

Brooklyn  
Conservatory  
of Music



# Strategic Plan

2019-2024 SUMMARY

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# Preamble

The past three years have been a period of tremendous growth at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music. We have expanded, diversified and significantly improved upon our programming, and we now serve 7,500 students—1,000 more than last year—in our beautiful home and at more than 70 schools and community centers throughout the five boroughs of New York City. Since our last strategic plan, in 2016, we have also done the critical work of stabilizing and strengthening our organization’s finances, remaining fiscally disciplined while investing heavily in programmatic and infrastructure improvements.

We are enormously proud of our recent accomplishments. With the organization’s finances stabilized and a growth trajectory in place, the Board of Trustees determined that the moment was ripe to pause, take a breath and reflect on our aspirations for the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music’s future.

In the fall of 2018, the Board of Trustees decided to embark upon a rigorous strategic planning process to identify our organization’s goals and priorities and to chart our future. The process began with the formation of task forces charged with examining the strengths and opportunities of each of our four divisions: the Community Music School, Suzuki, Music Partners and Music Therapy. This work provided the backdrop for a comprehensive day-long retreat in February 2019, during which 40 parents, staff, faculty and board members participated in a comprehensive “visioning” process.

In March 2019 we formed a Strategic Planning Committee, also comprised of parents, staff, faculty and board members across all four of our divisions. Drawing on the work of the visioning process, the committee solicited input from program teams, staff, faculty, parents and other stakeholders in a series of small and large meetings over the summer. The committee used these insights to develop a plan that, we hope, reflects the aspirations of the Conservatory’s entire community.

**Our mission, transforming lives and building community through the expressive, educational and therapeutic powers of music, is more urgent than ever. The strategic plan outlined in these pages defines a path for carrying that mission into the future—by broadening and deepening our impact and becoming a (and in some cases *the*) premier provider of high-quality music education and music therapy in New York City.**

Thank you for your continued partnership as we embark on this exciting next stage together.

# Our Mission

Transforming lives and building  
community through the  
expressive, educational and  
therapeutic powers of music



# Our Vision

We envision a world where every New Yorker, regardless of age, income or level of ability, has access to high-quality music instruction and music therapy. We believe that neighborhoods and communities traditionally under-served by New York City cultural institutions need and deserve hands-on musical experiences, and that by creating these opportunities we are building a more vibrant, interconnected city.

# Results of Our Visioning Process

The full-day strategic planning retreat in February 2019 was the first moment in this process wherein representatives of all four of our divisions came together to identify common areas of strategic planning focus. During the visioning process, bigger-picture themes emerged—areas in which we wanted to improve as an institution, across all of our initiatives.

As a group, we agreed that our overarching objective was to position the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music as the preeminent provider of high-quality music education and music therapy in Brooklyn and beyond. We aspire to deliver excellence at every turn; build diversity, equity and inclusion; and enable sustainable growth through enhanced development income, steady earned income and the creation of adequate reserves. We want program recipients, donors, supporters, staff, faculty and board members to feel welcome at BKCM—to feel that BKCM understands their needs and is the institution most capable of meeting those needs at the highest levels. We want our community to see BKCM as a desirable brand to be involved with, and as one of New York City’s most vital cultural, educational and community institutions.

We recognized that to achieve these ambitions, we will need to evaluate and consistently maintain excellence, enhance our marketing and communications efforts and integrate and modernize our IT systems. We will also need to expand and deepen the scope of our programs and to create more integration amongst those programs.

All of this, in turn, will require greater organizational capacity. We will need to implement enhanced enterprise and customer-facing technology, for example, add administrative resources, and enhance and fund training, recruitment and retention efforts for faculty and staff.

# Our Strategic Ambition

To position BKCM as the preeminent provider of high-quality music education and music therapy in Brooklyn and beyond.

## WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS BY

- ✧ Emphasizing excellence and quality at every level of our operation
- ✧ Strengthening our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion
- ✧ Investing in our people
- ✧ Deepening and broadening our program offerings
- ✧ Enhancing our infrastructure and capacity
- ✧ Building our brand and broadening our support base

# Goal:

## Emphasize excellence and quality at every level of our operation

We want the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music to be associated with excellence. While many of our programs, and many aspects of our operation, already meet this standard, we strive to elevate every single event, class, lesson, program and aspect of our operation so that excellence pervades our entire organization.

On pages 9 to 12 of this document, we provide greater detail about the specific ways in which each of our four divisions—Community Music School, Suzuki, Music Partners and Music Therapy—will strive for excellence. Because each of our divisions is unique in its size, scope, mandate, strengths and areas for improvement, these division-specific goals vary widely.

The initiatives, strategies and investment areas articulated below, however, span all four divisions, speaking to our wider ambitions as an institution. These efforts will enable us to achieve, measure and hold ourselves accountable for the more granular ambitions set forth by each division.

### INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

- ✧ **Program evaluations.** To understand what excellence means for each of our programs and to ensure that we reach that standard, we will design and implement rigorous assessments to evaluate each program and curriculum. This will give us a robust understanding of areas for improvement and enable us to replicate and build upon our programmatic successes and “best practices.” We will fund faculty time for gathering program assessment data.
- ✧ **Student evaluations.** We will fund faculty time to assess students, document their progress and prepare detailed notes for them and their families. This will enable us to pinpoint areas for potential growth, accelerate learning and ensure that students are fully supported throughout their time at the Conservatory.
- ✧ **Information management.** We will build out user-friendly student portals and seamless information management systems to benefit our students, faculty and staff. This will include maximizing the benefits of technological resources such as Google Classroom and using technology to document and track students’ progress over time.
- ✧ **Measuring and sharing our outcomes.** As we do a better job of evaluating our programs and as we continue to experiment with new models of teaching, we will share our findings within our community and more broadly. We will do this by participating in conferences and workshops, producing videos documenting our successes and key learnings, and publishing pieces in scholarly publications—contributing to the field and establishing our reputation as a leader in music education and therapy.

# Goal:

## Strengthen our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion

When it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion, there are areas in which the Conservatory excels and areas with significant room for improvement. We intend to honestly and critically examine every aspect of our operation through the lens of “DEI,” to understand how we can integrate these principles throughout our organization.

While many premier cultural organizations fail to reach our city’s impoverished, marginal and under-served populations and communities, BKCM is unique in our unflagging commitment to bring the life-changing power of music education and music therapy to New Yorkers of all ages, abilities, income levels, communities and walks of life. In recent years we have made great strides on this front: Through Music Partners, we have grown to become one of the largest providers of high-quality music education in the New York City public school system. Our cutting-edge Music Therapy program, which has become a sought-after training ground for professionals in this burgeoning field, serves 1,600 clients, from children with autism to homeless teens to adults with dementia, at 40 sites citywide (including our own building). Our building is fully accessible, and it is important to us that students and families from all of our divisions feel at home in our home.

We recognize that there is a lot we must do to ensure that every facet of our organization is as diverse, equitable and inclusive as possible. We will critically investigate areas including programming, affordability, leadership (faculty, staff and board composition), language and messaging, and decision-making processes, to honestly appraise our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. We are mindful that the changes we make now will set BKCM on a path toward more fully realizing this ambition in the years and decades to come.

We are fortunate, because at the core of our mission is music. Music breaks down barriers and brings people together. It helps people express themselves as individuals and forges new pathways for connection with others.

### INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

- ✧ **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.** We will create and fund a DEI Committee, comprised of students, faculty, staff, board members and parents, representing all four of our divisions, to establish a path forward. This committee will be charged with identifying specific areas for improvement within each of our divisions.
- ✧ **Scholarships.** We will make our onsite programs more accessible and affordable by expanding scholarships and financial aid.
- ✧ **Staff training.** We will provide diversity and sensitivity training for all members of our staff and faculty.
- ✧ **Recruitment.** We will take a more deliberate approach to faculty recruitment and on-boarding. This will include examining our current recruitment efforts and communication strategies, to determine how we might attract more diverse candidates and constituencies.



# Goal:

## Invest in our people

We endeavor to attract and retain staff and faculty members of the very highest caliber. In many ways, we know that we are succeeding: In a recent survey, for example, our families told us that the number one reason they come to the Conservatory is because of our excellent faculty. In recent years we have hired new faculty and staff members for several key positions, and we are pleased to say that we have assembled a cadre of extraordinarily skilled, passionate and dedicated team members.

In order to retain our excellent faculty and staff, and to continue attracting the best of the best, we must invest in them. This translates into wage and benefit increases, skills training and professional development work. It also translates into additional administrative support, so that we can free our faculty and staff to do what they do best.

### INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

- ✧ **Compensation.** We will increase staff and faculty compensation each year, reaching a point where our compensation is at or above competitive market wages. While we have significantly increased wages and benefits, across the board, for all of our 185 faculty and staff members, we must go further to reach this goal.
- ✧ **Professional development.** We will focus on faculty training, professional development and retention through efforts that include peer supervision groups, paid faculty retreats, continuing education workshops, classroom management workshops and program vision/core values workshops. We will encourage our faculty to hone their craft by attending conferences in their areas of interest, and we will provide training to enhance the skills of our staff, further professionalizing our operations.

# Goal:

## Deepen and broaden our program offerings within each of our four divisions

The goals and investment areas articulated in the strategic plan thus far span all four of our divisions. Because these divisions vary widely in their size, scope, mandate, strengths and areas for improvement, however, the goal of deepening and broadening program offerings will also manifest differently across divisions.

The following four pages detail the ways in which the aspiration to “deepen and broaden our program offerings” will take shape in each of our four divisions: the Community Music School, the Suzuki Program, Music Partners and Music Therapy.

### OVERVIEW OF OUR FOUR DIVISIONS

- ✧ Our **Community Music School** reaches 800 students ages 6 months to 80 years old through private lessons, group classes and a flourishing ensemble scene led by world-class musicians and educators.
- ✧ Our **Suzuki Program** is one of New York City’s premier destinations for this rigorous, nurturing and time-tested approach, immersing 240 students ages 3-18 in violin, viola, cello, bass, guitar, flute and piano instruction.
- ✧ Our **Music Partners** program has cemented its status as a major provider of top-notch music education citywide, reaching 5,000 students—two thirds living at or below the poverty line—in schools and community centers citywide.
- ✧ Our **Music Therapy** program is a national leader in this growing field. Our program now serves 1,600 clients, from children with autism to homeless teens to adults with dementia, at 40 sites citywide.

# Goal:

## Deepen and broaden our program offerings

### COMMUNITY MUSIC SCHOOL

Our Community Music School reaches 800 students ages 6 months to 80 years old through private lessons, group classes and a flourishing ensemble scene led by world-class musicians and educators. There is room to add additional private lesson students, create new large and small ensembles, expand our early childhood offerings, grow our summer camp program and increase financial aid. At the same time, we want to build a shared understanding of the values and philosophy that distinguish our Community Music School from lessons and classes offered elsewhere.

#### INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

- ✧ **Growth.** Our Community Music School is flourishing, and even amid recent growth there is enormous potential for further expansion. We seek to increase our enrollment for private lessons, early childhood classes, group lessons and ensembles. We will also look for expansion opportunities relating to our summer camp and adult learning programs.
- ✧ **Core values.** We will work to develop a unified set of core values and adhere to those values, further distinguishing the Community Music School as not only a premier destination for music education but a thriving community in which our students are challenged, supported and inspired by our world-class faculty and by one another.
- ✧ **Curriculum.** The Community Music School offers excellent music education opportunities to students of all ages, interests and abilities, at every point on their lifelong musical journeys. We will continue to enrich our curriculum and make it more consistent, ensuring that classes build on each other and enabling multiple pathways to musical enrichment and mastery. We will build out our sequential and holistic set of program offerings, including private lesson study, music theory classes and group/ensemble opportunities, for students of all ages and skill levels.
- ✧ **Concerts.** We will host a curated selection of six to eight family and educational concerts per year for our CMS community.

# Goal:

## Deepen and broaden our program offerings

### SUZUKI PROGRAM

Our Suzuki Program is one of New York City's premier destinations for this rigorous, nurturing and time-tested approach, immersing 240 students ages 3-18 in violin, viola, cello, bass, guitar, flute and piano instruction. We have [the only Suzuki early childhood program in New York City]. At the other end of the spectrum, our retention rates are getting even better, and as a consequence our middle and high school cohorts are growing. We currently have approximately 20 Suzuki faculty members.

#### INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

- ✧ **Suzuki Early Childhood Education.** We currently have [40] students in our Suzuki Early Childhood Education program, which we piloted several years ago and institutionalized based on its success and popularity. Our goal is to grow this program to [60] students, adding [two additional faculty members].
- ✧ **Music theory.** Music theory is an integral part of our Suzuki Program, and our emphasis on theory is one element that distinguishes our program as particularly rigorous and high-level. We will revamp the music theory component of our Suzuki Program, hiring a music theory coordinator to oversee this effort.
- ✧ **Summer institute.** We currently operate an informal two-week Suzuki summer camp. We would like to convert this camp into a renowned Suzuki summer institute that attracts students from throughout the region (and eventually draws Suzuki students nationwide).
- ✧ **Touring and performance opportunities.** When our advanced Suzuki guitar students traveled to Italy in the summer of 2018 to study with accomplished guitarists and perform at the Brescia Guitar Festival, it was a life-changing experience. We will provide more performance and touring opportunities for our Suzuki students—locally, nationally and internationally—building these opportunities into our program in a more formalized way.

# Goal:

## Deepen and broaden our program offerings

### MUSIC PARTNERS

Music Partners has cemented its status as one of New York City’s largest providers of excellent music education, reaching 5,000 students—two thirds living at or below the poverty line—in schools and community centers citywide. Music Partners is already prodigious in its scope, so in this case we will seek to build and deepen our programming, rather than expand our geographic footprint. We will dedicate more resources to our existing school and community center partners so that these programs provide a higher level of musical enrichment. This will involve introducing semi-private lessons and other innovations at certain sites and, more broadly, ensuring that all of our Music Partners faculty members have an opportunity to learn from one another, building on our successes.

### INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

- ✧ **“Dyad” model.** In some schools, we will introduce a “dyad” model in which group classes are supplemented with semi-private lessons, providing a richer version of music education.
- ✧ **Growth along the age continuum.** Most of our Music Partners sites are elementary schools, but there is room for growth within our 3PK (preschool) and seniors programs.
- ✧ **Afterschool, summer and weekends.** To provide greater continuity for our students and accelerate their musical trajectories, we will explore ways to reach students after school, on weekends, over the summer, and as they transition from elementary school to middle school.
- ✧ **Professional development.** We will expand opportunities for our 50 Music Partners faculty members to learn from one another, building our capacity and ensuring that we implement best practices citywide.

# Goal:

## Deepen and broaden our program offerings

### MUSIC THERAPY

Our Music Therapy program is increasingly considered a national leader in this burgeoning field. Our program now serves 1,600 clients, from children with autism to homeless teens to adults with dementia, in our building and at 40 sites citywide.

#### INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

- ✧ **Onsite program.** We will grow our onsite program to between 150 and 175 clients over five years, up from 100 currently.
- ✧ **Off-site program.** We will increase our off-site program hours by roughly 5 percent per year.
- ✧ **Advocacy.** We will increase our advocacy on behalf of music therapy and neurodiversity more broadly. As we are increasingly seen as leaders in the field of music therapy, we are well-positioned to impact public policy and promote greater understanding of the needs of the neurodiversity community.
- ✧ **Concerts.** We will host more sensory-friendly concerts, including concerts featuring artists with autism and traditional concerts adjusted to serve the needs of audience members with autism. We will also increase performance opportunities for our own music therapy clients, including opportunities for music therapy clients to perform with other BKCM ensembles, such as the Brooklyn Conservatory Community Orchestra.
- ✧ **Publications.** Our holistic music therapy program is on the cutting edge of a growing field that is increasingly validated by neuroscience research. We will seek to publicize the most successful aspects of our model, including by engaging the scholarly community and by publishing research that will contribute to the field.

# Goal:

## Enhance our infrastructure and capacity

Over the last three years we have invested more than \$250,000 in improvements to our facilities and technology infrastructure to make our beloved Park Slope home a more welcoming, accessible and joyful place to make music. With these improvements in place, additional infrastructure improvements and capacity-building efforts will ensure that our organization is on solid footing for the years and decades to come.

### INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

- ✧ **Organizational capacity.** We will invest in shared services such as bookkeeping, human resources, facilities management and other critical business functions that are essential to efficiently running an organization of our size. We want to ensure that we provide excellent program delivery and that key faculty members such as program coordinators receive the administrative support they need to be effective. To this end, we will expand our accounting staff, provide more personnel support in human resources, hire a dedicated facilities manager and expand our registrar hours.
- ✧ **Physical infrastructure.** Our building is at capacity. It's open seven days a week, with hundreds of people streaming through every single day. We have had to turn away students because of space constraints, and we also lack sufficient office space for our staff and faculty. In the short term, we will begin exploring interim options such as leasing space outside our building. We will also examine the feasibility of various long-term expansion options, including the renovation and expansion of our headquarters, to accommodate the current demand for current demand for our programs and the demand that we anticipate over the next 50 years.
- ✧ **Technological infrastructure.** We have made great strides toward overhauling and modernizing our IT systems and technological infrastructure. We've built out a new, bespoke software platform to manage our off-site programs and streamlined our system for tracking donations. But to take this organization to the next level, we need to invest more heavily in such systems and ensure that they are integrated with one another.

# Goal:

## Build our brand and broaden our support base

The Brooklyn Conservatory of Music is thriving, and people are taking notice. Over the past couple of years, we have been featured in The Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, NY1, Fast Company, Stanford Business magazine and other local and national news outlets. Over the past three years we've grown our contributed revenue to more than \$1.3 million, up from \$650,000 in FY 2016. Over the next five years, we will seek to further raise and burnish our profile and to grow our annual contributed revenue to between \$1.75 million and \$2 million.

### INITIATIVES, STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENT AREAS

- ✧ **Development.** We will strengthen our development team, create a strategic fundraising plan, continue to invest in our development technology infrastructure and bring on key staff members, including a new Director of Development.
- ✧ **Marketing.** To enhance our marketing efforts, we will hire an additional marketing associate and a dedicated community engagement specialist. We will earmark funds to support program-specific marketing efforts.
- ✧ **Events.** We will build upon our robust calendar of more than 200 events each year, most of which are free and open to the public. Our events have been essential to our growth over the past three years, broadening our community and introducing people to the Conservatory who have subsequently become students, board members and enthusiastic donors. We will continue to invest in these events, ensuring that they remain fresh, lively, engaging and relevant.



# Investing in our future

The goal of this plan is to broaden and deepen our impact in order to become a (and in some cases *the*) premier provider of high-quality music education and music therapy in New York City.

We plan to invest over \$8 million over the next five years to achieve this goal—investments in program delivery, touching more widely and deeply the lives of the communities that we serve; investments in faculty learning and curriculum development, ensuring our programs are leaders in their fields; investments in evaluation and assessment, driving clarity and transparency around our accomplishments and our students' growth; investments in operational support, enabling our program teams to do their best work; investments in marketing and brand development, building greater awareness and understanding of how we serve the needs of our communities; and investments in our fiscal future, securing the long-term stability of the organization. We will also be investing in additional fundraising and development capacity and in addressing the constraints of our current physical space, both in the short and long-term.

# Feasibility and constraints

This plan sets out our ambition for the next five years and identifies the investments required to get there. These investments will be funded by additional earned revenue from Community Music School and Suzuki Program growth, along with growth in contributed revenue and grants.

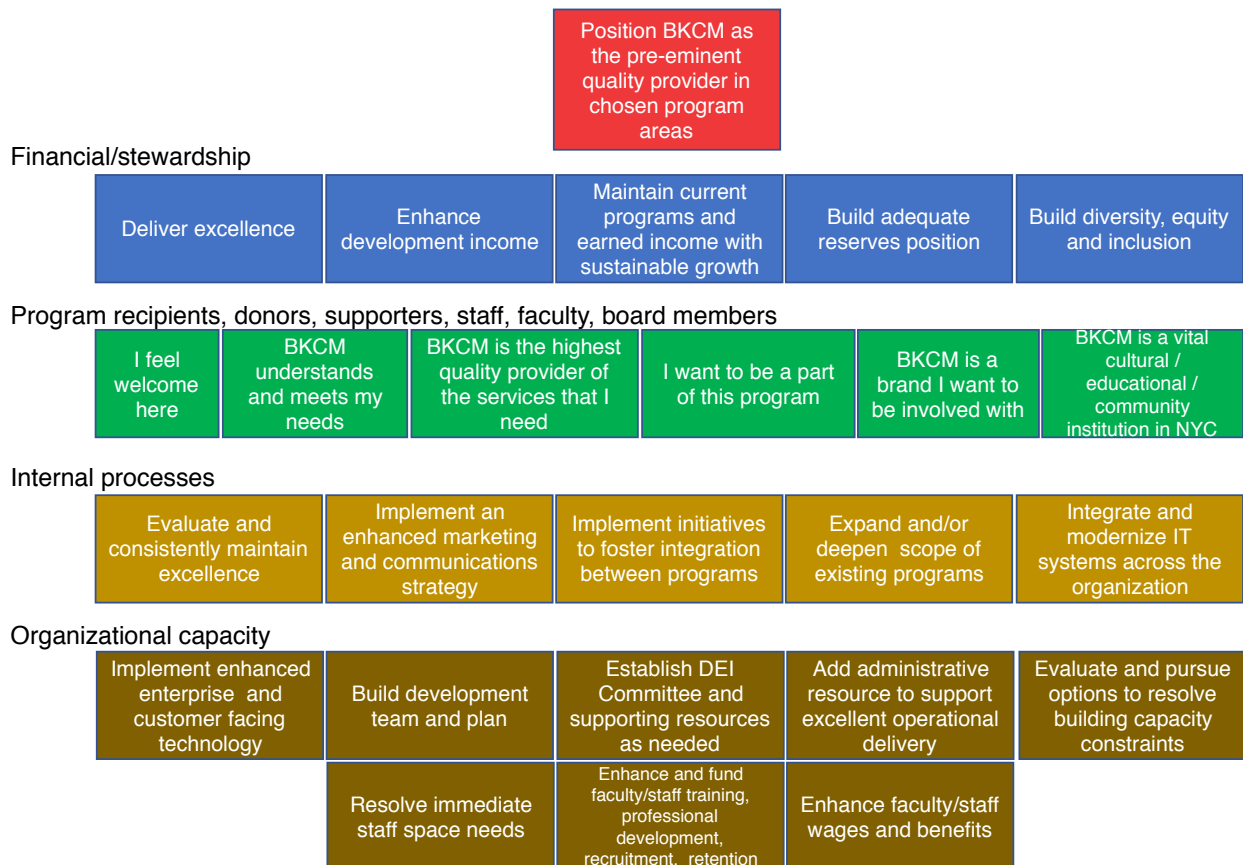
Over five years this plan anticipates an increase in the operating budget from \$4.9 million in FY2020 to \$7.3 million in FY 2024—a compound growth rate of 10% per year. This is less than the average growth rate over the last three years of 15.8%. Currently 71% of the Conservatory’s income is earned; assuming this remains unchanged (based on planned growth in the CMS and Suzuki programs), we would be dependent on just 10% growth in unearned development income over the next four years to fund this plan—well below recent historical trends of 17-20% increases.

These strategic planning goals and objectives will form an integrated part of our budget process from 2020 forward. If revenue does not meet expectations, we will deliver in critical strategic areas by managing the timing and scale of investments and by reviewing priorities each year to ensure we continue to make best use of the resources available.

# Appendix I

## BALANCED SCORECARD

To structure our discussion, we used a framework called a “balanced scorecard.” This balanced scorecard makes visible our goals and desired outcomes as an institution, as well as the areas in which we will need to invest to realize those ambitions. It also provides a basis for the development of metrics that we can use to manage and track delivery over time.





# Brooklyn Conservatory of Music

58 Seventh Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York 11217  
(718) 622-3300  
[www.bkcm.org](http://www.bkcm.org)  
#bkcm  
@brooklynconservatory

