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Luzerne Music Center: Creative Donor Engagement



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Since 1980, Luzerne Music Center (LMC) has been a summer home to students from all over the world who travel to the Adirondack Mountains of New York State to study music and hone their musical craft. While simultaneously running a summer instructional program and concert series, LMC aims to provide musical experiences for students of all income levels and promote classical music within a rural setting. Providing tuition scholarship and bringing distinguished artists to the campus have been central to LMC's program but have also been responsible for increased operational expenses in recent years. This case surveys the LMC's fundraising initiatives both to raise money for student scholarships and to serve the community through artistic interaction. The reader is asked to explore the effectiveness of these approaches and to brainstorm how this organization can effectively raise additional funds for a capital campaign without diminishing yearly operational income.

LUZERNE
MUSIC CENTER

*Building Young Artists and
Audiences of the Future*

This case study was prepared by Emily Dobmeier. **The Eastman Case Studies** are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements or sources of primary data nor are they to serve as illustrations of effective or ineffective leadership or decision making.

Lakeside Music Camp

Founded in 1980, Luzerne Music Center (LMC) hosts nearly 150 talented young musicians each summer, who travel from all around the world to Lake Luzerne in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. Students who attend LMC are accommodated on the site of the former Camp Tekakwitha, a Christian boys' camp, dating back to 1909. The brainchild of Philadelphia Orchestra cellist Bert Philips and Steinway pianist Toby Blumenthal, LMC continues to uphold the mission established by its founders, namely "to provide world-class music instruction for passionate young people in a summer camp environment, regardless of their

LMC aims "to provide world-class music instruction for passionate young people in a summer camp environment, regardless of their financial circumstance."

financial circumstance." The students, ages 9 to 18, represent a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. In 2018, LMC hosted students from 16 different states and 14 different countries, from Afghanistan and Brazil to Poland and the Cayman Islands. LMC provides financial assistance to about two-thirds of its students. In addition to its teaching aims, LMC

sponsors a two-month concert series that presents nearly 30 performances by students and professionals alike from June to August. Over the years, LMC has forged strong relationships with major composers and has welcomed to its campus such distinguished names as John Corigliano, George Crumb, and Joan Tower. It has further brought guest artists including Chris Brubeck, Sarah Chang, Riccardo Muti, Imani Winds, and Canadian Brass.

Students who attend LMC have the opportunity to participate in daily orchestra rehearsals or piano classes, chamber music coachings, music theory and rhythm courses, and weekly private lessons.

The faculty comprises high-level performers and educators from around the world as well, with an enviable student-faculty ratio of 5:1. The festival's Junior Session features middle school students, where students can attend from two to four weeks at a time; the Senior Session welcomes high school students and spans four weeks. Beyond classes from the core curriculum and on their major instruments, students can also take supplemental coursework in conducting, composition, jazz, and secondary lessons at LMC. Situated in its picturesque natural environs, the program even offers swimming lessons and recreational activities on the lake.

Within its summer season, LMC hosts the Luzerne Chamber Music Festival. In this concert series, LMC presents on its campus four to six guest artist concerts on Monday evenings and six Faculty Artist Series concerts on Friday evenings. These concerts are ticketed events and held concurrently with the student summer camp. Not only do students attend, but local area residents and even parents of students also appear at these events. Through diverse programming, the chamber music festival concerts have attracted both new and seasoned audiences to classical music. Located in a relatively rural portion of the state of New York, LMC aims to expand its audiences for classical music to include more local area residents each summer.

Meanwhile, LMC has maintained close ties with two major metropolitan arts organizations, the Philadelphia Orchestra and New York City Ballet, whose summer seasons take place in Saratoga Springs, a half-hour drive from Lake Luzerne. While in residence at LMC, students often attend performances by the orchestra or ballet. Additionally, LMC often invites the professionals from the Philadelphia Orchestra to provide master classes, to perform as part of the Luzerne Chamber Music Festival, or to participate in the weeklong Philadelphia Orchestra residency during LMC's Senior Session.

The Challenge of Fundraising

Luzerne Music Center has had steady growth in its operating budget each year, enabling it to continue to extend more invitations to talented guest artists and develop a diverse student body. LMC's increased recruitment efforts have presented new demands for student scholarship support. As its mission remains to provide music instruction to students of any background, the festival intends to ensure that financial need should not prevent students from attending. Consideration should strictly be made on an applicant's musical talent and interests. Each student who applies to LMC is given the option to complete a financial aid application. In recent years, every student who has applied for assistance has received scholarship support, if not full tuition.

Only 25% of LMC income comes from student tuition. (Other sources of income are captured in **Appendix 1.**) The remaining portion of its revenue comes from grants gifted by philanthropic organizations, the New York State Council on the Arts, and foundations, as well as fundraising efforts geared towards individual donors. Together, this income offsets the operational expenses, including an administrative staff of three,

who work year-round. The staff thus has the substantial burden of locating and pursuing fundraising ideas, while also maintaining the integrity of the summer program.

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With the appointment of Elizabeth Pitcairn as artistic director in 2010, and president in 2012, LMC began a series of fundraising efforts that have been successful and therefore repeated. Several local families and foundations near LMC were waiting to continue their support of the organization until a successor to founders Bert Phillips and Toby Blumenthal was appointed. With Pitcairn in place, fundraising could be back on track. An accomplished violin soloist, Pitcairn performs around the world on her Red Mendelssohn

Stradivarius of 1720, which is said to have inspired the Academy Award-winning film *The Red Violin*. Along with her musical experience, Pitcairn arrived with a background in fundraising, thus providing LMC with creative ways to find financial support for students.

With Pitcairn's guidance, LMC has adopted both large- and small-scale fundraising initiatives and has refined its model over the years as the administration comes to know how to reach and communicate with prospective donors. Emphasis in fundraising efforts has been placed on the positive impact of the classical music festival on students, both while in residence and after their summer studies are complete. The pitch for donor support takes place in a number of event contexts organized by LMC staff. An annual gala and separate 5K run/walk have achieved consistent success for LMC, while smaller fundraisers, student soirées, and Pitcairn's own performance schedule have further complemented the efforts to raise awareness for LMC and identify donor prospects. The most effective fundraisers have both generated revenue and showcased the artistic aims of the program.

Gala Under the Stars

Each summer, Luzerne Music Center hosts its annual gala, focused on raising funds specifically for student scholarships. This event is attended by a variety of patrons, ranging from long-standing donors to the newest concertgoers. The event is publicized widely to general audiences and promoted at LMC summer concerts. Apart from electronic save-the-date invitations, those who have traditionally supported LMC receive invitations by mail. The gala provides a chance for patrons to see the inner workings of LMC, with opportunities to witness live performance, interact with students, faculty, and staff, and tour the property itself, which the students call home for part of their summer.

The first gala took place in 2010 and was held on the festival premises, featuring violinist Sarah Chang as guest artist. This event drew approximately 50 people. Tickets were sold for \$250 each, which included a

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chamber concert, unlimited drinks, and hors d'oeuvres. "It was the first time people came to the campus for an early evening concert event outdoors in daylight, and this drew many people who wouldn't normally come for a chamber concert," Pitcairn remembered. In addition, the inaugural gala concert was situated on an outdoor stage, because LMC had arranged for a tent that provided covered seating. Chamber concerts are typically held in the Lodge indoors, but the new outdoor venue for the early evening concert

allowed gala attendees to witness a high-level musical performance nested in the beautifully forested Adirondack Mountains. In the end, ticket sales covered the cost of the gala, revealing a need for additional fundraising ideas throughout the evening to make the event more profitable.

The following year, Pitcairn and her team expanded the gala to include a silent auction, live auction, scholarship appeal, and sit-down dinner. Tickets were offered at multiple price points, and, like the inaugural gala, sales covered the cost of hosting the event. This meant that the auctions and appeals raised the "real" funds for LMC. In 2018, the gala was branded as the "Gala Under the Stars" and has moved away from featuring headline artists in favor of student performances. The evening now opens with a half-hour concert by the Luzerne Symphony Orchestra, spotlighting Senior Session students in attendance at camp. The silent auction contains more than a dozen big-ticket items for sale, from tickets to the U.S. Open Tennis Championship to a bottle of wine valued at \$1,500. The live auction, held during dinner, offers a half-dozen premium items,

including trips and works of visual art valued over \$10,000. A perennial favorite item up for bidding in the live auction is the "Conducting Experience." The winner of this bid is given the opportunity to conduct the Luzerne Symphony Orchestra at next year's gala concert. The winner attends a handful of rehearsals with the student orchestra and also receives private conducting lesson from the resident conductor. This auction item has brought students and donors into close contact and showcases the collegial spirit of the camp.

In addition to the auctions, the biggest fundraiser for the gala is the scholarship appeal. Once the live auction concludes and attendees continue with dinner, Pitcairn invites one or two students to tell a story about how they came to classical music and then perform for the audience. Patrons are treated to fascinating anecdotes, such as 14-year-old violinist Weronika from Poland, who spoke about her father being an opera director and her mother a choreographer. She had never been to the United States, but a full scholarship she won as first prize of the Red Stradivarius competition at the Akademia High School in Poland allowed her to travel abroad. Since choosing to come to LMC, Weronika was introduced to chamber music and collaborated with students from all around the world. She also won LMC's annual Concerto Competition. Weronika's fantastic performance and touching story was very moving for prospective donors to hear. Patrons were also able to talk with the young violinist personally, which was rewarding for all.

By providing patrons with high-level musical performances, chances to engage with the students, and different opportunities to donate, "Gala Under the Stars" has proven to connect well with those in attendance. In less than a decade of hosting this event, LMC has reliably netted over \$100,000 annually from the gala. The format has attracted donors who, over the long term, are able to witness the hard work and transformation of LMC, in its idyllic campus setting.

Move It for the Music 5K

In the same year that Luzerne Music Center started its gala, the organization also began a new fundraiser, the “Move It for the Music 5K.” While the gala takes place during the Senior Session with high school students, the 5K run/walk takes place during Junior Session with the middle school group. While the race course begins and ends on campus, participants proceed at their pace through the town of Lake Luzerne. Student chamber groups are stationed throughout the course, performing for the runners and walkers as they pass. One of the most beloved traditions of the 5K is the brass group of students, counselors, and LMC faculty, who await the participants at the finish line. They play the “Theme from Rocky” over and over as people end the race. Sometimes, the group plays at half speed as the faculty walkers begin to cross! Students who choose not to race can perform, cheer, or assist the administrative team with registration and distribution of prizes. Participants from the local area outside of camp are then invited to stay for breakfast in the dining hall, and in the past they have caught the first portion of the students’ rehearsal.

As with the first year of the gala, the opening year for the 5K broke even despite strong attendance. In addition to the dozens of students registered for the run/walk, many faculty and board members participated. Since the inaugural year of the 5K, LMC administration has targeted its marketing efforts much more toward the local community and added an online fundraising option for participants. With the online platform, participants receive an individual sponsorship webpage, where they can fundraise by crowdsourcing within their own social networks. A participant can be a runner, walker, or someone who simply wants to create a sponsorship page, but not race. No matter the chosen option, they are encouraged to promote their donation pages with their friends, family, and local community. Prior to arriving at camp, students are encouraged to participate however they would like and are incentivized to fundraise, though doing so is optional. Prizes including LMC gift cards, LMC

merchandise, and gift cards to local businesses have been given to both the top racers and fundraisers as enticement to spread the word about the summer camp program beyond Upstate New York.

In recent years, the “Move It for the Music 5K” has raised up to \$10,000 for LMC. With the course now certified by USA Track & Field, outside participants have increased, especially those who are training for larger races. Additionally, the symbiosis between running and music has drawn the attention of community members, who either have not visited LMC or might not otherwise engage with classical music. With

student musicians positioned around the course, the community members encounter bits of student performance in a fun and casual atmosphere. And by encouraging students to assist with fundraising and providing other options for participation in the event, ownership of “Move It for the Music 5K” is spread beyond just LMC staff. The lively annual event helps to create a memorable activity for the students and also allows them to take an active role to make the event a success. In addition to the gala and 5K, smaller house concerts and soirées occur throughout the year. These are the opportunities in which LMC has found positive interaction on a more individual level with donor prospects while continuing to educate them about the music center.

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House Concerts and Student Recruitment

For many of the weeks during the off-season from camp, Elizabeth Pitcairn goes on tour, performing on her rare instrument while also promoting Luzerne

Music Center. Her travels have taken her all over the world, playing solos with orchestras, performing outreach concerts in schools, providing intimate house concerts, and participating in various other events. These house concerts are hosted by interested donors who invite their friends or colleagues for a performance and dinner at their homes. Pitcairn performs for small audiences and provides them with information about LMC's mission. The host of the party agrees to donate a certain amount to LMC, a portion of which will often cover travel and lodging for Pitcairn and her accompanist. The rest becomes a contribution to the organization. She charges no fee for her performance, volunteering her efforts for the organization. Also, her accompanists tend to travel very far for a reduced fee because they support and believe in the mission of LMC. During the summer, faculty members will volunteer to join Pitcairn in these performances, highlighting that pride in LMC comes from all involved. The agreed-upon donation that the host will give to LMC varies depending upon the donor and location of the event. Often, other attendees of these house concerts will pledge support to the organization as well. Many of LMC's most generous and reliable donors have been won through Pitcairn's travels and connections.

In 2018 alone, the artistic director's concerts and promotional touring brought ten students to LMC from countries around the world.

Pitcairn's performances and outreach efforts have also become effective recruitment aids aimed at fostering the diversity and quality of students that LMC enjoys. In 2018 alone, the artistic director's concerts and promotional touring brought ten students to LMC from countries including Bulgaria, Cayman Islands, Poland, and

Ukraine. Through a partnership with Akademia High School in Warsaw, Poland, an annual competition called the Red Stradivarius competition (mentioned

earlier) has been created. The event concludes with a solo concert by Pitcairn and the winner, who receives full scholarship funding from the Akademia to attend LMC that summer. Connections with other schools and teachers abroad bring not only incredibly talented students from robust arts organizations around the world but also incoming scholarship funding for these students.

Student Soirées

In addition to Pitcairn's concerts and personal recruitment endeavors for Luzerne Music Center, students are invited a handful of times per year to participate in evening performances in their local area on the organization's behalf. The soirées typically arise when an existing donor steps forward to fundraise on a large scale within their community of friends and colleagues in cities and towns away from the campsite. Attended by the administration and board members of LMC, there are often more attendees and more formal presentations at soirées than at house concerts. In the past year, these events have taken place in a variety of settings from New York City and Philadelphia to Albany and smaller New York towns such as Sleepy Hollow and Brant Lake. In New York City, one soirée took place in an apartment overlooking Central Park, while one in Albany was at the Fort Orange Club, a private club where some patrons were members.

For each soirée, current (i.e. continuing) students and recent alumni from LMC in the chosen area are contacted and asked if they would like to perform. Often, the students will perform a solo work or two, but chamber music collaborations have also materialized, with students taking the initiative to organize their own rehearsals before the event and make programming decisions. Pitcairn has also reached out to a student or two to perform with her at the soirées. These run-out concert events provide past and present students not just an opportunity to perform but also a forum to share with prospective donors their experiences attending LMC.

The soirées typically begin with a cocktail hour or informal social gathering, which then leads into the evening's featured concert. Board Chair Mike Conway, a retired lawyer and active philanthropist, typically introduces the concert. Along with the administrative team, he shares background on LMC, including its history and mission. When the concert portion begins,

The performances at soirées are impressive, but the post-concert interviews with the musicians have great impact too.

each participant comes up to play one at a time and is then "interviewed" by LMC's program director. In the interviews, students are asked why they love playing music and explain how their time at LMC helped them to grow. The performances alone are impressive, but the interviews with the musicians have great

impact too, as these students each live within the communities of those in attendance, establishing LMC in the region of potential donors and new recruits.

At a recent soirée in Albany, Leo—a cello student who attended the Junior Session for the past four summers—described his experience at the camp, following his solo performance at the event. In his first year, he realized he had not studied his instrument as much as other students and even needed a faculty member to sit next to him in rehearsal to assist in his playing. The next summer, Leo was able to perform his first public solo in concert at an LMC Solo Showcase concert for students and parents. At the soirée, he mentioned that the chamber music portion of the LMC experience was his favorite part of camp. Leo was thrilled to collaborate with other musicians his age and revealed that his goal for summer 2018 was to win the concerto competition when he returns to LMC. Two months later, he indeed appeared in front of the Luzerne Symphony Orchestra as a winner of that competition! The achievement was inspiring to hear described by the talented cellist.

When the student performances conclude at the soirée, Pitcairn performs a short set and opens up a dialogue with the audience in the course of her concert. Presenting a vision for the organization and sharing her story as an alumna of LMC, Pitcairn puts an exclamation point on the evening. Following her performance, she mingles with patrons in direct conversation, as do the students and parents who are in attendance. This unique interaction among those gathered has traditionally translated into financial support for LMC and new relationships to build its network for the future.

Capital Campaign

Since its inception, Luzerne Music Center has occupied 20 beautiful acres of the Adirondack State Park in upstate New York. The on-site accommodations, which date back to Camp Tekakwitha's time, include 21 student cabins, three faculty cabins, a practice building, and an administration building with medical facilities. These facilities have endured many repairs over the years, and nearly all components of their original structures have been replaced. The rest of the facilities on the LMC campus include the Piano Pavilion, Lodge (recital hall), Shed Stage (backstage storage and library), practice studios, 11 counselor cabins, and four faculty cabins. The practice studios, counselor cabins, and newer faculty cabins are simple, prefabricated toolshed-type structures, which have been renovated to become living spaces. They are in dire need of repair. All physical structures on-site are integral to the operation of LMC's summer program, yet most are in need of replacement (**Appendix 2**).

Updates and repairs have been made to various buildings over the years, such as the complete rebuild of the Shed Stage in 2015. This renovation was a significant improvement for that performance venue. Additionally, an entirely new lighting system was installed in the Lodge in 2018. With the growth of LMC's programs, the administration is turning its focus to the need for a larger-scale upgrade of

facilities to handle the students and demands of the center: a full rebuild of the campus is in order with a \$5 million capital campaign in the works.

Design plans are nearly completed. Phase 1 will cost \$2 million and entails the construction of a new Faculty Village where teachers can be housed on campus, new student/counselor cabins, and new water, electrical, and septic services. Presently, only a handful of faculty members reside in LMC facilities, while others are placed in housing away from the camp itself. The existing faculty housing, as well as the current student housing, will be torn down and replaced with new camper cabins. Future phases will include the construction of practice and teaching facilities, a new administration building, and renovation of the campus dining hall (**Appendix 3**).

The capital campaign has necessitated fundraising to take place at an even higher and more urgent level. Funding for scholarships and general operating costs meanwhile cannot sag while capital is secured. LMC's initiatives have catapulted fundraising, but the capital campaign will require greater support than ever from current donors and highlights a pressing need for new prospects to fund the upgrade of the campus premises. Luzerne Music Center is fortunate to be welcoming a growing roster of students and artists to participate

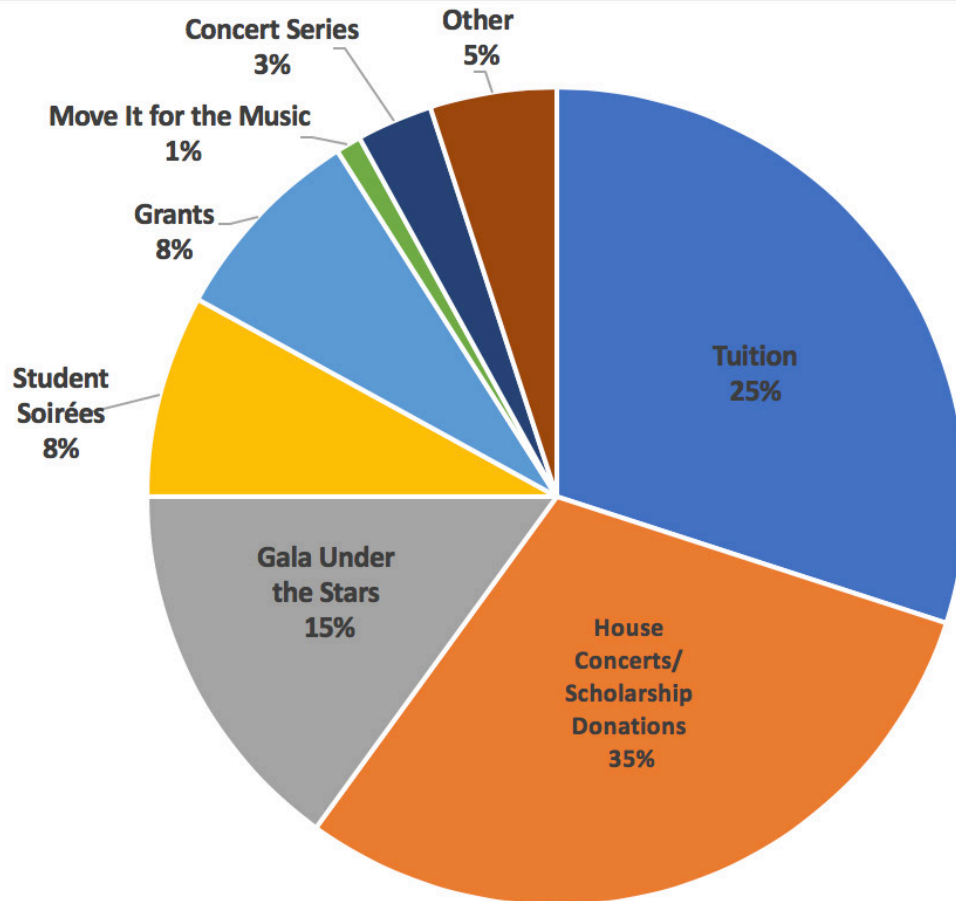
in its summer camp each year. Feeling the wind at their back, Pitcairn and her administrative team have committed to the capital campaign with support from the board of directors. A deeper and wider donor pool is critically needed, but the team believes fundraising success for its current programs can help inform a strategy for achieving the goal of the campaign. What aspects of LMC's current fundraising initiatives can it rely on as it now incorporates the capital projects as an institutional priority? What efforts can be enhanced even further and what new initiatives are needed? What events should be prioritized? Are there ideas outside of events? What steps can prevent "donor fatigue"?

As plans progress, Pitcairn has asked her team to consider these questions in light of the LMC mission "to provide world-class music instruction to passionate young musicians regardless of their financial circumstance."

The team believes fundraising success for its current programs can help inform a strategy for achieving the goal of the capital campaign.

APPENDIX 1

Sources of Income for Luzerne Music Center



Source: Luzerne Music Center, Fiscal Year 2017

APPENDIX 2

Existing Facilities at Luzerne Music Center



Student Cabins (left)

Faculty Cabins (below)



Practice Building Facilities
(above and right)



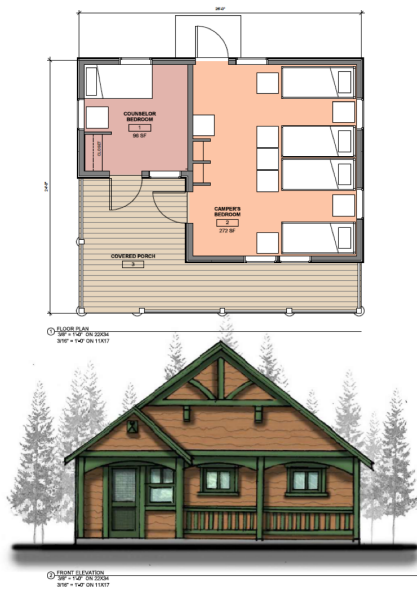
Student
Restrooms
(left)

APPENDIX 3

Luzerne Music Center Capital Campaign Vision



Student Cabins



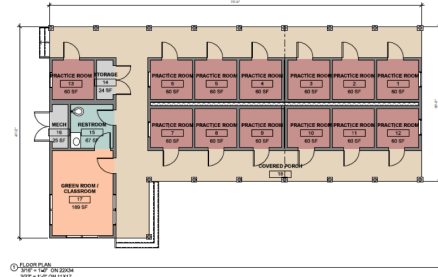
Faculty Cabins



Student Restrooms



Practice Building





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