

# Michigan Festival of Sacred Music

## Strategic Plan 2016 -2019

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The Strategic Plan sets nine goals: [1] Build a more robust and active Board; [2] Establish a regular annual 10-month meeting schedule and attendance expectation; [3] Define and limit the role of the Executive Committee; [4] Evaluate current standing committee structure and discuss and implement needed changes; [5] Move Festival files, equipment, and records out of the Executive Director's home and into a rented office; [6] Clarify communication and reporting roles of paid staff; [7] Adopt clear Belief, Mission and Vision Statements, and develop methods for evaluating success in achieving them; [8] Focus on goals of Strategic Plan; [9] Explore option of offering Festival on an annual basis. Details regarding the steps needed to meet goals, and what the Board should expect as the result of achieving them are included in the body of this report.*

### BACKGROUND

*First we thank you for your dedication and enthusiasm. One of the fringe benefits of consulting with non-profits is the opportunity to work with the volunteers and staff who make Kalamazoo so appealing and who actively contribute to its "quality of life." Your willingness to build a stronger and more effective platform for the Michigan Festival of Sacred Music benefits our entire community. We appreciate that! And we have enjoyed getting to know you all.*

Our work started following meetings and discussion with Executive Director, Elizabeth Start. Subsequently in May 2015 we submitted a formal *Strategic Planning Proposal* to the Michigan Festival of Sacred Music. Later we were introduced to the Board at its June Board meeting. At that time we expected that all Board members were committed to actively participating in the planning process. Indeed, when first contacted to work with the MFSM, we expected a much different path than the one eventually taken.

To make sure as many stakeholders as possible could participate in the strategic planning process, we mutually agreed to accommodate rehearsal/work schedules, event and performance schedules, holiday celebrations, and winter and (eventually) spring break vacations. Between the first Retreat on September 10, 2015, the second Retreat on October 19, 2015, and the third Retreat on February 8, 2016 we solicited comments, information and documentation from the Board and Executive Director. In addition to confidential interviews (several lasting well over an hour) with eight individuals serving on the MFSM Board or working for the organization, we conducted interviews with members of the Kalamazoo arts and non-profit community.

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Based on background research, Board retreats, and extensive interviews<sup>1</sup> with individuals, we realized that creating a useful and realistic Strategic Plan for the Michigan Festival of Sacred Music (MFSM) required attention to *organizational* structure and stability before almost anything else. As a result of observation and many conversations, we were prompted to ask — does the Director receive appropriate and adequate support from the Board; are committees effective and active; is the Board strong enough and motivated enough to sustain the MFSM if the Executive Director were to resign; are human resources valued, given adequate guidelines and regularly evaluated; and are programming and financial resources appropriately coordinated and prioritized. In other words, is the organization sustainable?

No one on the Michigan Festival of Sacred Music Board of Directors will be surprised to read that *almost every member* expressed a desire for some sort of change! In our meetings with individuals, it soon became clear that the corporate culture of the MFSM has not supported open, consistent and transparent communication; and no one has wanted to challenge the *status quo*, or create “hurt feelings,” or initiate complicated discussions by formally addressing sensitive or contentious issues. Of course serving as a volunteer on a non-profit board should be pleasant. However, as the Harvard Business Review points out, an avoidance pattern “creates disconnects..., unnecessary revisions in project plans, and lower standards of performance — all of which complicate organizational life.”<sup>2</sup>

Following the February Retreat and additional discussion with the Executive Director, we revised the proposed *Strategic Plan*. We believe the following Plan clearly and accurately represents the needs and aspirations of the MFSM. The effective implementation of this plan will follow several overlapping sequences of action. For each action costs, responsible personnel and deadlines are identified in an Appended *Strategic Timeline*.

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<sup>1</sup>All participants were assured that information would be shared in aggregate but not attributed to any particular person or other organization.

<sup>2</sup> <https://hbr.org/2010/08/is-your-culture-too-nice/>

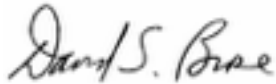
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*The Strategic Plan* recognizes that most change needs to be gradual and focussed. There is no progress if goals are overwhelming or too detailed. The *Strategic Plan* proposed here for the MFMS lists only nine strategic goals. We recommend adopting this Plan and beginning its implementation immediately. The first step will be to go through the accompanying *Strategic Timeline* to assign<sup>3</sup> specific deadlines and responsibilities.

The Strategic Goals of the Plan are designed to improve communications, mitigate resentment of an Executive Committee authoritarian approach to management, and to build a stronger, more effective and more satisfying Board experience.

Cordially,



David S. Brose, Ph.D.



Barbara H. Brose

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<sup>3</sup> The assigning of deadlines and responsibilities is a group activity by the Board accompanied by discussion and resulting in consensus!

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### GOALS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

- I. *Building a more robust Board* will take time, but the existence of, and focus on, new Strategic Goals will communicate the organization's improved governance and management approach to current and prospective officers.
- II. *Establishing regular meetings dates and times and attendance expectations* will immediately begin to improve communication, orderly governance and planning.
- III. *Defining and limiting the role of the Executive Committee* immediately engages the entire Board in discussion, decisions and planning.
- IV. *Revising committee structure and mandates* clarifies responsibilities, encourages innovation and participation, and improves morale.
- V. *Moving records and equipment into a commercial office* makes them accessible to officers and Board members as needed, ensures their integrity, and protects the Director.
- VI. *Defining employee roles and reporting structure* clarifies status of employees and their interactions with Board members and committees.
- VII. *Adopting "statements" and evaluating success in terms of lofty aspirations* will help determine future formats, locations, and program content.
- VIII. *Focussing on the goals of the Strategic Plan* keeps everyone in tune with individual and organizational progress, challenges, and responsibilities.
- IX. *Exploring options for producing an annual Festival in discussion within the Programs Committee, and then with the entire Board and break-out groups* will help develop a more cohesive Board, and may also result in more audience participation.

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### NINE STRATEGIC GOALS AND STEPS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE THEM

#### I. *Strategic Goal:* **Build a more robust and active Board**

- A. Assess the time constraints of current members; their expertise; their length of service; and attendance at Board meetings, and decide if there is a need for an infusion of new talent and energy to help sustain the Festival or move it forward
- B. Develop procedures that allow you to successfully expand, revitalize, and retain a Board
  - (1) recognize pitfalls of casual recruitment
  - (2) identify characteristics that make a productive Board member
  - (3) identify skills and expertise needed on the Board
  - (4) identify and implement new policies and procedures that make serving on the Board satisfying and engaging
- C. Adopt policies that require careful, orderly and strategic recruitment of candidates to serve on the Board of Directors
- D. Establish 6-month and annual goals for Board and perform Annual and 18-Month Reviews, and (if needed) adjustments
- E. Elect officers who have demonstrated ability to delegate, plan ahead, work collaboratively and lead productive discussions and meetings

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### II. *Strategic Goal:* **Establish a regular annual 10-month meeting schedule and attendance expectation**

- A. Conduct meetings with formal Call to Order, introduction of guests, approval of Minutes and Financial / Budget Reports, discussion of issues, votes on motions, and reports from committees.
- B. Given the Executive Director's part-time work schedule for Festival and other organizations, define those areas of discussion that the Board and committees can continue in the Executive Director's absence, such as:
  - (1) Board composition, nominating procedures and prospective nominees
  - (2) Committee assignments, challenges and progress
  - (3) Scheduled evaluations for the Board and its committees (not individuals however) based on previously established goals
  - (4) Scheduled evaluation for the Executive Director based on previously established goals
  - (5) Bi-monthly include "how are we doing" in terms of our Strategic Goals; what are our obstacles and successes?
- B. Keep an attendance roster; monitor attendance, and expect Board members to participate in at least 70% of the Board meetings

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### III. *Strategic Goal:* **Define and limit the role of the Executive Committee**

- A. The Executive Committee is composed of the organization's elected officers and the Executive Director
- B. The Committee meets as needed to discuss issues requiring confidentiality
- C. The Committee meets<sup>4</sup> quarterly or more to discuss needed policies; to examine issues in depth, and to bring related proposals or motions to the entire Board for consideration
- D. In the case of a situation so urgent that there is no time to inform the Board fully, or if it is so time-sensitive that it needs to be acted upon during the Board's summer recess, the Committee may make decisions on behalf of the Board
- E. The Secretary takes minutes of the meetings and decisions. The President reports these minutes or decisions to the Board as fully as appropriate, and informs the Board of such emergency decisions asap. He/she brings motions to the Board for consideration
- F. The Board holds the Executive Committee accountable for these procedures

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<sup>4</sup> The Executive Committee meeting should take place at least one week prior to any Board meeting

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### IV. *Strategic Goal: Evaluate current standing committee structure and discuss and implement needed changes, including changes to bylaws.*

- A. **Cultivation Committee**: The Cultivation Committee builds and nurtures personal and institutional relationships with potential and actual supporters and donors. The committee develops levels of donor benefits and recognition; and works closely with marketing to communicate with benefactors, audiences, patrons, foundations, and individuals (including volunteers<sup>5</sup>) to connect them to the Festival and to thank them for their support. Cultivation committees also plan and implement fundraising strategies, and sometimes appoint sub-committees to manage particular special events.
- B. **Marketing Committee**: The Marketing Committee recommends communications strategies and focus for the organization. The committee deliberates on how to maximize marketing impact on the various communities<sup>6</sup> the organization serves. The committee works directly with marketing staff as well as with the Executive Director to plan, approve and implement print and media outreach and design; and they help set schedules that allow appropriate opportunity to make suggestions and proofread.
- C. **Programs Committee**: The Programs Committee analyses the structure of the Festival and brings related issues to the Board for discussion and decisions. The committee shares information with the Board (Marketing and Development Committees especially) regarding peripheral activities such as master classes, outreach to educational communities, and collaboration opportunities. The committee is a resource for the Executive Director, providing a sounding board for her/his artistic choices, and an advisory voice regarding scheduling.
- D. **Finance Committee**: The Finance Committee, chaired by the Board Treasurer, oversees the Festival budget, financial controls, investments and grants; and recommend policies for Board approval. The Treasurer provides financial reports to the Board regularly, signs checks, and has access to all bank statements, contracts, and income and expense records.
- E. **Leadership Development Committee**: The Leadership Development Committee plans orderly procedures for recruitment, cultivation, and vetting of prospective Board members. It recommends prospects to the Board for approval. It challenges committee chairs to build inclusive committees to expand the diversity and numbers of the volunteer work force, and to help develop prospective Board members. The Leadership Development Committee conducts formal Board Orientations, and addresses issues of governance and best practice compliance.

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<sup>5</sup> This committee will have direct access to all Volunteer Coordinator files in order to develop volunteer selection/diversity matrix and orientation materials; and to evaluate effectiveness of volunteer participation for events and performances.

<sup>6</sup> Communities are not limited to geographic entities, but include groups of people with affinity



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### VI. *Strategic Goal:* **Move Festival files, equipment, and records out of the Executive Director's home and into a (commercial) rented office**

- A. Find appropriate neutral<sup>7</sup> rental property with office and meeting space<sup>8</sup>
- B. Add line item of \$4000/year to the budget
- C. Document rationale<sup>9</sup> and improvements in operations as the result of this move
- D. Seek grants and other funds to support cost of rental in operating budget
- E. Develop policies and protocols regarding access to the office, equipment and files

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<sup>7</sup>Avoid appearance of religious affiliation

<sup>8</sup> Consider <http://jointhebureau.com/locations/downtown/>

<sup>9</sup> Brose & Brose Consulting willing to help with this

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### VI. *Strategic Goal*: Clarify communication and reporting roles of paid staff

#### A. Executive Director

1. Reports to Board of Directors
2. Speaks to public as authorized representative of the Festival
3. Assigns duties to other staff and evaluates their performance
4. Recommends changes to job descriptions or roles to the Board

#### E. Marketing Coordinator

1. Reports to Executive Director
2. Employed thru monthly retainer
3. Works directly with Marketing Committee
4. Submits annual *Marketing Report* to the Executive Director beginning in 2016 (to be distributed to the Board)

#### E. Volunteer Coordinator & Festival Assistant

1. Reports to Executive Director
2. Paid on hourly basis
3. Responds to Development Committee requests for information and files, and reports volunteer attendance and overall effectiveness at performances and events
4. Submits *Master List Volunteer Roster* spreadsheet with current contact information annually beginning in 2016 as part of *Volunteer Activity Report* to the Executive Director (to be distributed to the Board)

#### F. Board of Directors respects the “chain of command” and communicates with employees accordingly

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### VII. *Strategic Goal: Adopt clear Belief, Mission and Vision Statements; and develop methods for evaluating success in achieving them.*

- A. Belief Statement: *The intentional use of the intrinsic power of music reaches across faiths and cultures.*
- B. Mission Statement: *We serve audiences and communities of all faiths and cultures by providing opportunities to connect with each other through music.*
- C. Vision Statement: *The connecting power of music fosters mutual understanding and respect, and builds community harmony.*
- D. Tag line: *celebrating the connecting power of music to reach across faiths and cultures*
- E. Coordinate all marketing materials with the approved statements
- F. Seek assistance<sup>10</sup> to to develop evaluation tools that test all assumptions related to aspirations and purpose; name of the organization; and MFSM’s unique role in the community.
  - (1) Determine if event placements at various venues / locations are essential and effective indicators of the ability to reach across faiths and cultures and build internally diverse audiences, or do they create silos? Develop evaluation tools.
  - (2) Programs are intended to increase spirituality, mutual respect and tolerance. Do they succeed? Develop evaluation tools.
  - (3) Does the composition and engagement of the Board reflect the Belief Statement?
  - (4) Does the word “sacred” adequately communicate MFSM’s intent? Does it limit or expand its impact? Develop evaluation tools.
  - (5) Identify social and geographic communities that are included in MFSM’s intended audience.

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<sup>10</sup> Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA), Karen Tice, 734 747-9681, [ktice@feraonline.com](mailto:ktice@feraonline.com) (based in Ann Arbor, office in Kalamazoo) or iEval, Wendy Tackett 269-420-3417 [wendy@ieval.net](mailto:wendy@ieval.net)

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**VIII. Strategic Goal: Focus on goals of Strategic Plan**

- A. Distribute copies of the *Strategic Plan* and accompanying *Strategic Timeline* to each Board member<sup>11</sup>
- B. Vote to formally adopt the *Strategic Plan*
- C. Set aside time for all Board members to participate in work sessions during which they go through the *Strategic Timeline* step by step, and collaboratively assign responsibilities and deadlines, and discuss costs
- D. Review the *Plan* annually at Board Orientation
- E. Post a copy of the *Strategic Timeline* in the Festival office
- F. Assign a positive and enthusiastic individual to monitor progress and:regularly lead discussion related to progress and success at Board meetings
  - (1) ask Board members to check off accomplishments and deadlines on the *Timeline* as they are met
  - (2) bring to the Board's attention the "cost" in terms of Board focus, time, human or other resources related to opportunities that are diversions from the Plan
- F. Review (and revise if needed) the plan at the end of fiscal year 2017

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<sup>11</sup> Nominating Committee can also use the plan in discussion with prospective Board members

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### IX. *Strategic Goal:* **Explore option of offering Festival on an annual basis**

- A. Programs Committee and Executive Director discuss issues thoroughly and bring recommendations to the Board for further discussion; including:
  - (1) venues
  - (2) schedules
  - (3) # of performances
  - (4) diversity of performances
  - (5) availability of artists
  - (6) all-Michigan all artists
- B. Ask for Board approval over two year period, proceed as follows:
- C. Programs Committee, Marketing Committees meet together to:
  - (1) (committee chairs) assign someone to take written minutes of all decisions/actions
  - (2) identify immediate goals
  - (3) develop booking and production timelines
  - (4) identify volunteer jobs and needs
  - (5) suggest collaborations with Development Committee to formally recognize and thank donors and volunteers, including but not limited to:
    - a. “green room” party after last performance
    - b. recognition from the stage
    - c. thank you letters signed by committee members
- D. Committees monitor progress and report to Board regularly
- E. Coordinate plans with independent expert in program evaluations and marketing
- F. Formulate recommendations regarding option of annual Festival, and bring it to the entire Board for consideration
  - (1) Vote on the recommendation
  - (2) Apply planning and scheduling recommendations
  - (3) Conduct debriefing following Festival(s) and identify possibilities for improvement