Brooklyn Music School Strategic Plan

Promoting Equity & Excellence in Music & Performing Arts Education

BMS Executive Committee

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**Introduction**

This plan was developed under the direction of the Board of Trustees of the Brooklyn Music School (BMS), as well as with input from BMS executive director, parents, faculty and staff, and has been updated to reflect the results and accomplishments of our most recent Fiscal Year 2019.

The Strategic Plan establishes the priorities that will drive the key initiatives of BMS for the next five years and beyond, including a high level five-year financial plan. The plan will be modified as required based upon unanticipated opportunities or events.

*At the moment, BMS is making far-reaching adjustments in response to the temporary suspension of in-person activities related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the uncertainties regarding the duration of this crisis, our forecasts for the current fiscal year are provisional and subject to change.*

However, the Vision, Mission, strategic goals, and planning framework will remain constant.

The plan is organized as follows:

I. Vision Statement
II. Mission Statement
III. Key Result Areas
   1) Sustainability & Growth
   2) Facilities & Equipment
   3) Marketing & Brand Management
   4) Governance

IV. Five-Year Financial Plan Highlights

**Exhibits**

A. Financial Aid & Scholarship Policy
B. Updated Five-Year Financial Plan
Vision Statement

To make it possible for everyone, regardless of their background and resources, to be able to experience the joy of music and the artistic and intellectual benefits of the performing arts.

The BMS vision statement captures the state of the world towards which our organization aspires and that drives all of our actions as a non-profit. The BMS Vision is consistent with our roots as a musical settlement at the beginning of the 20th Century and remains just as relevant more than 100 years later, when many New York City residents, including children, families, and adult amateurs have limited access to musical instruction and the performing arts.

This vision has remained the animating spirit of this institution since its founding.

"If we are to have a useful community life and an understanding of our foreign born neighbors, there must be an opportunity for the expression of these aspirations. There must be a place where such expression can be given in the musical and dramatic life of each group."

- BMS Trustee, in 1926

While the fortunes of our surrounding community have ebbed and flowed over the intervening century, Brooklyn Music School continues to pursue an ethos of inclusivity and access. We continue to advocate for the essential role of music and the performing arts in bringing people together and nurturing democracy.

Our challenge is to continue to innovate and grow so as to meet the needs of New York City which is again experiencing tremendous growth in population combined with significant disparities in access to cultural education of all kinds, but to music instruction in particular.

Participation in high quality music and performing arts education has been demonstrated to have a dramatic correlation with improved life outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged and at-risk young people, including improvements in:

- Cognitive development, working memory, and mood regulation
- Performance in core academic subjects including language and mathematics
- High school graduation and college matriculation and graduation
- Civic engagement

Our goal is to continue to promote both equity and excellence in music and performing arts education over the next century in New York City.
Mission Statement

Community Music School for the 21st Century

- Make high-quality musical instruction approachable and affordable
- Create frequent opportunities for performance for our students and cultural enrichment for our community
- Represent a wide range of musical traditions, including European, African, Middle Eastern, and American
- Offer a safe and welcoming environment for families and individuals of all ages to explore new talents and make lasting friendships
- Nurture a vibrant community of local cultural non-profits by providing access to affordable rehearsal and performance space

The BMS Mission Statement outlines at the highest level how we actualize our Vision within our served communities and the elements that make BMS distinctive as a cultural and educational institution.

Consistent with our history, BMS is working to reinvent the community music school for a changing educational, demographic, and technological context in the 21st Century. Music has a unique ability to connect people across different ages and cultural backgrounds and support a sorely needed sense of community. We strive to be inclusive and welcoming in all we do.

- Musical instruction and performance is now absent from many schools in our community, requiring innovative approaches to bringing this human birthright to young people.
- Brooklyn and the larger New York City continue to be a melting pot of new immigrants, but today the breadth of countries, cultures, and musical traditions is far more varied than 100 years ago.
- New technologies have eroded traditions of amateur musicianship by making music pervasive and passive, but technology has also made the creation of high-quality recordings and electronic music much more accessible.
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- As the pace of urban life increases, common cultural spaces have become even more vital to building communities and allowing new relationships and artistic experiences to flourish.
- Every musician, artist, and student is a product of his or her environment. Even as technology advances communication, every community needs a haven for holistic human interaction that nurtures meaningful relationships between teacher-to-student, peer-to-peer, and organization-to-family, that creates camaraderie using the power of music and performance.
- Given the overall proven cognitive benefits of music and performance education, BMS does not just create musicians, dancers and actors, but also the future generation of lifelong learners, leaders and arts patrons.

The BMS Mission is what guides all of our Strategic Initiatives and underpins our operating principles. It guides our approach to pricing our offerings and providing financial assistance, the ways in which we leverage the historic BMS Playhouse to provide a venue for both BMS students and our over 50 cultural non-profit partner institutions, and our decisions on capital investment.

"For more than a century, the Brooklyn Music School has nurtured thousands of youths and adults who now share their incredible talent with millions worldwide. This artistic and educational institution has an immeasurable legacy — providing students of all backgrounds and abilities with an opportunity to explore their creativity — that is truly remarkable."

- Laurie A. Cumbo, Council Member for the 35th District of NYC, Majority Leader City Council

Brooklyn Music School’s Mission is closely aligned with many of the key priorities of the Create NYC Cultural Plan put forth by the NYC government, given that we focus on:

- Furthering equity and inclusion to high-quality cultural education for underserved audiences;
- Sustaining affordable performance space for emerging artists and smaller non-profits to do innovative work in the heart of Brooklyn’s cultural district;
- Preserving the neighborhood character by providing a refuge for enrichment programming in a rapidly changing part of Brooklyn; and
- Delivering exceptional quality music and performing arts education to youth both in-school and at our community music and performing arts center, and to seniors as part of a healthy aging and cognitive resilience program.
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Our Community

An essential part of BMS’s strategy is to build a vibrant community of students, families, and music and arts educators. To this end we surveyed our parents and students in December of 2019 to better understand what they valued about BMS and what changes they would like to see in the future.

Some of the insights from that survey and subsequent meetings include:

- **Most valued aspect** of BMS is our excellence of music & performing arts instruction, followed by the welcoming community and then accessibility of the programming.
- **Genres of music** that interests our community is highly diverse, with classical and then rock as top choices, but strong interest in jazz, African and diaspora, Hip-Hop, R&B, Latin and electronic music genres.
- **Aspirations with music** show that the majority are seeking exposure to music and the intellectual benefits that come with that, but many are seeking opportunities for ongoing amateur performance and some aspire to perform at a professional level.
- **Most important factor** in choosing a music school was the quality of the music teachers, followed by the price of instruction and the community experience, including performance opportunities.

When asked what aspect of BMS experience they would like to most see improved, our community has consistently identified the aging facilities as the highest priority. Based on this input, the BMS Board has developed a phased facilities renewal and expansion plan that includes the renovation and upgrade of the BMS Playhouse, followed by the construction of the new Community Music & Performing Arts Center that will more than double the instructional space at BMS and provide a modern, full accessible, acoustically designed facility.

Important features of the new facility identified by the community include enhanced space for private and group lessons, recital space, a dance studio, a music recording space, and a digital music lab.

Addressing these facilities improvement needs, while preserving the existing community spirit of BMS, is a strategic priority over the next five years.

This Strategic Plan contains future projections and targets, rather than guaranteed results.
Key Result Area

Sustainability & Growth

To be a sustainable and growing organization that continues to serve and broaden its community of stakeholders.

Growth and financial sustainability are both critical to achieving our mission of making high-quality music and performing arts instruction approachable and affordable. BMS has achieved a very significant and consistent growth of our served population over the past five years, from 300 students in 2013 to over 8,500 students in FY 2019.

This has largely been driven by increasing the quality of our instruction, introducing popular new programming, and keeping our offerings affordable. We have recently stepped up the professionalism of our marketing efforts in order to bring these offerings to a wider audience.

BMS provides a range of free classes, workshops, and ensembles at no cost and provides financial aid to a significant percentage of students to make music and performing arts accessible regardless of financial resources.

To sustain this level of growth in the future, BMS must address a range of challenges including:

- Capacity constraints due to the size of our facility are limiting the growth of several of our most popular programs.
- Making our facility and BMS Playhouse accessible to all New Yorkers, including the disabled.
- A comprehensive upgrade of our BMS Playhouse so as to create a modern, safe, attractive showcase for BMS students, guest artists, and over 50 non-profit partners who present work by local emerging artists.
- Continuing to provide sufficient levels of financial aid to lower-income families requires a more robust fundraising capability.
- Supporting our new program offerings and sustaining the growth of our students will require a more professional marketing function.

Strategic initiatives, operational improvements, programming, fundraising, and investment all play a role in achieving sustainable growth. BMS must balance our mandate to achieve accessibility with the need to maintain a reasonable level of liquidity and prudent financial management.
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**Growth**

Brooklyn Music School is the fastest growing Community Arts School in NYC, with growth in both revenues and served students of more than 27% a year annually over the past six years. Our growth reflects the intensity of the need for high quality and accessible music and performing arts instruction and the hunger for community-based arts experiences in NYC at this time.

In thinking about growth, we pay attention to metrics that are directly tied to our Vision and Mission.

- **Number of students served** – This includes both offerings at BMS and Outreach programs to schools and community organizations.
- **Number of students receiving financial assistance** – Financial aid is essential to reduce or eliminate family income as a barrier to music and performance education. Both merit-based and need-based scholarships enable BMS to retain high potential students as they develop their skills and artistry.
- **Range of service offerings** – Continuing to introduce new classes, workshops, and master classes that increase the range of musical traditions and disciplines BMS covers, with programming oriented towards students from toddlers to senior citizens.
- **Number of partner schools and organizations** – BMS believes that we can achieve a multiplier effect by collaborating with a range of partners, including schools and community groups where we design customized Outreach programs, smaller non-profits to which we offer reduced price access to the BMS Playhouse, and by holding performances at public events and non-traditional venues.

**What We Have Done**

Over the past several years BMS has taken a number of foundational steps to drive growth that has extended our mission and increased our financial sustainability.

- We have **increased our served students** from 300 in fiscal 2013 to over 8,500 in fiscal 2019.
- We have **grown our revenues by 27%** annually from FY 2013 through FY 2019.
- We provide **free or reduced cost programs to over 80%** of the students we serve through fiscal sponsors, financial aid, scholarships, and/or free classes.
- We offer a range of **free programming**, including music theory and master classes with guest artists, Music and Dance Discovery Days, and free concerts and workshops, and we offer free ensembles including rock bands, jazz ensembles, choirs, orchestra, and percussion.
- We have developed an innovative **BMS Outreach** Program that brings customized music instruction back to public schools that have suffered cutbacks.
in music programming, expanding it from nothing to over 35 institutions and reaching over 7,000 youth and seniors in fiscal year 2019.

- We developed an affordable and very popular **After School Music & Performing Arts Program, Arts Reaching Youth**, which has been sold out for the past three years and now serves over 250 different students.
- We developed an affordable **Summer Institute** covering a range of musical instruments and performance options, which was at full capacity for the past two years.
- We have expanded our offerings for adult musical education to include African and Brazilian drumming, steel pan, Motown ensembles, and group evening classes in violin, guitar, and ukulele.
- We recently launched a high-level **Musical Theater and Drama Program** for students from grade school through high school ages with fully staged productions in the BMS Playhouse.
- With the support of city funding, we have developed Outreach programs targeted to at-risk youths, immigrants, and seniors to bring the joy of music into our communities.
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**What We Plan to Do**

In the next five years, BMS plans on sustaining a relatively high level of growth by finding innovative ways to address our capacity constraints through optimizing our programming mix and expansion of our facilities.

- Subject to city support, we plan to make a **major renovation and upgrade to our BMS Playhouse** that will make the facility ADA compliant, restore and modernize the historic theater, which is the last remaining example of the “Little Theater Movement” in Brooklyn. This project will significantly upgrade the experience of BMS students, guest artists and to expand the range of independent cultural non-profits we support with reduced rates, while increasing the capabilities of our sound, lighting, and amenities to enhance the experience of attendees.
- We are building a **new community music and performing arts center** adjacent to our current facility that will add an additional 20,000 square feet of instructional space, including a dance studio, digital music lab, and a music recording facility. The expansion will provide the capacity to increase our served students on site by over 100% in the years to come. This project, which is being
done in partnership with the Gotham Organization, will be a mixed-use civic and residential project with 30% of the residential units set aside for permanently affordable home ownership.

- We plan to introduce new offerings targeted to Music Therapy for both young and adult students, reviving a tradition at BMS going back to WWI, when BMS was among the first organizations to pioneer the therapeutic benefits of music for returning veterans.
- We plan to continue to expand the range of institutions we serve through our BMS Outreach program to cover 45 schools and community organizations and reach over 12,000 students by FY 2022.

Key Programs

BMS plans to expand and enhance a number of our signature programs over the next five years, as outlined below.

**BMS Music Mentors**

**BMS Music Mentors** offers 100% scholarships for private lessons and ensembles with leadership roles for low-income students that have demonstrated sustained dedication and strong musical aptitude. Students receive leadership opportunities to mentor the next generation of music students in our Arts Reaching Youth (ARY) after-school program and to gain training and experience in theater operations, music production and concert support that can lead to new vocational opportunities.

BMS provides support for students in applying to specialized performing arts high schools such as Laguardia and for higher education, with participants achieving a 100% college matriculation rate, with many being the first in their families to attend college. Past Music Mentors have received music scholarships from colleges including Berklee College, Ithaca College, and New York University.

Goals for this program include:
- Double size of program to 40 mentors in 3 years
- Enhance college application support and document life outcomes

**BMS Outreach**

BMS Outreach Program currently serves 5,700 children and 725 seniors with music and dance education at over 30 public and charter schools, senior centers, and community centers across NYC.

BMS Outreach has grown by over 50% annually since initially receiving DCLA support in FY 2017 and serves children, seniors, and at-risk populations primarily located in low-income areas of New York City. Students are 72% people of color and over 60% come
from families below the poverty line. Our program encompasses a wide range of musical and cultural traditions reflecting the diversity of communities we serve, including at-risk-youth for gun violence, children whose parents have been incarcerated, Hasidic women's vocal chorus, and recent immigrants.

BMS Outreach is designed to bring high quality music, dance and performance education back into pre-K-12 schools where budget cuts or lack of personnel have resulted in limited or no arts instruction. We enable educational and community organizations to provide high quality educational programming, at an affordable price, as a gateway to a life-long interest in music and the performing arts.

Given the well-established benefits to cognitive development of quality music instruction, and strong correlation between music performance and improved academic and social-emotional outcomes, we believe that access to such programming is essential to equity of opportunity in New York City.

We plan to enhance the BMS Outreach Program by:

- Expanding served populations to serve new groups including disabled veterans, NYCHA residents, recent immigrants, and homeless families.
- Providing quality documentation of the impact of these programs through videos that capture the struggles, spirit, and triumphs of participating students and build greater awareness of the benefits of quality music and performing arts education.
- Enhance our assessments to include longitudinal data on children participating in multi-year programs so as to measure the impact of sustained music and performing arts participation on artistic and academic outcomes, interest in the arts, and civic engagement.

**BMS Arts Reaching Youth (ARY) After-School Enrichment**

BMS Arts Reaching Youth (ARY) is an affordable after-school enrichment program designed around the needs of working families that provides high quality classes and performance opportunities in a range of music, dance and performing arts disciplines combined with academic assistance for children ages 5-12.

We provide pick up from a range of public and charter schools that have limited arts programming on site. Since receiving CDF support in FY 2017, the program has grown by 38% annually and served in excess of 200 students in FY 2019 with a significant waiting list.

ARY is oriented towards accessibility, diversity and inclusion, with 85% of participating students being people of color. We feature a wide range of cultural traditions, including African, Middle Eastern, Asian, Latin, American Roots, Jazz, Blues, Classical and Hip Hop musical and dance idioms.
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We offer financial aid to families with demonstrated need, maintain affordable pricing, and believe this program is a very effective solution to obtain the cognitive and social-behavioral benefits of music and arts education.

BMS teaching artists are highly trained professionals with college or masters degrees and extensive in-class experience. The curricula are designed by our BMS Department Chairs to align with the standards and outcomes of the New York City Blueprint for the Arts.

In line with BMS’s strong performance orientation, students in ARY have multiple opportunities to showcase what they have learned and build confidence through recitals, twice yearly concerts on the BMS Playhouse main stage, and in public spaces around New York City.

We plan to take this proven program to the next level, with the following goals:

- Increase financial aid support from 8% of families to 20% of families to improve accessibility
- Maintain affordable pricing structure
- Provide an arts and music after-school program to meet the needs of working parents with children ages 3-4
- Introduce new popular programming options including electronic music, puppetry, and circus arts

**BMS Master Concert Series**

BMS Master Concert Series brings together stellar musicians and performing artists with BMS students to create a unique experience that includes a master class, rehearsals, and culminating concert in the BMS Playhouse.

This unique format provides life-altering interactions for young artists and accessible performances for the community through in-person and online participation, with affordable and free tickets. Artists have come from the BMS Artist Advisory Board, which was founded in 2017, which donates time and sponsors events in collaboration with BMS students and faculty. Typical structure includes a master class and/or rehearsal with artist prior to concerts, intensive preparation with BMS faculty, public performance combining guest artists and students, followed by student and/or audience Q&A with artist.

Past participants have included:
- Nels Cline of Wilco (multi-Grammy winner) with Sean Lennon guest artist
- Arturo O’Farrill (Grammy winner)
- Maya Beiser
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- Dan Zanes (Grammy winner)
- Anthony Roth Constanzo (Grammy nominated 2019)
- Chris Cerrone (Rome Prize)
- Jimmy Heath (Grammy nominated)

The Concert Series spans multiple musical genres including West African, Afro-Cuban, Middle Eastern, jazz, rock, classical, new music, folk, and blues. Audiences for BMS concerts range between 40-85% people of color, and we have initiatives to make concerts available to interested New York City Housing Authority residents at no cost.

BMS faculty participates and we have observed dramatic impact on motivation and creative output from students who participate in these events.

BMS will continue to partner with local community organizations such as Brooklyn Information and Culture (“BRIC”) and the Persian Arts Festival to co-produce selected events. BMS markets the series to the community through digital advertising, posters, and flyers, as well as through social media.

We plan to enhance the BMS Master Concert Series in the following ways:

- Continue to broaden the range of stellar artists participating to include a wide range of musical genres and incorporate disciplines of dance, opera and musical theater
- Provide quality production value to artists and audiences with professional ensemble musicians and audio-visual support
- Support performance of new works of music by emerging composers and choreographers in collaboration with BMS students
- Increase our marketing efforts with a focus on access to under-served audiences for our on-site concerts
- Expand the reach of performances through promoting on-line distribution of performances on the BMS YouTube channel
- Hire a part-time Director of Live Programming to coordinate concepts and production details with artists, advisory board members, and BMS faculty

**BMS Non-Profit Theater Access**

The BMS Non-Profit Theater Access Program is designed to provide affordable performance and rehearsal space and technical support to smaller cultural non-profits that enrich NYC's cultural landscape in our historic 266-seat Spanish-style BMS Playhouse.

Since receiving DCLA funding in 2017 we have supported over 50 non-profits with access to theater and rehearsal space at a 20-80% discount from our rate card. These partners have served over 39,000 audience members and many have a focus on minority audiences, local and emerging artists, and making performing arts accessible

This Strategic Plan contains future projections and targets, rather than guaranteed results.
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to non-traditional audiences.

Organizations that we support span children's theater, dance, experimental music, social justice theater, chamber music, and community theater, including:
- AdHoc Productions
- Bed Stuy Museum of African Art
- Brooklyn Children's Theater
- Brooklyn College Dance Department
- Brooklyn Players Community Musical Theater
- Dreamstreet Theater Company
- Ifetayo
- Irondale
- Movement in C
- The Toy Museum

Our goal is to continue to provide a vital resource to non-profit partners who do not have a dedicated performance space at rates far more affordable than other options in Brooklyn's downtown cultural district.

The BMS theater is the last of the "Little Theatre Movement" theaters founded in the 1910's and 1920's that remains operating in Brooklyn. The historic space provides a unique atmosphere that evokes the values of intimacy, non-commercial ethos, and experimental performing arts at the origins of this movement. The space has a proud history of opera and theater production and is well suited to a wide range of music and performance genres, from plays to dance, chamber operas and rock concerts.

Cultural non-profits are provided access to dressing rooms, bathrooms, lobby entrance for audience arrival/exit, theater technician, lighting, back projection, and sound equipment. We source our non-profit partners through relationships with the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance events or the National Guild for Community Arts Education, through online search, and through targeted outreach efforts to smaller cultural non-profits in NYC.

We are currently planning a significant upgrade to the BMS Playhouse that would make it suitable for a wider range of performances and provide improved access for disabled artists and audiences once complete.

Along with renovating and upgrading the BMS Playhouse, we plan to:
- Continue to offer discounted access to the BMS Playhouse to cultural non-profits at a 20-80% discount
- Increase our outreach and marketing efforts to groups from under-represented artists across multiple disciplines and genres that enhance the diversity of artistic voices in NYC
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- Be able to offer significantly upgraded performance and rehearsal capabilities due to recent improvements in lighting, sound, and back projection capability
- Leverage planned major upgrades to stage, rigging, seating, access to disabled, rehearsal space, costume shop, scene shop and support facilities to enhance artist and audience experiences

Accessibility

Making high-quality music and performing arts accessible to the broadest set of audiences is a fundamental part of BMS's mission as a community arts organization. From our founding until the present day, BMS has consistently emphasized diversity and inclusion as core values of our institution, and we have continued to adapt and innovate over the past century to meet the needs of Brooklyn’s changing community.

- In order to support the goal of accessibility, we plan to **increase by over 100%** the amount of **financial aid and scholarship** funding we provide during the next five years through more effective fundraising and then building an endowment for these purposes.
- Double the size our highly successful **Musical Mentors** program which provides full scholarships and leadership opportunities for dedicated music students in their teens, resulting in 100% college matriculation rate since inception and multiple college scholarships for music.
- Dramatically increase the amount of **free programming** that we offer to families in the community so as to provide exposure to a wide range of music and performing arts classes for kids and workshops, master classes, and lectures for advanced and pre-professional students.
- Introduce competitive **merit-based full scholarships** that will enable BMS faculty to continue to mentor our most talented students who might otherwise be lured away to other well-funded institutions.

(See **Exhibit A: Financial Aid & Scholarship Policy**)

Fundraising

Increasing BMS’s capability for fundraising is a critical element of executing this strategic plan. In past years, unearned income made up approximately 10% of total revenues, as compared to an average of 39% for our community music school peers in the New York City area.

Our strong programmatic revenue provides stability to our operations and helps reduce risk from the loss of large donors. However, increasing our fundraising from
institutional, individual, and government sources will enable BMS to take our organization to the next level by:

- Providing a greater range of free programming targeted to families, at-risk youth, and emerging and pre-professional artists in our community.
- Expanding the scope of our Outreach program to schools and organizations with the least financial and cultural resources.
- Increasing the quality, attendance, and impact of our BMS Master Concert series and productions to develop new audiences for the range of musical traditions we cover, from opera to American roots, Middle Eastern music and African diaspora traditions.
- Increasing the number of students receiving financial aid and providing competitive full scholarships that will enable BMS to retain emerging talents.
- Enabling us to establish a professional marketing function at BMS to build awareness of our programming and events.
- Being able to attract visiting artists to participate in our festivals, workshops, and master classes to provide high-level training to our students and share best practices with our faculty.

Our goal is to increase unearned income (exclusive of a Capital Campaign) to over 20% of total revenues by FY 2023, placing us closer to peer benchmarks.

**What We Have Done**

BMS has recently taken important early steps to become more effective at fundraising, including:

- We hired a Development Associate to expand our fundraising efforts with both institutional and individual donors, who is provided with coaching by an experienced development consultant.
- Developed a three-year Development Strategy that includes measurable annual and quarterly targets with a well-defined path to achieve them.
- Instituted a mandatory give-get policy for all Board of Trustees and continued to recruit new Board members who can help BMS access new sources of support, while maintaining the diversity of our board of Trustees.
- Grown our Board of Trustees from 10 to 22 in the past four years, with an emphasis on those at more senior levels of their careers who have established fundraising networks and/or can direct resources to BMS.
- Provided professional training to Trustees in fundraising using a professional trainer at a half-day offsite event.
- Held a successful Gala that raised needed funding for scholarships and the enhancement of our facility.
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What We Plan to Do

To achieve our goal of bringing unearned income to 30% of revenues over the next five years, we plan to:

- Grow unearned income from 11% to over 20% of revenues in five years.
- Increase the size of our Board to 25 members, while achieving defined diversity goals to reflect the community we serve.
- Increase the number of grants submitted and size of grants awarded based on excellence of proposal and fit with grantor mission and priorities.
- Schedule cultivation events to bring the BMS story to an expanded circle of potential supporters every other month.
- Continue to expand the scale of our annual Gala to build awareness of our impact on equity and excellence in music education and solidify financial support.
- Cultivate large donors who have a passion for music education and performance and/or strong commitment to the Brooklyn community.
- Craft sponsorship partnerships with corporate donors that provide them with positive brand visibility and/or team building opportunities for their employees and are consistent with the BMS mission.
- Develop an individual giving program drawing on the parents of BMS students and BMS alumni.
- Continue to increase the scale and returns from our fundraising events through innovative themes and involvement of recognizable guest artist performers.

Liquidity Position

In order to ensure our sustainability, the Board of Trustees is very focused on managing the organization to achieve positive operating cash flow and building a stronger liquidity position. In the absence of a sizable endowment, careful management of liquidity and expenses is essential to be a sustainable institution.

_BMS has recently taken emergency actions to promote the sustainability of the institution during the period in which on-site services are disrupted due to COVID-19 and the senior executives and the executive committee are monitoring the situation on a weekly basis to ensure sufficient cash reserves._

What We Have Done

In order to promote financial sustainability, BMS has:

- Established targets for revenues and operating income for all of our significant programs with the input of program managers whose compensation reviews are tied to meeting these annual targets.
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- Held detailed quarterly financial reviews of operating results and liquidity with the Executive Director and Executive Committee shortly following the close of each quarter.
- Instituted annual budget for capital improvements that is reviewed and approved by the Board.
- Changed our payment plan options to automate payments and eliminate the need for invoicing and collections management with our students and parents.
- Made all non-emergency capital expenditures subject to Executive Committee review.
- Required a detailed business case for all significant new programs to be reviewed and approved by Curriculum Committee before incurring expenses to launch new programs.

**What We Plan to Do**

Over the next five years our goal is to:

- Raise an operating endowment of $5 million in advance of the completion of the new expanded facility so as to provide capacity to absorb the increase in operating expenses during the first few years as we ramp up our programming to fill the larger space.
- Recruit a dedicated Chief Financial Officer to meet the growing needs for financial reporting and planning for a larger organization, as well as managing the financial aspects of the construction and management of our new facility.
- Establish endowments to provide ongoing support to our merit-based scholarships and Music Mentors program.

**Financial Controls**

Execution of a growth-oriented strategic plan requires that BMS maintain strong and timely financial controls in order to mitigate risk and allocate resources appropriately.

**What We Have Done**

In the past three years, BMS has:

- Successfully addressed every issue raised by our auditor in order to be compliant with new regulations and best practices for non-profits.
- Appointed an Audit Committee that is entirely independent, whose members have significant financial and accounting training, and that is highly engaged with independent auditors.

This Strategic Plan contains future projections and targets, rather than guaranteed results.
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- Shortened the cycle time for our quarterly and annual financial reporting so that quarterly financial reports are available within two weeks of the close of the quarter and annual unaudited financials are presented to the Board within one month of the end of the Fiscal Year.
- Shortened the amount of time to complete our audit and file our 990 from 10 months to 5 months to provide timely and relevant data to stakeholders.
- Provided coaching to the finance team on increasing process efficiency, internal controls, and working capital management.
- Developed an Annual Operating Budget that incorporates extensive questioning and refinement based on input from the Board of Trustees.

**What We Plan to Do**

To further enhance our financial controls, BMS plans to:

- Further strengthen our Finance function by improving our staffing, business processes, technology and automation so as to be able to support scaling of our served populations effectively.
- Develop a more comprehensive policy with regards to the investment and uses of our endowment, with a goal to attract more sizable donors and efficiently report back to them on the outcomes from their gifts.

As the organization continues to grow and undertakes a major expansion of our facilities, having strong financial controls and a Board of Trustees and Leadership focused on sustainability and risk management will become increasingly important. These priorities are reflected in our current **Five-Year Financial Plan**.

*(See Exhibit B: Five-Year Financial Plan)*
Key Result Area

Learning Environment

To operate in an environment that supports the delivery of exceptional music and performing arts education and creates an ecosystem to develop the next generation of artists and audiences in our community.

BMS requires extensive facility upgrades in order to successfully deliver on our goals for the next five years and set the stage for serving as a core part of Brooklyn’s cultural and educational infrastructure over the next century.

The Board of Trustees has recognized that the amount and quality of space we have will soon become a major obstacle to the organization’s growth. Furthermore, our Mission is also at risk as there will be limited opportunity to expand our programming after 2020 as we near full capacity.

To provide just a few examples:

- Our affordable After School Music and Arts Program (Arts Reaching Youth) has been sold out for the past three years and we cannot accommodate requests from other neighborhood public and charter schools.
- Our Summer Institute has been sold out for two years and cannot be expanded without more space.
- We have run out of rooms for additional private lessons Monday through Saturday during the hours that most children are available to learn.
- There is no dedicated space for our new marketing and development staff to work.
- Our growing dance program, which previously had over 400 students a year, has been significantly restricted due to lack of suitable dance space.
- We have no space for storage of instruments for our Outreach Program that brings music education to public schools, at-risk-youth, and community centers.
- We do not have any suitable space for our planned Digital Music Lab.

During the 1920's the Brooklyn Music School acquired four brownstones and created a neighborhood anchor institution for performing arts education, which included a 266-seat playhouse built by the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce.

Over the past five years, BMS has grown our served students from 300 to over 8,500 through a combination of in-house programming and our BMS Outreach program. This growth has created significant capacity issues that are constraining our ability to
continue to serve Brooklyn's growing population and fulfill our mission. Our historic facility lacks many of the modern standard amenities for music and dance instruction, such as proper soundproofing, music technology, HVAC, and ADA compliant classrooms.

The time has come for the institution to invest in building a modern facility just as our forefathers did 100 years ago.

The Board of Trustees has set out a plan that has three key components:

- **Repair and secure** our historic location at 126 St. Felix Street in Fort Greene to address immediate operational needs.
- **Expand our facilities** so as to enable continued organic growth of our programming and introduction of new strategic offerings that will allow BMS to reach new audiences and scale the number of community members we serve.
- **Renovate and modernize** the existing building and BMS Playhouse in a phased approach that does not disrupt the delivery of services to the community.

**Repair & Secure Existing Facility**

Over the past two years, the Board of Trustees has identified and addressed immediate facility needs in order to provide a safe and comfortable learning and performance environment for our served students and faculty, and we will continue to address these urgent needs in our annual operating and maintenance capital expenditure benefits.

We have completed or are in the process of completing the following:

- Significant repairs to our exterior walls
- Repair to our boiler and plumbing systems
- Upgrade of our sprinkler system
- Securing handrails and iron work
- Partial replacement of roof
- A ventilation system for the BMS Playhouse
- Upgraded lighting system in the BMS Playhouse
- Renovated the attic to add 3 more classrooms
- Secured funding from the Brooklyn Borough President for an upgraded Audio-Visual system

All of these capital expenditures have been made using a combination of operating cash flow, dedicated fundraising events, and small grants. These phased improvements will continue over the next several years.

**Phase I – Renovate and Upgrade BMS Playhouse**
For FY 2020, Brooklyn Music School is applying for capital support to renovate and upgrade the historic BMS Playhouse, the last remaining example of the “Little Theater Movement” to remain in continuous operation in Brooklyn.

This project will enable us to make the facility fully accessible to disabled audiences and performers, restore the aesthetics of the 1920s-era venue, increase energy efficiency, provide badly needed upgrades to the stage area, back-stage support areas, and the structural integrity of the building. This project will significantly upgrade the experience of BMS students, guest artists and will expand the range of independent cultural non-profit partners we support with discounted access to rehearsal and performance space.

The project has a total cost of approximately $5.3 million and includes the following features:

- Replacement of all lighting with energy efficient LED fixtures and theater instruments
- Installation of an entrance lift and five-story elevator to make the Playhouse, support areas, stage, and teaching areas wheelchair accessible
- Restoration of stage, proscenium, and interior
- New roofing system and drainage system to ensure structural integrity
- Replacement of rigging system that is reaching end of usable life to ensure safety of performers and students
- Gut renovation of support areas including dressing rooms, powder rooms, rehearsal studio, scenery shop, costume shop, and storage areas
- New HVAC systems for support areas
- Upgrade of fire safety and sprinkler systems

Following the renovation, the theater is expected to serve over 50 cultural non-profit groups, over 1,500 students and performers, and over 20,000 audience members each year.

**Phase II Expansion – New Community Music & Performing Arts Center**

In FY 2018, Brooklyn Music School secured an allocation for $5.659 million from the Mayor/Department of Cultural Affairs and NYC City Council to acquire the adjacent lot at 130 St. Felix Street as the site of the new Community Music & Performing Arts Center, and in FY 2019 we received an additional allocation of $350,000 from the City Council towards the construction of the new building.

Subsequently, the owner of the property, the Gotham Organization, approached BMS about developing the property as a mixed-use development with a 20,000 square foot new Community Music and Performing Arts Center on the first two floors and a...
combination of market-rate and affordable condominiums above. This approach has a number of advantages to BMS in meeting our expansion needs while mitigating the project risk. Working closely with the Majority Leader and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, BMS has negotiated and entered into a series of agreements with Gotham and is in the midst of obtaining all the required approvals to commence construction.

This approach has a number of important benefits:

- Reduces the overall cost of the new facility to BMS by approximately 50% as compared to stand-alone construction.
- BMS to receive $7 million from Gotham for the sale of unused “air rights” to be applied to the cost of fitting out the new facility.
- Gotham to incur all costs associated with rezoning, permitting and approvals for construction.
- Gotham, as an experienced developer, will oversee construction of the facility and deliver a finished condo shell to BMS.

We are anticipating submitting for a certificate of appropriateness to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in the late Spring of 2020 (subject to disruption by COVID-19) and then commencing the formal ULURP process.

The construction of a new facility will enhance the school's mission and serve many purposes outlined in the CreateNYC cultural plan, including:

- providing high-quality music and arts education both inside and outside of a school setting,
- furthering accessibility of cultural education and performance opportunities for local emerging artists,
- creating significant job opportunities for teaching artists and administrative staff,
- and strengthening cultural resources available to low and middle-income families in the rapidly transforming neighborhood of Downtown Brooklyn.

**Phase III - Renovate & Modernize Existing Facility**

Our long-term plan encompasses a phased renovation of our existing brownstones during which the operations of BMS would move partially into the new facility, permitting a gut renovation of our historic facility at 126 St. Felix Street to modernize this facility and make it suitable to the needs of our served students and families.

- Making the building ADA compliant so that all classrooms are accessible to disabled and senior students
- Installing modern electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems
- Improvements in energy efficiency
March 2020

- Reconfiguring certain common areas and instructional spaces for better flow and access with new adjacent facility

**An Environment for the Next Century**

The expansion of our facilities will provide BMS with the platform to meet the demands of the next 100 years as a vibrant cultural institution serving Brooklyn and the Greater New York City Area. It will enable BMS to grow our served population, significantly enhance the learning and performance environment for our students and faculty and provide a nexus for smaller arts and cultural organizations in Brooklyn that need affordable space.

This forecast growth is supported by a number of very favorable geographic and demographic factors, including:

- Population density of downtown Brooklyn is exploding with approximately 11,000 units of apartments that have been added or are in planning and approval stages.¹
- Recognition of the Downtown Brooklyn Cultural District as an important hub of innovative artistic and cultural programs, with institutions within a few blocks of BMS having received major city support for new or expanded facilities, including BAM, Mark Morris Dance Center, Theater for a New Audience, BRIC, Roulette, Dancewave, and MoCADA.
- Location next to central mass transit hub at Barclay’s Center provides exceptionally easy access.
- A growing ecosystem of smaller, Brooklyn-based non-profit performing arts companies who are not at scale to support a facility of their own but need access to rehearsal and performance space.

The new facility will allow us to:

- Significantly expand dedicated spaces for group classes, one-on-one lessons, and practice and rehearsal space with appropriate sound characteristics.
- Launch a new digital music center targeted to urban youth, pre-professional musicians and performing artists, and music technology & recording courses.
- Create high-quality dance and drama rehearsal and performance spaces for BMS and smaller non-profit cultural partners.

¹ “Downtown Rising: How Brooklyn became a model for the urban development,” NYU Wagner Rudin Center.
March 2020

- Create a “Music Hangout Space/Cafe” for young musicians to share ideas, form new connections and experience a sense of community with others who are passionate about music and performance.
- Expand current programming for Senior Citizens including programs such as Golden Voices, Golden Guitars, and Golden Beats. These programs have been funded by the city in our Outreach program. With the new facility, BMS would be able to welcome hundreds of seniors a week to an ADA accessible building.

It will enable Brooklyn Music School to continue to serve as a vital institution for cultural education in New York City and a valued community anchor for downtown Brooklyn and the borough’s surrounding neighborhoods.
Key Result Area

Marketing & Brand Management

To enable continued growth through increased brand awareness in our targeted markets.

Historically the majority of BMS students and families found us through word of mouth or by walking past our Fort Greene headquarters. Even within the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to us, many families were not aware of the resources that BMS offered to the community.

Over the past three years, BMS has begun to put together a structured marketing program, including both digital and offline elements, to drive higher awareness of our programming and build an engaged community of students, families, and audience members that we can provide music education, performances, and community events.

The Board of Trustees has identified Marketing and Brand Management as an important area of focus for BMS to fulfill our growth potential and execute our Strategic Plan.

What We Have Done

In the past two years, BMS has:

- Launched a new website in 2016 that provides a professional presentation of the BMS Mission and programs using a very low-cost platform that can be updated and expanded without any need for technical support.
- Hired a full-time Director of Marketing in Fall 2017 for the first time.
- Launched a series of highly popular concerts featuring members of our BMS Artist Advisory Board who have donated their time and engaged with our students to expose them to the standards of highly successful professional musicians.
- More than doubled the size of our email newsletter list to 5,600 people.
- Increased the unique visitors to our website by 400% to over 9,000 per month.
- More than tripled the engagement levels with our Facebook page, and launched other social media channels on Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter with a consistent brand and messaging.
- Developed marketing brochures used for our major programs, including music and dance classes and private lessons, Summer Institute, After-School Program (ARY), and Outreach Program.
- Conducted our third comprehensive Student-Parent Satisfaction Survey that will be used as a basis for improvement of our curriculum, parent communications, and customer service, as well as providing suggestions for new programs.

This Strategic Plan contains future projections and targets, rather than guaranteed results.
March 2020

- Developed a small-scale digital advertising campaign that is highly targeted to support the launch of new programming and our concerts and community events.
- Increased the number of people attending our concerts and Holiday events, with our recent Halloween Haunted House being sold out and Holiday Spectacular at capacity.

**What We Plan to Do**

To further raise awareness of our offerings and support the launch of new programs, BMS plans to:

- Increase the use of highly engaging social media content using video content to drive higher levels of sharing and viral engagement
- Engage in targeted outreach to public schools to educate music teachers about the resources BMS offers, and/or engage with administration and parent groups at schools where music and performance has been cut back about our Outreach Program
- Promote BMS programming by partnering with different outreach locations and providing marketing materials about BMS to them to distribute in hard copy or via their email lists and social media channels
- Develop tailored marketing plans for each new offering at BMS, each one of our major concerts, festivals, community events, and for our major programming initiatives, such as our Summer programs
- Hold a series of open houses and free programming, entitled "Music and Dance Discovery Days," throughout the year, and especially at the beginning of the fall semester, to showcase all the class offerings and talented teachers at BMS
- Partner with high-level musicians on our Artist Advisory Board to create events that draw in new audiences to introduce to the Brooklyn Music School


Key Result Area

Governance & Organizational Performance

To maintain proper oversight and governance of organizational performance and strategic initiatives.

As a non-profit, Brooklyn Music School must demonstrate that it has strong governance procedures in place to attract the confidence and support of key stakeholders, including students, parents, private and institutional donors, and public officials.

In order to consistently deliver high-quality learning experiences to our students and families, BMS must have processes in place to ensure operational excellence in key areas including faculty hiring, training, and retention, curriculum, pedagogy, and communications.

Moreover, in order to be able to scale our programs in a cost-efficient manner, we must employ systems and technology platforms that reduce non-value-added administrative work, reduce errors, and automate clerical functions.

The Board of Trustees has identified several key areas of focus:

- Maintain:
  - Actively engaged and financially contributing board
  - Well-defined budget process
  - Independent Audit Committee
- Invest in Board development to recruit in targeted areas and grow Board of Trustees
- Measure and monitor organizational performance
- Publish Annual Report to community for transparency
- Develop process rigor for financial and operational oversight

What We Have Done

In the past two years, BMS has:

- Recruited a high-quality Board of Trustees that is actively involved in providing oversight, coaching, and financial support.
- Developed an active Board Committee structure (Audit, Curriculum, Development, Nominating, and Real Estate) in which each Trustee is expected to participate in one committee.
- Strengthened our Real Estate Committee with members that bring strong backgrounds in architecture, real estate development, and real estate law.
March 2020

- Launched a BMS Parent Portal for two-way communications between the Board and parents, faculty and staff.
- Launched a new **Artist Advisory Board** of high-level musicians and educators to enrich the programming we offer to our students and provide strategic advice and coaching to BMS leadership and faculty.
- Created a well-defined annual budgeting process that involves input from key program managers who are accountable for results and with extensive Board input and questioning.
- Developed detailed job descriptions and performance metrics for each staff position, from the Executive Director down.
- Implemented a new online registration system that enables 24/7 auto-enrollment for all group classes and ensembles and automates billing and payments.
- Created the position of Department Chairs who have the responsibility for overseeing hiring, curriculum, pedagogy, and quality of instruction for their departments.
- Created standardized curriculum across our offerings reflecting best practices in music pedagogy across the diverse disciplines and musical traditions that BMS offers.

**What We Plan to Do**

Over the next two years, so as to continue to strengthen our governance and organizational performance we are planning to:

- Increase the size of our **Board of Trustees** from 22 to 25 Trustees.
- Recruit additional members to **Capital Campaign Committee** to raise funds for our renovation and expansion with a focus on those who have led similar campaigns for other non-profits.
- Expand our **Advisory Board** to cover additional disciplines and bring in highly recognizable names that enhance the BMS brand recognition for innovation and excellence in both instruction and performance.
- Develop detailed annual plans for each staff member that include defined outcomes that they are responsible for, and identify training or coaching needs.
- Formalize annual performance reviews for each staff member and teaching artist, from the Executive Director on down, with specific goals and metrics and, where appropriate, linking compensation to outcomes.
- Provide consistent evaluations, goals, and recommendations to each student every year.
- Further refine the metrics used to evaluate the performance of the organization on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis to provide timely and actionable insight to the leadership and the board.

This Strategic Plan contains future projections and targets, rather than guaranteed results.
Brooklyn Music School Financial Aid & Scholarship Policy

Brooklyn Music School’s Vision is: To make it possible for everyone, regardless of their background and resources, to be able to experience the joy of music and the artistic and intellectual benefits of musical performance.

To achieve this, we design our programs and offerings to be affordable and accessible to students and families for a broad range of economic backgrounds. In addition, we offer **Need-based Financial Aid** in many of our programs. We have a **Music Mentors** program that provides highly dedicated and promising students with scholarships and the ability to serve as mentors to their younger peers. And we have **Merit-based Scholarships** for music students who have exhibited outstanding levels of talent and dedication to the musical and performing arts.

All of these programs rely on the generosity of our donors to sustain and expand them and are a key element in enabling Brooklyn Music School to fulfill our mission.

**NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID**

Need-based financial aid is available to students who require assistance to pay their tuition. Need-based financial aid awards are contingent on BMS' availability of funds, primarily from donations. Students must provide proof of household income and other supporting documentation as part of their application.

The Brooklyn Music School's financial aid applications are confidential and processed by the Operations Manager and the Executive Director. Before applying, students are required to participate and pay full price for programming for at least one month before an award is given in an effort to confirm the student's commitment with a display of good attendance, practice habits, and showing quality interest in and enjoyment of BMS classes.

Once it is determined that the families meet the threshold for financial aid, we determine the amount of the award, which are generally:

- 15%: Awarded to anyone to families with incomes less than $75,000 but greater than $50,000
- 30%: Awarded to families making less than $50,000
- 50%: Awarded to families making less than $30,000 or adjusted with overall family expenses taken into account

BMS notifies families of the award decision either by email, phone, or in person. In the past three years, BMS has been able to provide all students who qualify with some percentage of financial aid.
If you would like more information about need-based financial aid, please contact the school or make an appointment with BMS' registrar.

**MUSIC MENTORS**

The BMS Music Mentor program is designed for students who have shown a high level of dedication and musical accomplishment and who want to further develop themselves as mentors and potential future music educators.

Music Mentors must be nominated by the Department Chairs and must have demonstrated a consistent pattern of excellent attendance, dedication to practice, and progress in the study of music to a level of proficiency. High school, college, and pre-professional students are all encouraged to consider BMS' Music Mentor program which covers 50% or 100% of tuition.

Music Mentors are expected to actively contribute to the BMS Community through mentoring, teaching internships, participation in events, and other activities that build a strong community at BMS, demonstrate maturity, and develop leadership skills.

Audition, award, and monitoring of Music Mentors is done by the Executive Director and Operations Manager with awards made on a quarterly basis. All Music Mentors are expected to attend quarterly meetings.

**MERIT-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS**

In addition to need-based financial aid, BMS offers merit-based scholarships to support students who have shown exceptional talent and dedication. These scholarships are designed to enable highly qualified students to obtain the intensive level of instruction and performance opportunities that they need to excel as musicians and to encourage them to actively contribute to the BMS community.

Awards are made in the amount of 25%, 50%, or 100% of tuition based upon availability of funding and quality of applicant pool.

Students must be nominated by Department Heads and are then selected based on Annual Auditions, Teacher Evaluation Forms, and participation in school-wide activities. Returning students are encouraged to pursue merit-based awards. Students who receive awards will be expected to attend all classes and also participate in BMS ensembles, performances, recitals, and cultivation events either as a performer or a volunteer.