

While We Wait

Dear Angela: I can't seem to wrap my head around goal-setting these days. How can we plan for the long-term when no one knows when we'll go back to performing in concert halls?

BY Angela Myles Beeching

I hear you. Many musicians and arts professionals are struggling with this: how to invest their time, energy, and resources toward an unknown future.

There's a long recovery ahead for the performing arts field. No matter when we can be vaccinated, many venues—and their audiences—won't be ready to go back to concerts anytime soon, and some won't be coming back at all.

What to do?

Focus on your essential purpose. As artists and arts professionals, our essential work is to help provide inspiration, solace, and a sense of connection and meaning—especially now, when it seems like the world is on fire.

We're all at an inflection point. It's a time for answering important questions. Whatever your role—performer, manager, presenter, or any other—consider the following:

Purpose-Driven Goal Setting

Find a quiet, undistracted space, and with pen and paper, write your responses.

Think about *why* you're committed to music. Consider your ultimate purpose—both personal and organizational.

When it comes to the music you offer . . .

1. Who is it for?
2. What needs does it meet?
3. How can it serve your community *now*?

Then, with your purpose in mind . . .

Imagine three years from today.

This may be tough, because most arts professionals think short-term. We focus on the urgent tasks in front of us: the grant proposal that's due next week, or the

recording session at the end of the month. Inevitably, we're limited by this short-term, season-specific thinking.

We end up focusing on the needs and deadlines others impose on us. And we rarely pause to consider what it is that we want. So, at a time when performances are few and far between, it's important to consider where you're headed and *why*.

Ask yourself:

4. What ambitious, purpose-driven project do you most want to have completed three years from now? (Make it something that you'd create or lead—not a job or grant you'd win.) Whatever your goal, write it down.

Then, ask:

5. How can your project help create a sense of community and belonging? How might your purpose be expressed through relevant programming and discussions that reflect on the Black Lives Matter movement, social equity, and inclusion?

6. How might you actively engage audiences in the development of your project?

7. How might you create a “beta” version of your project to test the idea?

For instance, in the coming months, you might stream portions of the project online. You might enlist collaborators, engage potential donors, and plan special preview performances in cathedral-like spaces for socially distanced audiences.

Build the future you want to inhabit.

Don't wait. The future of chamber music can be far more inclusive and relevant—and you can make far more impact. We just need your courageous goals put into action.

Bring it on.

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