

Chamber *Music* America

Strategic Plan 2014-2018

CMA defines Chamber Music as music for small ensembles between two and ten musicians, with one musician per part, generally without a conductor.

Founding Definition - 1977

Chamber Music America Strategic Plan 2014-2018

I. Introduction

Since 2008, CMA has been guided by its Strategic Plan—approved in October 2007—as it has led and served the small ensemble music field. It helped CMA diversify and increase its membership; conceive, create, and launch its interactive and member-driven website; begin streaming its *First Tuesdays* seminars worldwide; initiate *National Chamber Music Month* to bring greater awareness of the art form to communities across the country; and participate more actively in national arts advocacy activities on behalf of the chamber music field, all while distributing nearly \$700,000 annually in direct financial support to ensembles and presenters nationwide.

As 2013 comes to a close, we are now embarking on a new Plan with a new vision for the field. Many of the action items of this Plan, extending 2014-2018, were inspired by CMA's *National Conversations Project*, which concluded in 2012. Through the project, CMA held focus groups of classical and jazz musicians and presenters in Seattle, San Francisco, Detroit, Chicago, the Twin Cities, and New York City, and conducted a national online survey. The results were compiled into two reports, which were later studied and discussed by a Strategic Planning Committee and CMA's Board of Directors.

This Plan is an outgrowth of the challenges and issues that were articulated in those conversations by the members of the chamber music field. The strategies and actions contained herein are made in direct response.

II. Current Challenges External to the Field

When Chamber Music America was founded in 1977, support for the arts was on the rise. Local and regional arts organizations were being created or professionalized, state and local arts councils were flourishing, and funding—especially to seed new organizations—was available at the state and federal levels of government.

In 2014, arts organizations find themselves in a very different situation. Government funding for the arts has been repeatedly decreased at the federal level, and those cuts have been passed on to state arts councils' appropriations. Smaller organizations that received modest government grants are feeling the strain of five or ten percent decreases to their grants that have been used to offset rent or utilities expenses.

Since the economic downturn of 2008, arts workers have been furloughed or laid off, and many have lost health insurance and retirement benefits as arts organizations have struggled to balance their budgets. This economic reality has led many talented professionals with marketing, development, and managerial expertise to leave the field entirely in search of higher paying positions in other fields.

The Great Recession had far-reaching effects on all segments of society. Families who were once able to afford to attend arts events eliminated non-essential ticket purchases, and individual instrument lessons for children were put on hold. These spending constraints have had a direct effect on musicians and presenters whose livelihoods are sustained by teaching, performing, and presenting the arts.

Cultural and societal changes have also had an impact on the performing arts. Through the internet, music is widely available for at-home listening, and performances of favorite artists are regularly seen on Youtube or through live-streamed or archived performances. Audience etiquette has changed dramatically with the advent of technology. Electronic devices are omnipresent, and younger audiences look forward to sharing their cultural experiences in real time with their Facebook friends and Twitter followers rather than silencing their phones and iPad minis to sit passively at a live performance.

The cultural composition of our country's communities is changing at an equally accelerating rate. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of the United States as a whole increased by about 9.7 percent from 2000 to 2010, but the Hispanic population rose by approximately 43 percent while non-Hispanic white and black/African American populations grew by only 5.7 percent and 12.3 percent respectively. At present, approximately one of every two children under the age of two is non-white, and at its current rate of change, the non-white population will soon represent an even greater percentage of the population.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, men and women over the age of 55 make up nearly 25 percent of the current work force; 8.6 percent of men and 3.9 percent of women over the age of 75 are still working.

While these statistics are neither good nor bad, they tell a story that is important for musicians and presenters to know. Our country's population is the well from which current and potential arts consumers are drawn; it is those artists and organizations that recognize their community's changing demographics, address the challenges that arise, and seize the opportunities that they necessarily create, who will flourish in the years ahead.

III. Current Challenges Within the Field

According to Steven Tepper, associate director of the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University and senior scholar of the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP), there is a high correlation between graduates of arts colleges/conservatories and job satisfaction. In his recent survey of 13,581 alumni of 154 arts colleges and conservatories, including graduates from fine arts, theater, dance, music, creative writing, media arts, film, design and architecture programs between 2005 and 2009, as well as those who graduated in 2000, 1995 and 1990, 92 percent who want to work said they are currently employed and 41 percent are working as professional artists.

The survey results indicated that artists are highly entrepreneurial: more than 60 percent were self-employed. However, few professional artists were satisfied with their level of income, and only one-third of professional artists were satisfied with their level of job security.

It is no surprise that a majority of arts graduates would be self-employed. Full-time jobs for musicians have never been plentiful and with orchestras struggling to sustain full seasons, the number of weeks of employment in the symphonic field has diminished.

And yet, students continue to flock to conservatories and schools of music each year, and enrollments are at record highs. The 2012 Common Data Set for New England Conservatory shows that the school admitted only 30 percent of those who applied. In 2011, total enrollment was 775 with 416 representing undergraduates. The Juilliard School admitted only seven percent of applicants in 2012, with a total enrollment of 969, 645 of whom are undergraduates.

These statistics reinforce that the field is competitive; if we estimate that Juilliard's freshmen class is 180 (based on a total four-year enrollment of 645), then approximately 2,500 young artists applied for admission. These figures also indicate that a growing number of young people are interested in pursuing a career in the performing arts, despite the prospects for full-time employment and adequate compensation.

The National Endowment for the Arts conducted research on arts consumers, the results of which are available in its *2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, released in September, 2013. The survey revealed that 71 percent of consumers accessed the arts through electronic media, which includes television, radio, CDs, DVDs, and the internet reached through computers and handheld or mobile devices. Of the various arts disciplines examined, music was by far the most-accessed art form. However, only 8.8 percent of all adults nationwide, or 20.7 million adults, attended at least one classical music event in the 2012 survey year and only 8.1 percent, or 19 million adults attended a jazz event. The survey did not distinguish between large and small ensemble music events.

In addition, only 12 percent had themselves played a musical instrument in the past year; of those, two percent had played classical music and only one percent had played jazz.

These figures are cause for concern, especially since participation has decreased since the 2008 survey was conducted. Factors affecting our field directly are changing as rapidly as those affecting our external environment.

IV. Vision

CMA envisions chamber music woven into the fabric of every community, allowing all members of the field to flourish artistically and economically.

Mission

The mission of Chamber Music America is to develop, support, and strengthen the chamber music field.

Values

CMA values

- all styles of chamber music;
- tradition and innovation;
- a diverse chamber music community at every level of experience and knowledge;
- compensation for chamber music professionals that is commensurate with their artistry and training;
- chamber music's potential to exemplify democracy, mutual respect, and empathy.

V. Strategic Directions

- Services to the Field
- Building Audiences
- Sustaining Chamber Music America

A. Strategic Direction: Services to the Field

CMA was founded in 1977 to address the lack of funding available to the chamber music field at that time. Its first program was a Residency Grant Program, which provided direct financial support to ensembles—most of which were not incorporated as not-for-profit organizations, and thus, were not eligible for grants from foundations or government agencies. Supporting the field through grant programs became a cornerstone of CMA's mission and vision.

Although individual grant programs have been introduced and retired as their funding streams have changed, CMA's commitment to supporting the field has remained steadfast. In 1992 CMA received an endowment grant of \$1.2 million from The Wallace Foundation to support CMA's Residency Programs in perpetuity. This fund was augmented 2000 – 2003 with a matching grant of \$2.25 million from the Helen F. Whitaker Fund, a long-time CMA funder, which was preparing to end its philanthropic activities. CMA met the match, increasing its Residency Endowment Fund to nearly \$6 million in restricted gifts, which has permitted CMA to support residency activity despite economic turbulence and funders' shifting priorities.

The Board of Directors has emphasized the importance of CMA's continued grantmaking, its ongoing career and professional development programs, its member-driven website, and the ongoing dialogue with its members, all of which highlight the critical importance of its first Strategic Direction.

Objective: Provide programs, services, and opportunities that respond to the current needs of the field and anticipate future changes and trends.

Actions:

- a. *Encourage the activities of artists and presenters through direct financial support, career development programs, and continuing education.*

Recognizing the critical need and importance of financial support to the field, CMA will continue to fund ensembles and presenters for the creation and performance of multiple styles of chamber music.

CMA will maintain its current portfolio of professional development programs: the annual national conference, *First Tuesdays* seminars, regional workshops, and individual/group consultations.

- b. *Create professional development programs that focus on emerging musicians, presenters, and managers in the field.*

Seasoned ensemble-music performers and administrators have negotiated the changing cultural landscape throughout their careers and have accumulated invaluable knowledge that must be communicated to younger generations. To ensure that young professionals will have the opportunity to learn from established leaders in their specific areas of focus, CMA will create a mentoring program for members of the field under the age of 30.

Our technology-based society demands that information be accessible digitally and immediately. CMA will grow its online presence, offering opportunities to younger professionals for greater digital participation in CMA's programs.

With the rise of digitally accessible information comes the need for in-person, real time connections. Building relationships remains one of the most important avenues toward musical collaborations and managerial problem solving. CMA will expand the offerings and networking opportunities for young professionals at the annual CMA conference.

- c. *Initiate a micro-grant program that provides financial support for administrative or artistic projects at a pivotal point in an ensemble's or organization's trajectory.*

Chamber music professionals are entrepreneurs who have proven through numerous economic downturns that their music will prevail. However, the field as a whole is under-resourced, forcing creative and innovative ideas to be continually put on the backburner. CMA will create a program that offers modest grants for projects with the potential to advance a career or organization.

- d. *Produce regional and online convenings that will encourage knowledge-sharing, collaborative problem-solving, peer connections, and networking.*

CMA will create more opportunities for digital participation in its professional development offerings. Grant application workshops will be offered as webinars; *First Tuesdays* will be live-streamed with audience participation from online viewers; additional opportunities for interaction among members on CMA's website will be examined.

CMA will also continue to increase the number of regional convenings it produces annually, focusing its efforts in geographic areas beyond the New York tri-state area.

- e. *Collect and disseminate data for and about the chamber music field.*

Anecdotal information from and about the field is not enough to make the case for increased funding, nor does it provide professionals with data that is essential for informed decision-making. CMA will collect and organize data from the field on an annual basis, and make it available for use by its members.

CMA will research the feasibility of creating and codifying mechanisms to alleviate the administrative burdens faced by musicians and presenters nationwide.

CMA will work with its colleague service organizations to distill and disseminate other research in the performing arts that will complement information about the small ensemble music field.

- f. *Advocate for the chamber music field at the local, state, and national levels.*

Recognizing its responsibility to represent the chamber music field – its concerns, challenges, and ideas – to legislators, journalists, and the general public, CMA understands the importance of gathering and evaluating appropriate data, creating field-wide policy, and crafting a unified message. Accordingly, CMA will create a Policy Committee to identify and study the issues of utmost importance to the field of small ensemble music, and to articulate them in a clear and compelling way.

As the committee’s work advances, CMA will create a Research and Advocacy staff position to coordinate the collection of data and formulations of policy with appropriate advocacy responses.

- g. *Monitor and evaluate ongoing programs to ensure quality and impact.*

To ensure that CMA’s programs and services are effectively addressing the field’s most important needs, CMA will periodically evaluate program goals and achievements, and make adjustments accordingly.

B. Strategic Direction: Building Audiences

A thriving environment for small-ensemble music is dependent not only on high-quality music-making by a variety of ensembles and dedicated presenters who are knowledgeable about and committed to their communities, but also to enthusiastic concert-going audiences.

The global and technological society in which we live presents challenges that audiences of generations past did not encounter. Live performances of jazz and classical music are but two options in the broad spectrum of the arts and cultural entertainment from which consumers may choose. It is incumbent on the chamber music community to invite audiences to be full partners in the live chamber music experience rather than expecting them to be passive recipients of the art form. Experiencing the vibrancy and dynamism of today’s small ensembles has the potential to transform audiences from occasional attenders to committed followers.

However, current performance conventions will need to be examined, and the field’s perspective on drawing audiences into the performance will need to be adjusted. Chamber music’s portability gives it an enormous advantage over larger art forms whose size and scope prohibit them from being presented in smaller and alternative venues, where audiences will enjoy a more personal experience.

Exploring new marketing techniques, inviting key local leaders to become advocates for chamber music in their communities, and providing greater access for ticket buyers to information about the artists and compositions prior to the performance, will increase the likelihood that newcomers to the art form will decide to make a ticket purchase, and will enhance the concert experience for those already attending.

Chamber Music America's responsibility is not only to support its professional membership, but to be a leader in expanding and sustaining audiences for small-ensemble music.

Objective: Increase awareness of, and audiences for, chamber music

Actions

- a. *Encourage experimentation and innovation in the areas of chamber music presentation and marketing.*

Over the past five years, numerous research studies have been conducted that indicate how audience preferences are changing. The traditional concert venue is being challenged by new performance spaces that permit food/beverage, present different styles of music on consecutive evenings or even within the same program, and encourages dialogue between artists and audiences. The word "participation" no longer means "attendance"; audiences are eager to create a concert "experience" which involves more than passively receiving the music.

CMA will focus on this topic by gathering examples of successful audience-building strategies that have been effective across the country, and disseminate them through its website, conferences, and publications.

CMA will engage experts in the field of marketing and customer/audience trends to inform the membership through articles, seminars, and webinars of techniques and strategies that are working in fields other than small-ensembles music.

- b. *Provide information to the field on national demographic changes and trends.*

In addition to conducting research within and about the field, CMA will inform its constituents about national issues and conditions that affect the field. Sessions at the annual conference, feature articles in *Chamber Music* magazine, topic-specific webinars, and the utilization of multiple digital platforms will be explored to stimulate discussion and problem-solving.

- c. *Disseminate information to chamber music professionals on successful audience-engagement models.*

CMA's Residency Grant Programs have supported successful audience-engagement activities since 1978. CMA will create a digital library of residency projects to encourage replication across the country.

- d. *Provide a forum for peer-to-peer sharing of residency and education information.*

The ensemble music field is filled with ensembles and presenters doing innovative residencies and building audiences through educational activities. Through online seminars, conference sessions, and regional gatherings, CMA will create opportunities for the members of the field to communicate with each other, share ideas and successful practices, and benefit from each other's expertise.

- e. *Expand the reach and effectiveness of National Chamber Music Month in the United States.*

Promote participation more vigorously among ensembles and presenters.

Establish partnerships with other organizations, such as public radio stations, municipalities, and arts councils to help focus attention on the activities occurring in their regions.

Engage a Public Relations professional to promote the month to media outlets across the country.

C. Strategic Direction: Chamber Music America's Long-Term Strength

The many initiatives outlined in this Plan will not be achievable without attention to Chamber Music America's own strength and longevity. CMA is an amalgam of its Board, membership, and administrative staff; if any one of these elements is fragile, the entire network will be adversely affected.

The first two Strategic Directions are member-focused; serving ensemble-music professionals and working to increase audiences for the art form are top priorities. The third Strategic Direction is inwardly focused on building CMA's own revenue streams, strengthening the Board, and optimizing the staff's crucial role in administering CMA's programs and services.

Objective: Bolster CMA's human and financial resources to enable long-term sustainability and growth

Actions

- a. *Identify and cultivate a greater number of Appointed Board members who will enable CMA to lead and serve the field.*

CMA's bylaws permit up to 15 Appointed Board members whose primary role is to bolster the organization financially; currently the Board has five Board members serving in this capacity. CMA will add one Appointed Board member each year for the next five years.

- b. *Expand the number of CMA's foundation and corporate funders.*

Approximately 80 percent of CMA's contributed income comes from two significant foundation funders. CMA will approach new foundation and corporate prospects in order to broaden its base of institutional support.

Engage a full-time development staff member to increase fundraising efforts.

- c. *Implement an Individual Gifts Program.*

CMA will continue its efforts to identify and cultivate a greater number of individual donors.

- d. *Ensure that CMA is diverse and inclusive in all areas of its programs and operations.*

CMA's greatest strength is the diversity of its membership. As an organization, it is a microcosm of the world – a variety of styles, races, generations, and functions within the small-ensemble field. In order to maximize this strength, CMA will continue to identify appropriate candidates for its Board and staff who will bring their unique perspectives to Board deliberations and staff implementation.

Through its conference showcasing, session topics, and keynote speakers, CMA will publicly demonstrate its commitment to inclusiveness and to the diversity that exists within the field of small ensemble music.

CMA will double its efforts to reach chamber music professionals across the country to inform them of our grant deadlines, application workshops, and individual consultations in an effort to increase access to all of our grant programs.

- e. *Evaluate CMA's current organizational structure to ensure optimal effectiveness.*

To be able to adapt to the continuing changes in the economy and the chamber music field itself, an organization must be in optimal operating condition. CMA will examine the structure, composition, roles and responsibilities of its Board and staff to ensure that it will be able to meet the demands of the future.

An efficient and economically viable office space is essential to an organization's longevity. CMA will establish a Maintenance and Equipment Fund in order to keep its headquarters in good condition, and its equipment compatible with current technology.

Anticipating financial trends and budgeting accordingly will position CMA to favorably adapt to short-term economic uncertainty as well as to longer-term market fluctuations. CMA will create multi-year budget projections commensurate with the implementation schedule developed for this Plan.

- f. *Regularly evaluate the elements of the Plan.*

CMA's Executive Committee will periodically review the Plan's Actions, suggesting course corrections, and bringing available opportunities not currently identified in the Plan to the attention of the full Board when necessary.