

FY21: March Cantus Board Meeting

Held via videoconference due to social-distancing requirements during the coronavirus pandemic.

Present: Nancy Gaschott, Theresa Gienapp, Jon Guyton, PaviElle French, Brian Newhouse, Jeff Reed, Paul Scholtz, Beth Anne Thompson, Craig Shulstad, Kevin Stocks, Frank Stubbs, David Niles, Bryan Fisher

Absent: Elizabeth Hartwell, Paul Johnson, Barb Thomas, Alberto de la Paz

Staff: Jacob Christopher, Joe Heitz

Guest: Stephanie Carlesimo (Vice President and Artist Manager, IMG Artists)

MINUTES

Jeff Reed called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

He introduced Stephanie Carlesimo (Vice President and Artist Manager, IMG Artists) who joined the meeting to discuss how IMG intends to work with Cantus.

Stephanie noted that it was a strange year to start a new relationship because of pandemic restrictions. She noted that IMG has received a lot of positive messages from presenters about the possibilities for Cantus post-pandemic. However, given postponements and rescheduling, the recovery is not as quick as they hoped.

Stephanie outlined some opportunities in the near future for Cantus:

- Virtual Performance followed by a Q&A session for (Hickory University)
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- McKnight Center, Stillwater OK live performance in May 2021 (adhering to social distancing guidelines). This event will be two one-hour performances.

Stephanie noted that the 2021-22 Season consists mostly of rebooking of cancelled dates from last year. She said that presenters are being very conservative about bookings for the 2021-22 season due to continued uncertainty.

For Cantus, IMG is focusing on building the 2022-23 season. There is a possibility of recording a new Christmas CD, followed by Christmas touring during the holiday season.

The board raised a number of questions for Stephanie. Nancy asked when the 2022-23 season begins. Stephanie said the 2022-23 season runs from September of 2022 to May of 2023. Summer festivals are also a possibility for Cantus.

Craig asked how we could coordinate “Christmas with Cantus” in the Twin Cities around IMG Christmas tour dates. Paul said that tour dates would not interfere with “Christmas with Cantus”.

Beth Anne asked what IMG thinks of the virtual work that Cantus has been doing and if IMG had any strategies for virtual content going forward. IMG is impressed by the thoughtful, artistic quality of the virtual concerts. Stephanie believes virtual concerts are a good idea until live concerts are possible. She said that it is difficult to know what the balance of live/hybrid concerts will be post-COVID.

Jonathan asked a question about the response of presenters to Cantus’ programming. He noted that it is challenging for Joe to budget when the presenters’ reactions to the programming can be unpredictable.

Stephanie said it is hard to know which Cantus programs will be popular with presenters, but IMG will work with Cantus to make the best possible revenue estimates. She described the cyclical nature of concert series (e.g., university presenters usually don’t rebook the same ensembles within 4-6 years). In describing IMG’s strategy, she said they plan around these expected cycles. By looking at an organization’s history, IMG will start having conversations with those presenters several years beforehand.

Stephanie also said she plans to have open dialogue with Cantus about trends and what presenters are responding to in the current landscape. She suggested that Cantus might design two tour programs; one that is more classical and one that is a little more “pop” in nature.

In support of touring revenue, she mentioned that Europe and Asia are on the table, however, it is hard to plan international tours right now because of pandemic travel restrictions. She suggested that diversifying the ensemble’s touring (i.e., more tours outside of North America) might be a good strategy. Stephanie said that if U.S. presenters perceive Cantus is in higher demand internationally, it could increase the group’s performance fees.

David Niles asked Stephanie how presenters are responding to Cantus. Stephanie said presenters have heard of Cantus, and the ensemble is well respected. She noted that presenters tend to have “go-to” groups, and IMG is working to shake up those presenter cycles to leverage new opportunities for Cantus.

Theresa asked what would be her dream booking for Cantus. Stephanie would like to build annual appearances for Cantus in major halls in North America (e.g., Disney Hall, Carnegie Hall, Davies Symphony Hall, and Koerner Hall), as well as at events and halls in Europe (e.g., The BBC Proms in London, and the Alva in Germany). Stephanie said it is also important to support the dreams of the artists (i.e., where they would like to go).

Jeff asked how the pandemic has affected IMG. Stephanie said the artists on their roster are surviving through the pandemic. IMG had to lay off some administrative staff due to

pandemic, and currently, booking agents and managers are working reduced hours.

Jeff commented that virtual concerts have expanded our audiences, and we would like to continue some virtual offerings. Stephanie noted that balancing virtual and live concerts is complex, as Cantus does not want to undercut its live audience. Virtual concerts may be good options for people who do not have access to live performances, however. She suggested that Cantus' virtual data could be important in booking conversations with presenters (e.g., showing presenters how many followers Cantus has, etc.).

Jeff thanked Stephanie for joining the call, and she logged off the call.

After Stephanie logged off, the discussion continued. Brian Newhouse asked what the revenue is for the upcoming online concert and if there is a way we leverage that existing content to improve the brand of Cantus. Joe noted that there are sync rights for previously recorded materials. Joe commented that we might want to use the pre-recorded materials as social media content.

Paul suggested that the professional videos from the Ordway recordings could be used on social media. He said the ad revenue on social media could offset the costs of the sync rights. Paul suggested utilizing targeted social media advertising for areas where Cantus will not be performing in-person.

Beth Anne asked if we could capture data about the virtual audience for use by IMG. Joe and Paul said that information is available and could be shared. They noted that Texas, Florida and California are prime markets for Cantus.

Jonathan suggested that university performance series and virtual performances might offer some options for Cantus until other concert halls are back in business.

Approval of Minutes

Jeff called for a motion to approve minutes. Bryan Fisher was marked as both attending and absent, so that correction was requested. Nancy moved that the February 2021 minutes be approved. Kevin seconded the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Artists' Report

Paul Scholtz and Jacob Christopher presented the artists' report and answered questions from the Board. The ensemble is starting to plan for the "Covers" concert, and they are starting to plan the next touring programs. The two programs currently in development are "My Journey, Yours" (focusing on why people leave their homes), and "Song of the

Universal” (music from different religious traditions). The next virtual concert is “Fields of Wonder” scheduled in April. They are also working on next spring’s program.

The ensemble is working on releasing video content from Camp Cantus I as well as some videos from the Ordway concerts.

Paul noted that audition materials were due today for the baritone vacancy. Forty candidates had submitted materials so far, and there are plans for virtual auditions.

Nancy asked for more information about COVID protocols for the Oklahoma concerts. Paul said that seven days of quarantine are planned as well as COVID testing. Jeremy will join the ensemble to sing on the program in Oklahoma.

Executive Director’s Report

Joe gave an update and answered questions on the executive director’s report. As of the meeting date, ticket sales for “Fields of Wonder” were 20% to goal. Joe is currently working on the budget for next year and will provide a draft to the finance committee next month.

Finance Committee Update

February Income Statement. David gave an update on behalf of the finance committee. From the February Income Statement, David noted that contributed income exceeded budget (mostly because of government grants). The earned revenue was ahead of budget, largely based on the “My Cantus Valentine” event (\$34,000 profit). As such, the income statement reflected total revenue for February of \$46,000 ahead of budget, and \$13,000 lower for expenditures. For February, the income statement reflects \$58,000 ahead of budget.

YTD Financials. On the Year to Date financials, contributed support is over budget by \$250,000 (including the PPP loans). Individual donations are \$78,000 ahead of budget.

David noted that the budget projections for virtual events are quite conservative, and robust online ticket sales account for much of the variance in the budget.

On the YTD financials, expenditures are \$50,000 lower than budgeted. For the YTD, Cantus is \$313,000 ahead of budget for income. David noted that for the rest of FY21, we expect to see cash decrease.

Balance Sheet. David reported that there is currently approximately \$500,000 in checking, and \$100,000 in reserves. Due to limited travel expenses, credit card

expenditures are very minimal. David noted that \$10,000 from the first PPP was forgiven in March. In June, payments on the EID loan will begin.

Jeff called for a motion to approve the February financials. Craig made the motion to approve and Frank seconded. The board voted unanimously to approve.

Engagement Committee Update

Jonathan Guyton gave an update on behalf of the engagement committee. He reported that contributed revenue and individual giving is way ahead of budget. As of February, we have already exceeded the budgeted goal for FY21.

Governance Committee Update

Frank Stubbs gave an update on behalf of the Governance committee. The committee has a meeting scheduled in the week following this board meeting to discuss bylaw revisions, new members and officer elections.

Jeff reminded the Board to please RSVP promptly when Joe sends out the request.

Jeff adjourned at 6:39 pm