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Facing Record Growth, Longy Takes Steps to Transform Program and Space
Cambridge institution will discontinue on-site Preparatory and Continuing Studies to dedicate additional resources to growing conservatory and its educational mission

Cambridge, MA – The Longy School of Music of Bard College today announced plans to significantly increase practice and teaching space in the 2013-2014 academic year in order to support record enrollment growth in its degree-granting conservatory program and to advance initiatives supporting music education in public schools and underserved communities in the region.

The announcement follows a vote on March 4 by the school’s Board of Governors to discontinue Longy’s Preparatory and Continuing Studies effective Aug. 31, 2013, which will end the part-time private lessons, classes, and ensembles offered by Longy to area residents in order to expand the space available to full-time conservatory students this fall.

“This was a difficult decision for the Board but an essential one if we are to continue to focus on advancing our mission as a first-class conservatory,” said Matina Horner, chair of Longy’s Board of Governors. “The past several years have been characterized by record enrollment growth in Longy’s conservatory. This has really strained the availability of mission-critical practice and teaching space for Longy’s full-time conservatory students.”

Longy’s need for practice and teaching space has been identified as a critical challenge for a number of years by faculty and students, as well as by independent accrediting bodies. Over the past decade the school has taken numerous steps to create space within the constraints of its existing facilities at 27 and 33 Garden Street, including multiple renovation, relocation and reorganization projects. It has also pursued the acquisition of nearby buildings.

“We believe this decision will have a dramatic, positive impact on the quality of student life in the conservatory,” said Longy president Karen Zorn. “The school’s recent merger with Bard College and new partnerships with organizations like the Los Angeles Philharmonic have only contributed to our rising stature as a world-class institution for advanced musical study in the United States. As we build toward an even more robust and talented conservatory student body, we must remain focused on meeting the most essential educational expectations of our full-time students.”

The school recently launched a new Master of Arts in Teaching in Music degree program—the only degree program in the world to offer training in the principles of El Sistema, the revolutionary social-justice-through-music program—and is pursuing plans for additional Cambridge-based graduate programs for aspiring teaching artists from across the country.

The private lessons, classes and ensembles offered through Longy’s Preparatory and Continuing Studies consume nearly half of the reserved practice and teaching space on its campus, putting undergraduate and graduate conservatory students at a competitive disadvantage with their peers at other area institutions. Longy students live off campus, which increases the need to have dedicated and flexible spaces available for practice, instruction and creativity.

Longy currently has 215 full-time conservatory students in its degree programs. Conservatory enrollment has almost tripled between 1998 through 2011. Conversely, Preparatory and Continuing Studies has seen a 27 percent decline over the same period. The contributions of the two programs to Longy’s bottom line are similarly disproportionate. While the Preparatory and Continuing Studies uses about half of Longy’s occupied space, it produces only one-quarter of its net revenue.
“The space currently occupied by Preparatory and Continuing Studies activity will be put to immediate use this fall for full-time students,” said Wayman Chin, dean of the conservatory. “Access to more practice facilities and better teaching space for studio instruction is essential for us to deliver a complete academic offering and to support the growth in the conservatory and its competitive degree programs.”

Miriam Eckelhoefer, who directs the Preparatory and Continuing Studies programs, said the school will work closely with students and families during the next six months to identify alternatives for continuing their music studies.

“We are confident that the demand for private music lessons, classes or ensembles will continue to be met,” Eckelhoefer said. “We anticipate that many current instructors will be able to keep their students, continuing to offer lessons in their private studios or at other institutions with which they are affiliated. There are numerous resources for private lessons, classes, and ensembles available throughout Cambridge and greater Boston in institutional, community and residential settings.”

54 part-time instructors work exclusively in Preparatory and Continuing Studies, with a majority of the teachers in the program working less than five hours a week. Discussions with the Longy Faculty Union will determine how these positions will be affected and the transition benefits those individuals will receive. In addition, six administrative staff members will be impacted by the change.

The decision does not affect Longy’s community-based curriculum for conservatory students, which is a key to the school’s unique mission to prepare musicians to make a difference in the world.

“There’s no doubt that Longy’s recent growth can be in part attributed to our community engagement curriculum for conservatory students. Students are drawn to Longy because our goal is not to simply train performing musicians, but to create real life experiences and practical scenarios that shape the way our students engage with the community throughout their life and career.” Zorn said. “Our innovative presence in schools and other community settings throughout Cambridge and greater Boston is stronger than ever and will continue to grow stronger in the years ahead.”

Longy students and faculty have an active instructional presence in the Greater Boston community through a wide array of teaching assistant positions, practicums, experiential education placements and performances.

For example, more than 60 Longy students have been assigned to 20 sites in greater Boston this year, where they lead innovative music projects while gaining valuable teaching experience. In addition, in a new initiative this spring, Longy has partnered with five local K-8 schools, providing in-depth collaboration between students and schools on the planning, implementation and assessment of lessons.

Conservatory students and faculty also contribute their talents and significant time to teach audiences about music in shelters, hospitals, prisons, senior centers and many other community venues by conducting hundreds of performances each year.

Longy School of Music of Bard College was founded in 1915 as Longy School of Music by renowned oboist Georges Longy. A degree-granting Conservatory and school of Preparatory and Continuing Studies, Longy is located in Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The school serves 215 full-time conservatory students from 35 states and over 20 countries. Longy provides a distinguished faculty that promotes profound musical understanding and technical mastery, encourages growth of imagination, and fosters inquiry about the role of music and the musician in the larger world. With a curriculum rooted in the traditions of Western music, Longy’s mission is to prepare musicians to make a difference in the world.

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