



Cornell University
College of Engineering

School of Civil and
Environmental Engineering
Peter Diamessis
Associate Professor
Environmental Fluid Mechanics and
Hydrology
105 Hollister Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853
Tel: 1-607-255-1719
Fax: 1-607-255-9004
e-mail: pid38@cornell.edu
website: www.cee.cornell.edu/pid38

Ithaca, June 30, 2017

Prof. Charles Van Loan
Dean of Faculty
Day Hall, Cornell University

Dear Charlie,

I am sending this note as a brief update on the work of the Cornell Concert Series (CCS) Faculty Committee on Music for the 2016-17 academic year. Committee membership has changed significantly over the last year. Prof. Ju May Chu (Performing Media and Arts) has stepped down. Tyran Grillo (graduate student member) is also moving on to a postdoc elsewhere. Anaar Desai-Stephens, a graduate student in ethnomusicology, had joined the committee for the past academic year, but has now moved on to a visiting faculty position at Eastman. In terms of additions, the committee now has three new members: Emeritus Prof. Jerrold Meinwald (Chemistry and Chemical Biology), Senior Lecturer Ed Intemann (Performance Media and Arts), and Nikhil Ranganathan, an undergraduate student in mechanical engineering. All current and new committee members have worked with the CCS Manager, Deb Justice, and the CCS Publicity and Production Coordinator, Mike Sparhuber, to continue improving and evolving the Concert Series and various related musical activities on campus.

During the 2016-17 academic year, the Faculty Committee on Music met five times. As Deb transitioned into her new position, our discussions at the meetings consisted of finalizing the schedule of performances for the CCS in 2017-2018 and exploring possible invitations to artists in 2018-2019. We also discussed various financial matters and strategies for improving attendance at concerts from both the student and non-student component of the audience.

The internationally-reputed artists invited during the 2016-17 season represented a mix of classical, jazz, and world genres: Fred Hersch, Sphinx Virtuosi and the Catalyst Quartet, Zakir Hussain and Niladri Kumar, Tamara Stefanovich, Christian McBride and Edgar Meyer, Vida Guitar Quartet, Simon Shaheen and his Zafir project, Eighth Blackbird, and the Jerusalem Quartet.

Led by Deb Justice's enthusiastic initiatives, significant work has been made in terms of an improved concert ticketing system and community outreach, two highly intertwined efforts. The CCS continues to be largely subscription-based, but this year we have expanded our relationships with listeners by instituting two categories of membership as well. We have implemented a CCS student membership, for learners from kindergarten to grad-school, which provides a pass to all concerts for only \$25. This

approach is aimed to increase student participation and to thus cultivate a concert-going audience over the long term. So far, response has been robust. The other membership category, Community Membership, appeals to the greater Cornell and Ithaca community. Members choose how much they would like to donate to the CCS for increased engagement initiatives in exchange for various levels of benefits. We are delighted by President Pollack's support for this new program, as she donated to be the first of our many Community Members. Furthermore, she purchased two full season subscriptions.

To additionally improve the CCS, a new, modernized, ticketing platform has been made available to concert-going audience and also staff operators. CCS also now has Wi-Fi-based mobile credit card reader which can also process sales away from the Bailey Box office.

At the outreach level, an effort spearheaded by Deb Justice and four music department faculty has secured a \$10K Engaged Cornell development grant for 2017-18 year. This grant has the potential of growing to an additional \$80K over the next two years. This funding cannot be used to cover artists' fees, but rather it is expected to enable increased curricular connection and engagement and student involvement with the community in a CCS context. The greater aim is that, during this 3-year cycle, the above grant will kick-start deeper relationships between CCS staff, members, Cornell students and faculty, and community partners such that the membership program will grow to become an important sustainable source of financial support for CCS' engagement initiatives.

On a financial front, the CCS remains healthy with the fixed allocation of \$136.8K. In addition, CCS is now part of the Jazz Touring Network, a grant-funded program of the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation. This partnership will cover our jazz performers' fees up to 30% for two years. Nevertheless, we have ongoing concerns about maintaining CCS' reputation as a flagship presenting series among our Ivy League and wider network of peer institutions. Our audiences consistently remind us that the CCS had historically had the budget to bring renowned orchestras and larger ensembles. It is excellent that our current budget allows us to bring one somewhat larger ensemble per a year, but to stand out among our peers, a boost of the allocation by an additional \$50K would allow us to add one more top-level touring ensemble to the CCS program.

We thank you for your continuing support in allowing us to sustain a high impact factor series that has been bringing the best music to Ithaca since 1903.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Diamessis', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Peter Diamessis