

Yale SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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February 28, 2014

Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund Grant Program
Massachusetts Cultural Council
10 St. James Ave., 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02116-3803

To Whom It May Concern:

With pleasure and confidence, I write in support of the grant application submitted to your Council by Saint James Place, Inc. in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Rare indeed are the individuals and communities who are committed to preserving and re-purposing buildings of historical significance that will become focal points for all citizens and places where visitors will readily see and experience cultural heritage.

Sally and Fred Harris had a dream for historic St. James Church – save this from the wrecking ball, renovate and preserve the building, and re-purpose this forever sacred space into a community center for emerging artists and a plethora of classes and colloquia that can enlarge, enliven and energize an entire region. This project will have a profound and transformative impact on the community and indeed on generations of people who will be beneficiaries of its gifts for the mind and the human spirit.

Great Barrington and the surrounding region do not have a year-round place to house and present the work of emerging artists, the standard repertoires that inspire and comfort viewers and listeners, and a place where peoples of all creeds and colors can feel emotionally safe as they shape community and seek tolerance and understanding. In the Harris' hopes, St. James is a physical place that enables us to look within ourselves and discover our own goodness.

While its location, history, and need all intersect in a manner that supports St. James as a positive influence, the attributes of the proposed facility will attract collaborative partnerships with other institutions. For example, I can imagine a number of projects that would be mutually beneficial to St. James and our School of Music.

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St. James has been and will, in its new context, be a significant cultural and educational asset for Massachusetts and Great Barrington. The project merits your serious consideration, and I endorse it wholeheartedly.

With kindest regards, I remain

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Blocker", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Blocker
The Henry and Lucy Moses Dean of Music

RLB/sep