DIRECTOR'S DESK

EXELLENCE HOPE HARD WORK COMMUNITY

Pursuing the Potential of our Community

IS SOLANO COUNTY LIVING UP TO ITS FULL POTENTIAL? IS YOUNG ARTISTS CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC (YACM) LIVING UP TO ITS FULL POTENTIAL? ARE WE DOING ALL WE CAN TO ADVANCE OUR MISSION AND OUR PURPOSE?

These are the questions that I ponder as we approach our 12th year in nonprofit service dedicated to the development of youth through excellence in the musical arts.

It is a great pleasure and a tremendous responsibility to lead this organization and my hope is that together we can develop and realize a bold vision for YACM in the future; a vision that will pull together all available resources for the betterment of our young people and the community in which we live.

Over the last year, I have been reviewing our mission, pursuing professional development, critiquing our programs, assessing needs, and interviewing faculty, parents, and students in an effort to capture a complete picture of the context in which YACM is engaged. Through this process I have been prompted to reflect on the role of a music conservatory – specifically – our music conservatory. Great music conservatories are bastions of tradition and culture, repositories of that which inspire and arouse imagination, and they are dedicated to unlocking potential. Great music conservatories uphold a standard of excellence to inspire hope. They encourage diligence and hard work, and great conservatories make great communities.

Those four fundamental values – Excellence, Hope, Hard Work and Community – propelled YACM to its current preeminence as a leading youth development organization with over 2500 young people a year enrolled in music programs. Those four values were garnered from a mission statement written from a vision "dedicated to excellence in the performing arts", and understanding of the "significance of potential-achieving" musicianship to foster and develop human potential and social cohesion.

Many have asked me "what we do, or what is a conservatory"? I used to say, *"We are a music education and performing arts organization. A conservatory offers a cohesive and comprehensive music education program."* Today, however, I tell them, *"YACM is a youth development organization that promotes and instills excellence not as an end in itself, but rather as a means to multiply its beneficial impact on our society. We do this by instilling the habits and disciplines of excellence and developing human potential through leadership in the performing arts."*

Maintaining our values has helped us project and apply our purpose over the many years of changes and challenges. The challenges of the recession made deep and lasting wounds in our schools and our community. It takes courage to take losses and make change. It takes resilience to evolve and strike out in new directions. But YACM is a meaningful and courageous community, as our history reveals. As founder I made a commitment to the YACM community that ensured the conservatory continued despite the devastating financial effect of the recession. In 2009, the YACM board of directors agreed to create, from scratch, a new program called *Music Matters* to address the loss of music education in our schools. The following year, YACM adopted the failed Solano Youth Theatre program from Solano College, another recession fatality, to ensure its continued its significant impact in our community. In 2013 YACM recognized the impact of Music Therapy as a powerful tool for stimulating development in children with neural exceptionalities, and dedicated resources to invest in Solano Music Therapy. Today 80% of our outreach impacts minority, disadvantaged, and at-risk children. YACM has trained our community's most highly recognized young musicians and vocalists and every graduating YACM senior who has pursued college music as done so on scholarship. Throughout the years YACM has demonstrated the courage, resilience and willingness to make great change where there is great need.

Young Artists Conservatory of Music has empowered the community by continually reassessing where the greatest opportunities lie and taking on new challenges. For as large as our impact is today, our team is really quite small and our resources are growing more inadequate. I believe everyone – students, parents, faculty, staff, board, and alumni play a role in advancing the vision and purpose of YACM. However, we are stretched far to thin to withstand the stress on our limited resources – human and financial capital. It is time to greatly strengthen YACM's resources in continued pursuit of our potential. By unlocking YACM's potential we can help Solano live up to its potential.

In January and February, working in broad consultation with the diverse community of YACM, I will meet with community leaders and willing philanthropists to affirm a long-range planning initiative. We will develop new Advisory Committees and add new Board Members. Over the course of the next several months we will explore how best to continue growing the impact of YACM and assemble a roadmap for the next year and decade.

Building on our legacy and values, I want us to inspire each other and dream big together; to dare to have an even greater impact on our neighbors, community, and society. I want us to do so with optimism, integrity, generosity, and a focus on human well-being. If we do, we will live up to our potential in Solano County.

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