

May 12, 2020

**New Music Virtual Town Hall Meeting: Board Leadership
Notes**

Guest Speakers

- Claude Arpels – Board President, International Contemporary Ensemble
- [Astrid Baumgardner](#) – Board Member, Program Committee Chair, American Composers Orchestra
- Stanford Thompson – Founder and Executive Director, Play On Philly; Board Member (Co-Chair of the Philadelphia Chapter), American Composers Forum; Board Member – The Presser Foundation, Marian Anderson Award, Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance

Questions Answered:

1. I'm curious if decision making structures are changing / distinctions between board / staff / artist, decision making.
 - Jennifer Kessler - put in place at ICE to put a musicians committee together. Accelerated that process and now we have a committee formed - join board meetings and senior leadership team.
 - Will McDaniel - now is not the time for radical re-thinking for how decisions are being made. Comes back to trust with management and board. Relying on relationships.
 - Jennifer - opportunity to strengthen how decisions are being made.
 - Stanford Thompson - could be a communication issue, not necessarily a decision issue. Consider what really needs to change.
2. I'm wondering if anyone has suggestions for young organizations who have boards that are working boards rather than giving boards.
 - Claude Arpels - have a board that has a little of everything.
 - Astrid Baumgardner - I think we are moving towards a more collaborative way of making decisions. At the ACO, we welcome a variety of creative inputs.
 - Gavin Chuck - making case for contemporary art and expression. Story to tell the public that takes the current situation into account. Prototype those stories with board - try out different story lines. Why are we shifting or not?
 - Arlene and Larry Dunn - Love what Gavin is saying . . . need to get the message out, with compelling stories, about why this moment of crisis demands new art to help us all explore and integrate this crisis experience and move forward
3. Boards tend to be risk-averse because of their fiduciary responsibilities. This moment is filled with unknowns and therefore is riskier. Can someone address ways to shift risk-averse cultures vs. innovation?
 - Astrid, ACO - artistic decisions made by artistic leaders. Board members not there for artistic decisions - that informs how we view risk. Mindset in crisis - have to take action

and that implies risk. Tomorrow's info can be completely different. Forward momentum is important but doing it honestly is critical.

- Ed Yim, ACO - view board as thought partner - keeps focused on mission and strategic plan. Always tie back to core values of organization. If we have a strong mission and strategic plan then the organization stays on track.
4. What's the general take on the likelihood of a larger federal arts relief package coming into the pipeline at some point? Are you noticing any momentum in the field for advancing that and/or lobbying for it? = Kit Baker, former ICE staff and Colorado Arts Leader
- Claude Arpels - budgeting is super conservative.
 - Katinka Kleijn - Regarding lobbying, I know that the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and New York City Ballet have formed a coalition to lobby.

Resources & Links

- Astrid Baumgardner - <https://www.astridbaumgardner.com/>
- Stanford Thompson - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/stanfordleon/>
- [Board Source](https://boardsource.org/) - <https://boardsource.org/>
- Resources for Continuous Improvement - <https://leapambassadors.org/continuous-improvement/>
- Video- Steps You Can Take Immediately to Diversify Your Board and Major Donor Base <https://grantspace.org/training/steps-you-can-take-immediately-to-diversify-your-board-and-major-donor-base/>
- Here's what's next up at Candid:

8 Steps for Cultivating Relationships with Individual Donors

Price: \$50 through 5/18; \$99 starting 5/19

May 26 at 2 pm ET

<https://bit.ly/052620Sanford>

Cultivating Donors in a Time of Crisis

Price: \$25

June 11 at 2 pm ET

<https://bit.ly/GS061120webinar>

<http://www.managementcenter.org/resources/assigning-responsibilities/>

Notes

Claude Arpels - ICE Board President

- Pandemic presented an existential crisis. ICE has always had conservative approach to financial management.
- At the beginning of the year taking on Executive Director transition w/ Jennifer. Set a goal to prioritize board development. Started to plan for our 20th year anniversary.
- Because of the crisis we have changed priorities + way we function as board
 - 1 - meeting schedule format. Full board usually meets quarterly. Now meeting more frequently as a full board - monthly basis. Weekly for committees now - finance, development. Reinforce board engagement during this time. Have every board member understand the fluid situation that we are in and have participation in decision-making.
 - Apply for PPP funding.
 - Lucky to have been meeting via zoom before time.
 - 2 - development - focusing on existing network instead of cultivating new relationships.
 - Asked board members to accelerate board pledges and payments.
 - Individual cultivation - had been talking about 20th anniversary planning. Falling back on existing networks and reconnecting with existing donors who may have fallen off network.
 - 3 - redefining our goals + redefining how we measure success
 - Usually measure success in terms of budget. This year, not sure how we will measure.
 - If our budget comes in at half but its balance is this how we define success? Securing continuation of organization? Maxing out resources? Taking bigger risks financially?
- Jennifer has made executive transition very easy for us, natural fit
- Board development - not sure how to undertake that in this climate.
- Stopped doing gala long time ago, but for our 20th anniversary wanted to do one in 2021. But who knows.
- Our board is lucky that our org has been in solid, financial state. Leadership team of Jennifer, Rebekah, Ross and incredible staff.
- Jennifer - ongoing communication with board has been invaluable. Have a board full of champions and ambassadors.

Astrid Baumgardner - ACO Program Committee Chair (Board chair for 8 years and co-chair)

- Applied for PPP.
- Now we are in “recovery”
 - This is the new normal - social distancing.
 - How do we keep our orchestra up and strong, present? Shout-out to Ed! Ed re-energized board - board pairing. Early-on - had strategic plan for priorities.

- “that was concerts, emerging composers, education and diversity ” - Ed Yim correcting during digital interruption of Astrid re: ACO priorities.
- Committees meet regularly.
- Meeting with musicians and board
- At ACO - Make best possible decisions, clear communications, creating instead of reacting - course correct as new info becomes available.
- 25-30% drop in Individual Giving, Government Support, Institutional Giving - money is going to be tight. Philanthropy won't be as malleable
- ACO Program Committee - Think Tank - to make sure delivering on mission
 - Shifted focus to: 1) deep scenario planning for next season 2) robust online focus ; 4 prongs of strategic plan
 - Highly unlikely to be able to give live performances in fall. This has been an underlying assumption in scenario planning.
 - Built in check-in dates w/ board - june, november, january - revisit decisions.
- Leaders have an obligation to be honest and transparent and to foster optimism. Having plans is a way to foster optimism.
- Measuring cash flow. 3 months of cash on hand and in reserve.
- Had gala March 4th - lucky to do this under the wire.
- Hard to find new donors and board members in this period.
- Careful, sensitive asks to those close to us.
- Thinking about how to approach new prospects - doing research, looking for connections.
- Good leadership in this era: open/honest communication, fostering optimism, cultivating relationships, taking action and making decisions to course-correct.

Stanford Thompson - American Composers Forum Board Member

- Speak to three experiences - Play on Philly; Presser Foundation; American Composers Forum (ACF)
- Play on Philly
 - \$2.6M organization founded 10 yrs ago. Built conservative income models. Surpluses each year.
 - Few years ago implemented best practices for board governance. Prioritized feeding savings and reserves.
 - Entered crisis with access to cash and multi-year giving.
 - Goal to provide peace of mind to create a sense of community and slow down spending.
 - Running a marathon - this is going to last 12-18 months.
 - Response
 - All 32 teachers would be paid to annual school contracts. All program staff paid. 8 weeks in - senior staff too pay reduction.
 - Week 13 - admin staff will take 15% cut.
 - Week 16 - program staff will take a 50% cut which allows them to apply for unemployment.

- Those w/ family will take smaller cut 5-10%
 - Cover healthcare of all employees and their families; allow for pto pay-out
 - Avoided PPP program - through salary reduction we would save 2.5 times the amount of money that we would get from loan. Weren't sure if we would get a loan or how to get out of it.
 - Got tax relief
 - board/staff - called all 716 donors to say thank you, made no request. Those ppl sent unsolicited gifts more than what the PPP program would give us.
 - Why don't we always communicate this closely?
 - Planning in trimesters - every 4 months - programmatic impact, financial impact, people impact; then build out scenarios to lock-in what will offer in those 4 months.
- Presser foundation
 - Made \$1.5M of relief funds available.
 - Not just about cracks revealed; highlights that orgs have been lying/hiding skeletons. Don't hide skeletons, foundations can help.
 - Surprised how little innovation is happening and how much adapting is happening. How can we innovate? Ex. Create sesame street style program
- American Composers Forum
 - Good health but in challenged position - innovation piece
 - Membership model is obsolete.
 - Last fall held racial equity forum. Learned a lot how, collectively, we have been part of those problems. Magnified hierarchies - made it impossible to be neutral.