

SOSB Leadership Team Meeting Minutes

June 13, 2024

- Brett Couch communicated with Dan and indicated that he is holding our usual date for December concert
 - Dan would like to have direction on at least the December concert, and preferably all three
 - Dan has been to Mason auditorium, and it's nice
 - Middletown HS would have to be a different date than our usual first Sunday
- Discussion of moving December concert to Middletown HS
 - Concern about changing both venue and date
 - Possibility of increasing or attracting a different crowd with new venues
 - 55th year could be seen as a "touring" year
 - Not unheard of to play different venues or different dates
 - Costs of DFA has steadily gone up over the years, and service has gone down.
 - Bill Steihl and Chris Brandenburg also had issues over the years with Miami and DFA
 - Dan's logistical concerns about concerts
 - Concert day is a lot of work to get the truck and move the equipment and set the stage – would like to just show up and conduct
 - Lack of volunteerism to help out
 - Going to a new venue with more service would alleviate this concern
 - Acoustics at DFA are very good, and tiered seating is nice
 - Warming up on stage is helpful for the conductor, and ensures that we're all ready to play
 - Lack of a reception is not a concern at a new venue
 - Important to decide what we can live with and support to the entire band – important to be a unified front
 - Trying new venues would help us decide if that's worth it and if DFA is really the better choice
 - Gives DFA a year to get their act together
 - Sam has concerns about losing audience that has always been loyal at DFA
 - Dan pointed out that moving around to other cities also increases exposure to other communities
 - Scott acknowledged Sam's ongoing efforts to work with Miami and work out our issues
 - Sam noted that previously when we moved around, we were supported by a bank that paid for lots of advertising with advance notice of next performance
 - This will have to be addressed if we begin to move around
 - Going to MHS means maintaining roots in Middletown
 - Sam also notes that we will need a concise way of explaining a move that doesn't ruin a relationship with Miami and maintains relationship with audience members and places like Mt. Pleasant.
 - Communication with patrons
- Scott moved to perform in December at MHS, Harriet seconded
 - Motion carried 4 to 1 to move to December

- Concert in March
 - Discussions have centered around Hamilton and Mason high schools
 - Andi has a connection at Hamilton that has told her about the auditorium
 - Hamilton is having an arts renaissance and would make a good choice
 - Important to decide early and be able to say at December concert where we'll be next concert.
 - Concern about Hamilton being off the beaten path, but it's a very easy to navigate
 - Berkeley Square very close and would probably love to bring a group
 - Paperwork for Hamilton has been sent but has not been approved – nothing sent to Mason yet
 - Costs at Hamilton would be inclusive of all services, including sound, lights, and setup
 - Sam feels that moving the band to another city is a loss to Middletown
- Carolyn moved to perform in Hamilton for March, assuming date is approved, Harriet seconded
 - Need for a backup venue if Hamilton unavailable for our dates
 - Mason could be the backup with Hamilton as the April concert
 - Motion carried 4-1
- Could DFA be our final concert venue?
 - Would that give DFA time to improve?
 - Sam doesn't feel that Miami will improve because of the budget problems
 - Scott wonders if Brett will continue at Miami, and whether they will fulfill their contract to provide a maintenance person, someone who can work the HVAC, can unlock doors, operate the elevator, etc.
 - Sam feels that the only way to find out if things have improved at Miami is to contact other events to see how things went
 - Scott thinks that contacting other events would be a great next step
 - The only way to ensure that we would have lighting and sound at DFA would be to hire our own guy who is familiar with the system
 - Harriet pointed out that maintenance people should also ensure a clean theater, which wasn't the case this past year
 - Sandy assumed that going back to DFA, if at all, would happen next year
 - Brett would need to know in the fall if we intend to use DFA in April
 - Messaging for the coming year is "going on tour" – not wanting to burn bridges with Miami
 - Dan suggested doing more concerts, some joint concerts, repeat some pieces, and visit new venues
- Andi moved that Hamilton and/or Mason (whichever is not the March venue) be our venue for April with DFA as our backup
 - Motion carried 4-1
- Will begin messaging soon to the band about the coming year "being on tour"
- Andi will communicate to Brett our decision
- Survey results will be discussed at our meeting in August
- Meeting adjourned at 7:15

Thoughts on SOSB continuing performances at Finkelman Auditorium

Before the Leadership Team Zoom meeting, I wanted to send this out for two reasons – to make all my points and to keep the meeting shorter.

As I have stated before, I feel very strongly that the band should continue performances at DFA. Regardless of the recent issues with MUM and Miami's financial challenges, the band has had a long history with MUM/DFA and has established DFA as a home base for its concerts. Audiences have become accustomed to attending our concerts at DFA inspite of certain parking and access issues. And those audiences have not decreased because of those issues but continued to grow over time, which is gratifying to the band members who volunteer their time and talent to making music.

As you may know, the SOSB began in 1969 as the Middletown Symphonic Band under the direction of Bill Stiehl, who was approached by Everett Nelson, chair of Miami's music department, to consider starting a community band in Middletown. Nelson and Stiehl both were aware of the legacy of band music in Middletown with the popular Armco Band of the 1920s and 30s.

In addition to the musical connection with Middletown, the community has supported the band financially, Since 2016 the band has received a total of \$21,000 in grants from Middletown foundations, helping the organization to remain fiscally solvent. Also, when the Middletown Symphony Orchestra disbanded, SOSB was gifted percussion equipment including expensive tympani, and a legacy fund from the MSO to add to the band coffers each year.

At our last meeting after the April concert, I asked for a chance to speak with Miami to get more of an understanding of what issues Miami was dealing with in regards to DFA, and I have done that. I have met and/or had conversations with some administrative staff and some members of the Regionals Advisory Council. While all were very supportive of the band and its long history of presenting music at DFA, they all had the same message regarding Miami's financial situation – enrollment is down, expenses are up, cuts are being made. However, they all say the regionals are NOT closing.

Regarding DFA, I was able to get some clarification regarding the contract for all groups as of now. Miami will provide a security guard and one custodial person for each event, but groups will be responsible for providing their own light and sound. In our case this is not much, as we can now provide our own sound equipment, and Miami has offered to help us learn how to set the lights. And, of course we can contract someone to take care of both.

I realize I am in the minority on this issue, but I urge the LT to at least consider these points in making a decision. I feel that moving around to different venues could result in a loss of some loyal audience members, and I also feel that we can resolve any issues with have had recently Miami in order to continue our concerts at DFA.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Ashworth