

A Proposal to Fund

**The Zoe and James Shepherd
Youth Leaders
Scholarship Fund
for
The Metropolitan Music
Community**

October 14, 2020

The Metropolitan Music
Community



This proposal asks for your support in establishing The Zoe and James Shepherd Youth Leaders Scholarship Fund for The Metropolitan Music Community. As long-time members of the Brooklyn Wind Symphony and faithful supporters of the New York arts community throughout the years, we ask that you consider making a significant gift to support the initiation and strategic development of the Enriching Young Leaders in Music Campaign. We ask that you do so through an outright campaign gift, payable over four years.

As dedicated supporters of The Metropolitan Music Community, our numerous ensembles, and the individual musicians in our community, we present to you here an overview of our mission, achievements, and ongoing vision with a special focus on how the creation of The Zoe and James Shepherd Youth Leaders Scholarship Fund and its provided benefit will continue to impact our surrounding community of musicians. As you know, support for young musicians to pursue professional development opportunities and formal training in music education is a top priority for our campaign. We hope that you find the following proposal an authentic illustration of our commitment to music-making and a cause worthy of your support.

The Metropolitan Music Community

Founded in 2008 by Jeffrey Ball, The Metropolitan Music Community (MMC) aims to provide instrumentalists the opportunity to make music, create community, and advance as artists. Originally a singular community ensemble named the Grand Street Band, MMC now reflects a multi-ensemble organization that offers members a growing number of programs and opportunities that directly support their development as musicians. From its original thirty members, the organization has grown into the seventy-piece Brooklyn Wind Symphony and allowed for the formation of two additional ensembles: the ninety-piece Grand Street Community Band and the seventy-piece Kings County Concert Band. Today, we support the growth of over 250 thriving musicians in the New York Metropolitan area.

Over the course of the last 12 years, Brooklyn Wind Symphony, Grand Street Community Band, Kings County Concert Band have put on over 90 performances throughout the borough of Brooklyn and across the state of New York. We pride ourselves on our unique mission of advancing advocational musicianship; while some members are teachers or professional musicians, the majority are not. Our community is made up of doctors, journalists, accountants, translators, engineers, architects, and more. We do not discriminate by skill level or ability—we are inclusive of everyone who has a passion for music.

Since its inception, MMC has also welcomed musicians of all ages. Our members range from 14 to 78 years of age. Over the course of MMC's existence, we have witnessed incredible intergenerational collaboration—whether it be as simple as an exchange behind the music stand or a more formal production such as the yearly [Don Winston & Friends brass recital](#). Not only does MMC provide musicians with a venue for music-making and artistic development, but it also serves as a conduit for connection within the Brooklyn community.

The Need for Young Leaders

As MMC continues to promote collaboration among musicians of all ages and skill levels, we also strive to bring young leaders in music to the forefront. We strongly believe that music provides young leaders with the skills and abilities necessary to succeed as individuals. We have seen that youth who participate in arts and music programming in primary and secondary school show higher outcomes in self-awareness, perseverance, sociability, and relationship management¹.

Participation in an ensemble and collaborative musicianship promotes responsible decision-making; student musicians depend on each other to be on time for rehearsals, prepare for performances, and to act honorably as ambassadors of their community. Furthermore, music provides youth with a clear path for professional success. Schools with music programs have an estimated 90.2% graduation rate and 93.9% attendance rate compared to schools without music education which see a 72.9% graduation rate and 84.9% attendance levels.² In The Harmony Project, a sister organization, 93 percent of Harmony Project seniors have gone on to college, despite a dropout rate of 50 percent or more in their neighborhoods³. Music serves as a guiding light in many young lives.

Unfortunately, funding for arts education continues to dwindle. In July 2020, New York City cut spending by 11% on cultural affairs—\$15 million of which was allocated towards arts education and services in the NYC Department of Education⁴. While the arts has never offered an overtly lucrative space for fledgling musicians, in a declining economy without resources or programs to support their education, exploration, and growth trajectory, the path for young ambitious leaders in art and music can appear to be a sinking ship. We know, however, that this is not the case—today, music is simply a space that requires the cultivation of new leaders, the amplification of new perspectives, and the establishment of a path for underrepresented musicians. The aim of our Enriching Young Leaders in Music Campaign is to provide funding for young musicians to pursue their passion without

¹ <https://nafme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/NAfME-SEL-Brochure-May-2020.pdf>

² [The National Association for Music Education. "Music Makes the Grade." The National Association for Music Education.](#)

³ <https://www.harmony-project.org/org-overview>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/arts/design/new-york-city-budget-cuts-arts.html>

uncertainty and to increase the representation of diverse voices in the music community.

Isaiah Figueroa

Isaiah Figueroa grew up in a musical family, but had never imagined himself as a professional musician. In early 2015, Isaiah's choir teacher, Laurel Stinson, noting his incredible natural talent, encouraged him to think more about diversifying and formalizing his musical talents. That Spring, Isaiah decided to dabble as an instrumentalist in the music department, swiftly becoming the euphonium section leader of his high school band. Encouraged by his teachers to further his abilities as a musician, he joined the Grand Street Community Band in 2017 and became an official member of the Metropolitan Music Community.



Over the course of his high school years, Isaiah performed in several Grand Street ensembles, with the ISO Symphonic Band and All-City programs; he was a finalist in the Leonard Falcone International Euphonium and Tuba Festival; and he attended the prestigious Tanglewood Institute last summer for the second time. When the Artistic Director of the Grand Street Community Band, Brian Worsdale, was asked to showcase his ensemble at the New York Sounds of Summer International Music Festival at Carnegie Hall, he knew he had to feature this incredible talent. In June 2017, Isaiah Figueroa performed *Pantomime for Euphonium*

and Band by Philip Sparke on the stage of the Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall in front of an audience of over two thousand.

Through a generous donation from Dr. Timothy Haug, a long-time member of MMC and supporter of the arts, Isaiah was able to attend Purchase College-Conservatory of Music in pursuit of his Bachelors in Music Performance after graduating from high school. "Music is one of the things that brings people together in a sense," Isaiah explained in a recent conversation with the MMC board. "It's a way to express myself

without words. It's one of those things that will help anyone change. Every challenging thing I have learned has made me feel almost naturally one with the instrument, as though me playing it was meant to happen." Isaiah has found his calling. After earning his degree from Purchase College, he aims to pursue a career as a music educator and hopes to return to his native Brooklyn to share his love for music with our local community and the next generation of music-makers.

The Enriching Young Leaders in Music Campaign

Through our 2021 strategic plan, [The Plan for Music-Making](#), we hope to give life to more stories like that of Isaiah. The Enriching Young Leaders in Music Campaign, a key component of [The Plan for Music-Making](#), aims to establish a designated fund to support the growth of leaders in music, creating more opportunities for young musicians to pursue careers as educators and foster community through musicianship. The donations made by our generous donors will go towards creating a scholarship fund that will be awarded to one or more high school-aged students each year who show outstanding dedication to musicianship and demonstrate an interest in pursuing a career in music education.

Recipients may apply the scholarship towards their education or towards development opportunities to advance their musicianship. Particular attention will be paid to students who commit to offering their skills and knowledge within the Brooklyn and/or metropolitan area. This scholarship not only aims to provide students with funds to pursue their passion, but it also hopes to incite within them a commitment to their local community. These outcomes will only be possible, however, through exceptional charitable contributions from the leaders in the New York arts community. To achieve our mission, MMC thus calls on its most loyal friends and advocates to provide the support necessary to achieve the lofty vision of our comprehensive campaign: Enriching Youth Leaders in Music.

What we ask

Today, we invite you to join as primary benefactors by making a gift to The Metropolitan Music Community's Enriching Young Leaders in Music Campaign. At the start of the 2020 academic school year, MMC already recorded over \$4.8 million in gifts and pledges in support of the \$10 million campaign goal. Despite the



economic downturn and ongoing uncertainty in educational institutions across the country, we continue to make unprecedented strides towards the achievement of our considerable goal. It's clear that our community's dedication to the arts remains steadfast—music serves as our guiding light during these difficult times.

Nevertheless, we recognize that we must continue to expand our network of supporters and strengthen our efforts as we move into the public phase of the campaign. We know that achieving this goal will require the support of a very select group of leaders who embrace our vision and celebrate—above all else—a dedication to young leaders in music.

In establishing the Zoe and James Shepherd Youth Leaders Scholarship Fund, you will follow the example set by board member and campaign chair, Dr. Timothy Haug, whose dedication to young leaders like Isaiah Figueroa has transformed the trajectory of young musicians and created a lasting impact on the Brooklyn arts community. There are a number of other individuals who have also supported the campaign with gifts towards scholarship support and program development. Thus far, we have witnessed over 200 community leaders, ensemble members, and friends of the organization make significant contributions to the campaign in its early phase.

We ask today that you take leadership in MMC's Enriching Young Leaders in Music Campaign, to be revealed publicly in June 2020. Based on our goal of \$10M, MMC still needs the following commitments to achieve success:

Gift Amount	Number of Gifts
<i>\$1,000,000+</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>\$750,000</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>\$500,000</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>\$250,000</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>\$100,000</i>	<i>10 or more</i>

Today, we hope that you will consider making an initial gift of \$750,000 to establish the The Zoe and James Shepherd Youth Leaders Scholarship Fund, which can be administered through a pledge over the course of four years. Of course, we are happy to modify the commitment as necessary to reflect a pledge plan specifically tailored to your family's desires and needs.

With your contribution, we would also love to invite you to take on a distinguished leadership role within the Metropolitan Music Community as a board member of our organization. We know that both your financial gift and personal dedication to the arts will make a lasting contribution on the lives of many young leaders as well as on the Brooklyn community as a whole. This incredibly generous gift will formalize your family's ongoing dedication to the arts and serve as a symbolic connection between the Shepherd Family and the Metropolitan Music Community.

Recognition

The Office of Development hopes to work closely with you and your family to determine the appropriate and desired level of public recognition for your gift. Should you be receptive to public recognition, the Metropolitan Music Community would like to announce the first award recipient of the first Youth Leaders Scholarship at a formal ceremony that will take place at our Spring concert this June in the Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall in New York City. This will be a memorable moment to commemorate the generosity of donors like the Shepherd Family and celebrate the diverse recipients of the MMC's Young Leaders Scholarship.

Conclusion

The Metropolitan Music Community asks that you commit to a generous campaign gift of \$750,000 to establish The Zoe and James Shepherd Youth Leaders Scholarship Fund. If you accept this proposal, the Shepherd family will be considered an early contributor to our campaign and will take a principal role in cultivating young leaders within the Metropolitan Music Community. Your family and your tremendous contribution will continue to set the precedent for other donors and ensure the ongoing success not only of this campaign and our future leaders, but of the arts community as a whole.

We thank you, the Shepherd Family, for considering this distinguished request for philanthropic and leadership support. Should any questions arise, please direct them to:

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