



Cornell University

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Prof. Eve DeRosa, Dean of Faculty, Day Hall, Cornell University

Dear Dean DeRosa,

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 2022-23 academic year. Thankfully, concert audiences have largely returned in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. CCS has continued our mission of providing access to the world's great musical traditions and engagement with artists.

CCS staffing underwent some major changes this year. Longtime CCS PR & Production Coordinator Michael Sparhuber left Cornell University. Recent Music Department PhD Jordan Musser stepped into the position in Fall '22, but he soon left for full time employment elsewhere. Currently, Lilac O'Brien is serving in this role. However, in the fall, Music Department staff decisions will impact the Concert Series. The Concert Manager position has been 85% CCS and 15% music department administrative tasks, but it will now be 100% CCS. To retain staff time for itself, the Music Department is reducing the PR & Production Coordinator position to only 10 hours per week (with some flex on concert weeks). While this plan works on paper, operations will be negatively impacted by this staffing reduction. As we discussed in our meeting in May, no other Ivy League peers are running a concert series with such a tiny staff. CCS offers great value to Cornell as a bridge between university and community. Since 2015, we have had over 1300 Cornell and community participants in our engagement programs, but those will be very difficult to sustain without staffing. With one year's budgetary notice, Cornell Concert Series could afford to fund a 20-hour a week PR& Production Coordinator, but this would need to be part of a larger discussion with the Music Department and University about the desired role of CCS and the value that it can bring to Cornell.

The faculty committee continues to be a vibrant body, full of ideas and discussions. Since some members had served their full terms, new members were selected this year. Moving into next season, the committee is comprised of Bruce Johnson (chair, neurobiology), Nicholas Bouklas (engineering), Michelle Delco (veterinary school), Roger Stephen Gilbert (English), Judith Peraino (music department), and James Spinazzola (music department), with staff advisors Laurie Damiani ("emeritus," international center) and Kristen Grace (international center), and student members Farhad Taraz, (graduate student) and Rilo Patrick Oberg (undergraduate student). We are continuing to further our goals of better reflecting the demographics of Cornell faculty and staff.

During the 2022-23 academic year, the Faculty Committee on Music met six times, with both virtual and live options. Our discussions at the meetings finalized the schedule of performances and engagement

activities for the CCS in 2023-2024 and explored possible invitations to artists in 2024-25 and beyond. We also discussed various financial matters, focusing on stewardship as the concert industry re-emerges from the pandemic. Deb also briefed the committee on the disastrous data breach from Cornell's current ticketing vendor, AudienceView. Due to a variety of factor (including how they handled the breach), Concert Series will be joining other Cornell units moving to a different ticketing supplier this fall.

The internationally reputed artists invited during the 2022-23 season represented a range of the world's greatest musical traditions: We opened the season with Louisiana creole musician Sean Ardoin and his band. Then, we enjoyed being able to host international ensembles again! We presented The Scottish Chamber Orchestra with violinist Nicola Benedetti, the Czech Smetana Trio, Italy's Quartetto di Cremona, and the long celebrated Malian group Amadou & Mariam. We sold out Bailey Hall in April with American supergroup Snarky Puppy and rounded out the season with a family-friendly matinee by the Rochester Philharmonic.

Following encouragement from Deans DeRosa and Kudva, CCS manager Deborah Justice has been working with FCOM to plan more ambitious programming and outreach for our 120th season. In 23-24, we have crafted the inaugural year of a continuing Cornell Concert Series residency program. In addition to their concert, DoosTrio (Iran's Kayhan Kalhour, China's Wu Man, and India's Sandeep Das) will engage with students in residence halls on West campus, give masterclasses, hold free and public discussions with students and faculty, and more. This residency partners with Near Eastern Studies, East Asian Studies, South Asian Studies, the Music Department, and the Einaudi Center to showcase the living traditions of these artists in our globalized, politically charged world. We appreciate your enthusiasm in raising the profile of this residency, and in communicating its value to alumni and benefactors.

This will be a truly banner year: we open the season with a 120th birthday party for ourselves, highlighting how the series has diversified and been a platform for voices that need to be heard over the century. Then, we present the Dover Quartet, chamber orchestra The Knights with MacArthur-winner Chris Thile, genre-bending guitar and fiddle/violin duo Frank Vignola and Tessa Lark, the DoosTrio residency, the Klezmatics, baroque orchestra Tafelmusik, Zakir Hussain's TISRA project, and what might be the most exciting: The National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine.

On a financial front, CCS would be healthier if our usual fixed allocation of \$136.8K would track slightly closer with inflation. It has remained the same since 2015, while costs have risen substantially. For example, in order to present the Ukrainians, we are working with various international campus units to make this financially feasible. Historically, the College has periodically infused the Concert Series budget, for example with 20k per year for 3 years or the like. We suggest that this might be a good time for a similar move, as we continue to focus on quality of presentation over quantity.

Concert Series has been presenting the world's highest quality musical traditions since 1903. We appreciate your continued support.

Best regards,



Deborah Justice, Ph.D.
Manager, Cornell Concert Series



Bruce Johnson, Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer

