

To our wonderful community of supporters,

First, I will preface this letter by apologizing for the delay in turning it around. When not working on a production the staff at Shift is really just one person and the mass arrived at the same time as my appointment to the faculty at the Berklee College of Music and my first professional theatre contract. Upon reaching this professional milestone I decided it would finally be alright to heed the numerous voices advocating for me to take some time off. Several weeks later, my recuperation is in full swing, and I turn my attention back to the Shift mission. Here is our follow-up letter from the performance.

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We did it! In a glowing review, A.Z. Madonna of the Boston Globe wrote that she had been transformed by our performance. The Shift Orchestra Project's debut performance was an artistic triumph and we are so happy to have been able to collaborate with the amazing artists of Cappella Clausura for this event. In addition to the 80 tickets we sold we donated an additional 25 through community partners and raised \$5,000 in contributed revenue. We were able to contract 28 musicians and the concert was staffed by 7 volunteers who assisted with various items from ushering to stage managing and even projector operating.

We hope this explosive entrance into the Boston music scene will help us secure our founding board members and raise funds for our next event.

We've conducted a post-mortem. This is standard procedure (if morbidly named), for performing arts organizations. We look into the various aspects of the production to see what lessons and data we can use to inform future opportunities and prevent any issues from recurring further on down the line. In many respects, despite having an operating team of about 2 individuals, the majority of the production aspects of this performance went smoothly. Contractors, musicians, and equipment were all secured in a timely manner. Equipment management and set-up experienced no issues. Video-synchronization was added into the rehearsal process seamlessly, and we were able to stay very close to our target budget.

Some of our solutions will be long-term procedures as the administration behind the orchestra begins to take shape. Others will be easier to address within the next two events.

### **Why do I feel good about this?**

When I say our operating team was 2 individuals I am referring to myself and Abby Lass—the executive director of Cappella Clausura, who ran ticketing and numerous aspects of marketing for us. Members of the orchestra made contributions in terms of inviting audience members and assisting with social media exposure, but the majority of the fundraising and marketing work was done by yours truly. If I was able to get this far with just my own efforts, imagine what I could do with a team and a budget.

## **What's next?**

In addition to looking for board members we are working on planning our Salon-style concert format and looking for potential partners. We also believe it's strategically prudent to continue collaborating with extant performing arts organizations while we build our audience and establish our name within the city. This also relieves us of some operations items (ticketing, program design, etc), which is invaluable until we can obtain a budget to pay some staff. Our goals for the next year:

- Incorporate as a 501(c)3 so that we no longer need Fractured Atlas to support our efforts
- Gather the advisory board for our education initiative: founding the U.S.' first Open Orchestra, based on universal design initiatives in the UK to include persons with disabilities in ensemble activities.
- Plan our first full orchestra concert (40-50 orchestral personnel), to be performed during the 2023-2024 concert season.

## **Our areas for improvement:**

### Donated tickets:

We reached out to numerous organizations regarding donated tickets. For this specific concert we targeted a younger audience. While our partners were enthusiastic it appears that none of the donated tickets were actually claimed at the door. It's normal for groups to not use their whole share of donated tickets but it is very odd for none to be claimed.

Offering the resource is one very important step to increasing equitable access to the arts. Our next step is to reach out to our partners and see what we could do to make the event more inviting and relevant to their constituents.

We had a number of organizations who were interested but were unable to accept the offer at this present time. We've solicited feedback from them on how to plan events that will help their constituents take advantage of the opportunity.

### Earned Revenue—Program ad-sales:

We missed our target on program ad-sales. This may be mostly due to the fact that this was Shift's debut performance. We're optimistic the attention of the press and the success of the event will make it a little easier to secure interested parties. The math indicates that the most optimistic use of this revenue stream is to pay the cost of program printing (and that it did, this time around).

### Marketing:

Social media appears to be in decline as a useful resource for arts organizations to advertise to audiences. This makes a bit of sense. The algorithm is supposed to feed you more content that you have already expressed an interest in, rather than new content (making it a bad place to court new audience members). Our greatest returns came from direct connections such as the PSU alumni association, direct relationships with members of our ensemble, and various other connections we made along the way.

Some new faces have already inquired about a mailing list. We'll be constructing one in short order. We also picked up some better insights for deadlines and best-practice regarding radio-advertising/underwriting and will be exploring this as a potential option for the next event. We aspire to develop some in-person marketing events somehow, though there are a number of financial and logistical challenges to consider here.

I continue to receive wonderful feedback from the community. We've made friends with the College Club and the PSU Alumni association. These relationships will prove valuable when promoting future events.

### Budget:

While we hit our crowd-funding goal we were less successful in hitting targets for other budget areas. This led to a significant deficit, however it has given us much very useful information for size and scope of that we can use to more accurately forecast what needs we can meet for events over the course of the coming year. The budget looks a lot better when we are able to qualify for grants and work them into the timeline. We are also optimistic that the response to our concert will help us make friends with donors and potential board members.

Our initial budget for this concert was \$15,000. We exceeded this budget for a final total of about \$16,000. We were able to keep it from exploding by reducing the size of the choir to accommodate the unexpectedly high prices of contractors involved with the projection equipment and moving the piano. We reduced the choir from 24 to 16 members (prior to contracting, so we didn't have to release anyone). The only piece this had a significant impact on was the Woods; but, Ayanna and I agreed on adding some orchestral instruments to cover what would have been missing. We were very happy with the results.

Contractors and rental fees ended up taking up about a third of our budget. The good news is that the Mass has numerous specific considerations that will not exist on other events (automatic budget reduction). We also intend to use smaller ensembles for the next couple of events which will dramatically reduce costs. Our budget ceiling for the next two concerts will sit ideally between \$6,000 and \$10,000. The biggest challenge to this will likely be performance and rehearsal venues. We were able to secure free or reduced rent for all of our spaces on this event. For our next concerts we may not have the same advantages, and Boston venue rental—much like its apartment rentals—is quite high.

The director/conductor was not paid for this concert. And he doesn't really mind but does aspire to be included at some point down the line.

The base rate for Shift performers has more or less been set at \$80-\$90/service for instrumentalists. This rate allows us to hire exceptional talent at a high enough compensation that they will dedicate time to the part preparation. If we go lower then we are mostly paying the musicians to attend rehearsal. We are a couple of years out from raising this pay-rate, but we would like to set it as a growth target.

Staffing:

A number of external-relations hiccups could be addressed by having a staff to delegate those accounts to. The director will have other things to worry about and could use someone to collect ad-sale payments, stay in closer communication with our community partners, and facilitate simultaneous focus on marketing and development (as opposed to having to rotate focus between the two). It will also be prudent to have a dedicated staffer who can oversee the educational project as, once it gets into full swing, it will require a lot of attention to flourish.

In closing:

Boston has proved a wonderful incubator for numerous new performing arts groups over the years. Shift is hoping to join a very rich community, in part by approaching needs that have not been filled yet (universal-design oriented youth ensembles), and re-imagining the concert format approach to be more welcoming and exciting to new listeners, while providing informed, fresh perspectives for long-term fans of the genre. We hope we can count on your support as we move forward with this cause. If you're interested in helping us out in anyway, please feel free to reach out! Aside from financial support, offerings of time, expertise, and network connections will all assist us with the development of future projects and development.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for your support of the "Mass for the Endangered", project. We hope to play again for you soon.

Sincerely,

David Allen Flowers, Artistic Director: Shift Orchestra Project