



Cornell University

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

Dear Prof. Van Loan,

We are sending this note as a brief update on the work of the Cornell Concert Series (CCS) Faculty Committee on Music (FCOM) for the 2019-20 academic year. With COVID-19 throwing the world into uncertainty, the end of the semester was unexpected to say the least. We had to postpone/cancel two concerts, and, pending guidance from the university, we are working on safe ways of implementing performances this fall. In the meantime, we have been active leading the arts community online. CCS hosted a series of writings about music industry response to COVID-19 and deepened our partnership with Engaged Cornell to sponsor a series of artist interviews and speakers for the Engaged Performance class.

In terms of committee membership, to further our goals of having FCOM membership rotate and better reflect the demographics of Cornell faculty and staff, we had some transitions in the committee this year. Long-serving chair Pete Diamesis retired from the committee, turning over the committee chair to Bruce Johnson, a Senior Lecturer in Neurobiology and Behavior. Nikolas Bouklas from Engineering joined, as well as Laura Taylor and Laurie Damiani from the Office of International Services. All committee members have worked with us, and the CCS Publicity and Production Coordinator, Mike Sparhuber, to continue improving and evolving the Concert Series and various related musical activities on campus. We have been working to diversify the committee, and will make extra efforts at this in the 21-22 year and beyond.

During the 2019-20 academic year, the Faculty Committee on Music met five times. Our discussions at the meetings finalized the schedule of performances and engagement activities for the CCS in 2019-2020 and explored possible invitations to artists in 2020 and beyond. In addition to reviewing our expanding agenda of community engagement, we also discussed various financial matters, our position in the regional arts scene, and strategies for optimizing attendance at concerts from both the student and non-student components of the audience. For example, we are continuing to publicize our "Your concert ticket is your bus ticket" program in partnership with TCAT that allows audience members to attend without the hassle of on-campus parking, and we are continuing targeted artist residency activities with student groups on campus.

The internationally-reputed artists invited during the 2019-20 season represented a mix of the world's greatest musical traditions: Terri Lyne Carrington's Social Science (progressive jazz), Daniil Trifonov and Sergei Babayan (classical piano), Lorelei (treble vocal ensemble), Marlow Rosado (hot Miami salsa), Yamato Drummers of Japan (taiko dummies), Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (Wind Quintet

and Piano), Lúnasa (the best Irish band on the planet, and Stefon Harris (both regrettably canceled to do COVID).

Deborah has continued her efforts to improve CCS customer relations management and community outreach, two highly intertwined efforts. The new ticketing software implemented two years continues to be optimized, allowing customers even better online access to ticketing options. The \$25 student membership program (for learners from kindergarten to grad-school) that we implemented two years ago continues to draw increased student attendance, with more non-Cornellians taking advantage every year. Our social media following has also skyrocketed, quadrupling over the past 3 years.

The committee has been supporting robust engagement by the CCS, both at Cornell and in the broader Ithaca community. We had over 200 people at our in-person artist interactions this year. We held master classes for Cornell students with 5 of our visiting artists, and supported multi-day residencies with CCS artists that included students in open-to-the-public lecture-demonstrations, master classes and community workshops. Supplemental funding for these expanded activities has come from external and internal grants, secured by Deborah. Funds from the Jazz Touring Network/Mid-Atlantic Arts Organization defray the cost of our jazz programming and outreach, while funding from Engaged Cornell (first in the form of a \$10k Curriculum Development Grant, and now increased to the next level of \$60k) allows CCS to interface with the music department and community to optimize educational opportunities for CCS artists and Cornell students. This competitive grant takes an important step in confirming the value of engaged performance on our campus. Moreover, our grant was the only purely arts/humanities project awarded funding, out of 23 working groups. Finally, note that the funding from Engaged Cornell is strictly focused on the educational activities listed above. This particular funding cannot be used to pay the performance fees and travel/accommodation fees of CCS artists.

On a financial front, the CCS remains healthy with the fixed allocation of \$136.8K. We annually express ongoing concerns and priorities about maintaining CCS' reputation as a flagship presenting series among our Ivy League and wider network of peer institutions. Prior to COVID tossing everything into disarray, we had negotiated for two large European chamber orchestras, now one postponed and one cancelled due to COVID. While we appreciate the economic ramifications of the pandemic, we have numerous contracts now stretched over multiple years. Any major cuts to our allocation would create reductions in our ability to present musical performances that inspire our communities in these challenging times. This next year will be a test of our resourcefulness as we weigh technologies and practicalities. We are investigating many angles, from live-streamed concerts, to recorded content tailored to our audiences, to online interactive sessions with our artists.

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.

Ever since Deborah took on the role of concert manager four years ago, she vowed to never again have a season, or even a semester without a diversity of artists and musical traditions represented. The FCOM enthusiastically approved of this mission then and will continue to strive to see this happen in our future concerts. This year, Deborah brought revised antiracist language for committee approval such that our mission statement now reads: "Cornell Concert Series presents artists from a broad range of the world's great musical traditions. In working with campus and community to enable access to both performances and interactions with our musicians, we want everyone to see themselves reflected on our stage." As part of this goal, we are especially excited about March 2021 collaboration to work with multiple partner

organizations to present a concert in conjunction with a Cornell-hosted major conference about the first African-American female composer to win a premiere with a major American symphony orchestra.

We aim to have the Series be an inclusive community treasure that brings joy, inspiration, and hope.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Deborah Justice".

Deborah Justice, PhD.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bruce R. Johnson".

Bruce R. Johnson, Ph.D.
Senior Research Associate