

True Concord Voices & Orchestra

Board Retreat

September 24, 2022

8:00AM – 12:30 PM

La Paloma Country Club: Santa Catalina Room

The board retreat was called to order at 8:15 AM

Attendance: Board Members: Eve Shapiro, Eric Holtan, Andy Watson, Sarah Dinham, Wes Moulton, Claire West, Julia Pernet, Susan Markovich, Pat Bjorhovde, Andy Robson, Nancy March, Luis Villa, Marcela Molina

Staff &c: Welz Kauffman, Josh Keeling, Madison Owen, Shawn Campbell, Philip Moody (Assistant Director)

Excused: Jeannette Segel, Lendre Kearns

Paula Van Ness, Facilitator:

Introductions: Going around the room, board members and staff answered questions about what makes True Concord unique and what they are proud of. Claire recorded responses on a presentation board.

Topics brought up:

- Quality of performances, best artists
- Innovation
- Employment for artists
- Champion of new music
- “Creative fearlessness”
- Introduced to choral music
- Collaborative nature: Eric was one of the first to join in collaboration with Tucson Desert Song Festival
- Great board – working board
- Financial solvency, 19 years and no deficit
- Artistic compensation
- Connection between various groups: artists, board, volunteers, etc.
- Flexibility & adaptiveness (ex: COVID), willingness to take (calculated) risks.
- Impact on future generations
- Highly respected organization
- Well run, both musically and administratively

Updates by Eric & Welz

Eric gave a presentation on the history of True Concord, our visions, and our culture.

Welz Kauffman spoke on his connection to the organization:

Welz has striven to eliminate chaos, anticipate projects earlier, and move on longer term goals.

Collaboration – Eric’s collaborative nature is evident in rehearsals: he’s willing to listen to people. We want to give Eric that room to breathe.

Increasing visibility – people in Tucson need to know who True Concord is... there are too many people who don’t. Side note – Scientists are the most powerful audience for Classical music!

Eric spoke on True Concord’s momentum, as we come off two of our best fundraising years *during COVID*.

Upcoming projects: getting back in the studio to record works of Runestad and Hagen. This will come close to exhaust the Dorothy Dyer Vanek Fund for Excellence.

We’re approaching several major anniversaries/opportunities: True Concord’s 20th season, the 250th of America’s founding, the 250th of Tucson’s founding, and soon after, True Concord’s 25th, 100th of Davis Monthan base.

Eric’s vision is that True Concord is the American ensemble to document the American experience through choral music. He expressed the need to commission and perform a work about racial harmony, by a composer of color, with a text that inspires us.

For America’s 250th, Eric imagines a larger project, with newly composed music and new arrangements, with bold visuals, celebrating America.

- New choral settings of Stephen Foster
- Recording the choral music of William Grant Still

Other dreams and possible projects:

- Collaborations with groups such as Voces8, etc.
- Collaborating with Peter Sellars
- A piece celebrating the 100th of Davis Monthan, celebrating aviation

True Concord is also pursuing new projects, including:

- First ever Composers in residence
- Possible recordings, tours, etc.

Compensation – we’ve come a long way in compensation for artists. We still have progress to make, but we are on our way.

Now may be the time for a major campaign to support these projects: Possibly \$1,000,000 multi-year campaign, which could be seeded with some of the \$380,000 bequest from Dorothy Vanek.

Board Basics - Sarah Dinham

Governance committee overview and asked for board feedback about what directors enjoy about being on the board.

Responses included: Enjoying meeting artists, meeting donors, enjoying the rapport for True Concord in the community, enjoying the board’s discussions and decision-making process, board’s collaborative and respectful culture, hosting, creating the “Bubble”, Eric’s receptiveness to new ideas, engagement of the board, being able to brag to people that they’re on the board!

Welz added, on Lendre’s behalf, that the board is asked to invite friends to concerts – we offer comp tickets for invitees

Conflict of interest forms were signed.

Business Meeting

Andy Robson discussed our Statement of Financial Position and Statement of Activity, explaining some of the particulars of our accounting system. Form 990 reports are available to anyone interested. (This was brought to the board in May)

The Balance sheet was discussed, topics including investment accounts and strategies, usage of Bequest money,

Motion to tentatively approve the Financials pending the Finance committee’s approval was made by Claire West, approved by the board unanimously.

Ticketing Report (Josh Keeling)

Josh presented the latest ticketing report, which shows sales up 25% over 2019-20 season sales at the same time of year.

Fund Development Report (Sandy Um)

Health policies (Eve Shapiro)

Eve reviewed True Concord's health & safety protocols for the season:

- Requiring audience masking this season, artists test before their travel to Tucson, and again in week
- Eve encouraged everyone to get the new bivalent booster.
- We are requiring masks despite other orgs not doing this, because True Concord is a largely vocal ensemble, and not masking is an unnecessary risk. Masking is a very small imposition to ask, as COVID is still in the community.

Next meeting will be November 16, 8:00 AM, at Tucson Girls Chorus HQ.

BREAK

Review Previous Work on Vision, Goals and Strategic Planning

Paula Van Ness

Introduced herself: Director of Center for Healthy Nonprofits (at CFSA)

Her career has consisted as CEO of numerous nonprofit orgs, including Make A Wish Foundation.

Updating our Plan

Today's approach:

Strengths

Opportunities

Aspirations

Results

"We live in a world our conversations create"

Strengths: The board has already created a long list of Strengths of the organization. Paula Van Ness asked for any additional strengths. Responses:

- Eric himself is an asset
- Financial strength – family of donors and continued growth

- The community we're in is an asset
- Willingness to experiment... commissioning, fundraising
- This board says YES... Can-do attitude
- Board is a safe place. Board members don't have their own agenda.
- Collaborative, non-competitive with other arts organizations – rising tides lift all boats.

Opportunities: What trends can we leverage? What are our stakeholders asking for? Great ideas we haven't been able to act on yet?

- Perhaps it's time to ask these questions to our stakeholders: Focus groups were brought up
- Getting behind the expertise of the Artistic Leadership.
- Short videos
 - Welz shared that Tiktok is the biggest driver of classical music audiences in the UK.
 - Video interviews have increased the accessibility of Eric – but short format videos could be an opportunity
- Collaborations and community involvement – audience growth, grant opportunities, etc.
- Our audiences want to learn, including mechanics of music, rehearsals & workshopping... Donors and audiences are interested! Behind-the-scenes is key.
 - People in Tucson self-identify as *lifelong learners*.
 - Donors attending rehearsals... has been visited in the past with mediocre success – how can we improve the concept?
- Youth – what are we doing to inspire and educate our future generations?
- UA Humanities Seminars, Learning Curve, OLLI, others for seminars on choral music, etc.
 - Paula: connections with artists – artists just speaking about their lives goes so far in building that recognition and connection
 - Mingling over cookies... also a key

Paula assigned the board to consider our top three opportunities.

- Now that we video our concerts... many people are asking if events are livestreamed.

Aspirations:

- Livestreaming

- Can expand reach & donor base
- Combined with an educational experience
- A touring project in celebration of the 250th
- Video availability
- Enhancing the support of artists everywhere
 - Longer, more sustainable basis, provide support to keep our artists in the field.
 - Our ongoing aspiration to pay artists more and more each season.
- Fund a local core group (octet?) for outreach and performances between large scale projects.
- Areas of Southern AZ that are unreached opportunities for live performances
- Enhance our ambition to reach out to youth.
 - Sandy: we want to be the ensemble that local youth dream of being in, just like the TSO was for her.
 - Visits to schools: TSO does this, but there isn't a professional choral ensemble doing this. For video-based education pieces, is there a way to make it more interactive?
 - Collaborate with other groups that are going to schools
 - Video could enable us to reach outside Tucson
 - Social media: livestreaming AND post-event interaction.
 - Julia: masterclasses with David Russell, broadcast on social media, were very successful.
- Is our goal to expand outside the local community? Andy R: yes but, there is still so much more we can do locally.
- The more things are recorded & filmed, musicians should be compensated.

Results: How do we know we are succeeding?

Ex: What are the signposts that tell us we are achieving our vision of “uplifting the human spirit”?

- Ex. Anecdotal words of audiences...
 - We can monitor income... how do we monitor:
 - Audience satisfaction, artist satisfaction, staff satisfaction?
- The fact that we continued presenting all through the pandemic
- Are we able to have other venues outside the Tucson area?
- Attracting more youth to True Concord's audience #s

Fundraising 101 – Presentation by Pat Bjorhovde & Sandy Um

Pat Bjorhovde and Sandy Um gave a presentation on the board's role in fundraising projects.

Discussion of fundraising strategies and ideas:

- Thanking calls – strategizing who calls who; first time donors, etc.
- Engaging subscribing non-donors
- Explaining to patrons that tickets alone don't fully support True Concord.
- Rehearsal-attending event suggested by Phil
- Parties in homes

Paula Van Ness: - Perhaps Nancy March in her capacity of Vice Chair of Strategic Initiatives can lead a team to do ad hoc work to follow up on these conversations...

- It's impossible to do everything that you can imagine... pick two or three activities you can act on.
- Continue the conversations and plans for strategic initiatives throughout the year!

Parting thoughts & reflections: Board members shared how they feel at the conclusion of the meeting and their outlook for the upcoming season and beyond!

Thoughts shared: Grateful, (re)energized, (re)connected, appreciative, curious, inspired, and looking forward!

The Retreat adjourned at 12:30 PM.