government funding to which they are entitled but which requires a significant amount of bureaucratic navigation to access.
- **Our newly hired Music Therapy outreach coordinator** (20 hours a week) has been instrumental in creating more outreach therapist support.
- **We expanded regular peer supervision**, which is much easier over Zoom.

ADJUSTMENTS

- Space constraints at the Conservatory itself remain a significant obstacle to growth. Space consistency is particularly important, as we serve many students who need sameness, community and a predictable environment, and who benefit from co-location with other music programs such as CMS and Suzuki. Moving to a separate clinical space would detract from the primary vision of this program and, to date, alternate spaces have not met the program's needs.
- Our efforts to increase advocacy on behalf of the neurodiversity community were hampered by Covid. As part of our diversity, equity and inclusion process, we intend to revisit this goal.
- During the pandemic shut-down we lost certain offsite programs, including adult day-habilitation programs, that were unable to pivot to virtual therapy. We bounced back to almost pre-pandemic day-habilitation numbers by utilizing the concert hall more extensively.
- Due to Covid restrictions, we were unable to offer performance opportunities to our clients.
- The UnitusTI system rollout has been exceptionally time-consuming for therapists, with a steep learning curve. After an 18-month time investment, we have decided to terminate our contract with UnitusTI and are currently researching other options for FY23.
- Due to capacity, our goal of publishing research contributing to the field has been delayed.

PRIORITIES

- We aim to grow our onsite program to 175 clients (if we can find the space).
- As we grow, we urgently need administrative support. At 175 clients, we will need a 32 hour/week onsite clinical coordinator, and our outreach program coordinator will need 32 hours/week.
- We will continue seeking insights from the UnitusTI platform. This will require expertise in data analysis and more exploration of our goals as well as which data we collect and track.
- We intend to continue expanding financial aid and are currently on track to do so in FY23.

Task Force: Suzuki

ORIGINAL STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- **Broaden and grow Suzuki Early Childhood Education (SECE) Program** to 60 students, adding two additional faculty members
- **Revamp our music theory component**, hiring a music theory coordinator to oversee it
- **Integrate DEI throughout our program**, including via staff training to increase DEI awareness
- **Create renowned Suzuki summer institute** attracting students from throughout the region, replacing our informal summer camp
- **Expand touring and performance opportunities** to our Suzuki students

PROGRESS MADE

- **Our faculty ably adapted to teaching virtually.** Faculty with technology experience shared best practices, strengthening our community and ensuring engaging classes for every student.
- **Our deeply engaged, close-knit community has endured**, remaining a source of strength for every aspect of our programming.
- **Our faculty's high level of teaching and our students' skillful, artistic ability** continued to shine. Students perform two to four times per year; special performance opportunities include spotlight recitals and outreach events.
- **Our enrollment has remained relatively stable** throughout the pandemic.
- **We have redoubled our DEI focus** through outreach strategies, faculty training on bringing the "whole student" into the room, repertoire expansion and new parent affinity groups.
- **We hired a music theory coordinator** to revamp that component of our program.

ADJUSTMENTS

- We are increasing our emphasis on DEI on multiple levels, including through teacher training, repertoire adjustments and expanded financial aid opportunities.
- Suzuki Early Childhood Education was severely impacted by Covid, as online learning was not appropriate for infants and toddlers. Enrollment peaked at 41, falling to 18 in Fall 2021. We are seeing demand return quickly as in-person learning resumes, but we continue to be space-constrained.
- We have honed our vision for the Suzuki summer institute. We are continuing to develop a large onsite summer program, but with a new emphasis on collaborating with BKCM's other programs. With further support, we may initiate a retreat-style summer institute upstate, bringing together Suzuki families and faculty from BKCM and elsewhere.

- In order to accommodate social distancing during the pandemic, we held many of our Suzuki group and theory classes in our largest spaces. Because these spaces are also used by other BKCM programs, we had to shorten the length of these classes.

PRIORITIES

- DEI will be a growing priority moving forward. We seek to diversify our faculty, which will require us to develop robust new training programs (which will be useful for all Suzuki faculty). We will also grow our scholarship budget and develop an inclusive process for identifying awardees.
- Expanding Suzuki Early Childhood Education will be an ongoing priority. We are committed to broadening diversity among our early childhood students, which will require us to explore offsite locations in other neighborhoods. Offsite programs will require investment and administrative support (e.g. recruiting and training faculty, purchasing and storing equipment, providing staffing to support families attending classes).
- We are developing a creative music summer program, with opportunities for collaboration with other BKCM programs. This will require a year-round summer program coordinator.
- We are committed to developing BKCM into a destination for Suzuki instructor training and development and for integrating DEI principles into Suzuki.
- To resume pedagogically required class lengths, and to accommodate the annual expected number of beginners, we will continue to need additional blocks of time in large spaces such as room 35 and the concert hall, especially on weekday afternoons and Sundays.
- For our instrument program, offsite solutions bring challenges: expense, correct size, storage, administrative time coordinating with another organization, schedule conflicts with alternate sites and family schedules, students scheduled at the flagship building vs. alternate site, etc.
- Additional administrative support within the Suzuki umbrella will be critical, as we seek to support our current faculty members and to recruit and train new faculty members who would be needed at any new sites, as well as to replace any departing current faculty members.
- Our parent community is extremely engaged, and we intend to make the most of this exceptional engagement to further strengthen our program—especially as we continue to seek opportunities for our students to perform nationally and internationally.

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