

American **Musicological** Society

Strategic Plan Overview

----- 2021–2025 -----



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About the AMS Strategic Plan

This document summarizes the five-year strategic plan developed by the American Musicological Society (AMS) for the years 2021 through 2025. In collaborative conversations spanning a year and a half, the AMS Board of Directors has taken stock of our current projects and the hopes and goals expressed by our members. This document represents the outcome of those conversations: a set of priorities that we believe will strengthen the AMS in years to come.

In particular, this plan has been informed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis of academic employment in the humanities, and the rise of new digital technologies for receiving, sharing, and exploring knowledge. These developments have altered the environment in which the Society conducts its work and pursues its mission, and they have sharpened our focus on issues of accessibility, outreach, employment, and technology. It is also informed by the fact that our goals and visions have frequently outstripped our available human and material resources. This strategic plan provides us with a road map for meeting our future and shaping it.

The goals, programs, and initiatives outlined here serve as guideposts to the work that our staff, volunteers, and members will and must do. That work will strengthen the Society by sustaining our most valued programs, while also allowing us to launch new programs and opportunities to advance the study of music and support the work and professional well-being of all the Society's members and constituents.

Board of Directors
American Musicological Society

DEVELOPING THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

The development of this strategic plan began in early 2020 with the formation of several strategic planning task forces. The members of those task forces included a diverse selection of AMS members and were charged with exploring all aspects of the Society's operations and governance and providing recommendations to the Board of Directors on future needs and strategic direction. In addition, the Board solicited the opinions and insights of hundreds of AMS members and constituents through a formal survey of all AMS committees and through many informal conversations with AMS staff members and constituents. These insights and recommendations were then reviewed and discussed, first by the Board Committee for Strategic Planning and then by the full membership of the AMS Board of Directors, before being distilled into the strategic plan summarized here.

President's Letter

Strategic planning is not new to the AMS. Every five years or so, the Board of Directors gathers to review where we are and where the Board and the Society's members imagine we could go. And our financial drives—the OPUS Campaign, appeals for various funds—express, in ways big and small, some of our priorities (but not all of them).

What makes this document unusual if not unique in our history is in its attempt to: 1) pull together in one place the multitudinous elements that currently constitute the AMS; 2) identify how these elements contribute to the life of our members; and 3) offer goals for us—board and committee members, staff, our entire membership, and those who are watching us—that allow us to measure actions against intentions. We've organized these actions under five rubrics:

SUPPORT: How might we better [undergird](#) the work that our constituents do now and are yet to do?

CAPACITY: How might we better [backstop](#) this new and existing work?

OUTREACH: What more might we do to [invite](#) individuals and institutions to join us in this work?

EVENTS: What types of activities might do more to [showcase](#) this work?

GOVERNANCE: How might we better [manage](#) persons and resources in order to make all of the above possible?

Our synoptic thinking and strategic planning began in earnest under the

leadership of Bob Judd (1956–2019), so it should come as no surprise that we have not only begun work toward some of the goals outlined in this document but have already reached some of them (e.g., additional financial support for our chapters and study groups, improving the document flow for our prize committees). There remains, though, much more work for us all to do to ensure that the AMS thrives in the years to come.

The word I return to again and again as I think of our shared future: I want us to be a capacious society. For us to be able to welcome more—work, people, and ideas—and to achieve more—support, influence, and impact—we need to have a clear picture of who we are, where we've been, and where we're going.

I hope you will receive this plan—this picture—in the collaborative spirit in which it is offered. As I also say repeatedly: You are the AMS.

I look forward to continuing our work together.

Steve Swayne, President
American Musicological Society

Guiding Principles

In preparing this strategic plan, the American Musicological Society was guided by the following three principles.

I.

The AMS generates, preserves, and extends knowledge about music.

The mission of the American Musicological Society is to expand understanding of music and sound. By supporting music scholars, educators, and performers in their pursuit of knowledge through research, teaching, and learning, we enable them to explore music's role in social life, past and present; develop multiple ways of knowing music; and foster the skills of respectful interpretation, communication, and advocacy.

II.

The AMS works to be inclusive, equitable, accessible, and environmentally sustainable.

We acknowledge that, like the broader society of which it is a part, the American Musicological Society has a history of exclusionary and inequitable practices. We are committed to eliminating those to the best of our ability. To build a strong network of people who love music, the AMS works toward broad and equitable access for all in AMS governance, programs, and

activities, and toward the open exchange of ideas. We welcome diverse peoples and viewpoints and will do our best to make all feel welcome. We also seek sustainable ways to keep our network lively while reducing the Society's carbon footprint.

III.

The AMS builds capacity as needed to support its mission and constituents.

The AMS supports many kinds of inquiry about music and makes the products of that inquiry accessible to a wide community of people who love music and seek to know it better. In order to accomplish this, the AMS must preserve knowledge and support existing constituents, while also developing new programs and resources to accommodate new knowledge and audiences. This work requires substantial institutional capacity—in program funds, paid staff time, volunteers, infrastructure, and more—and we are committed to expanding and improving the Society's capacity as needed.



The Way Forward

Over the five-year period covered by this strategic plan (2021–2025), the American Musicological Society will pursue a capacious vision of music studies by inviting the participation of people in many lines of work; increasing its investments in public-facing musicology; and fostering a broad and open network that connects people not only at the AMS Annual Meeting, but throughout the year.

To organize the many initiatives and projects that make up this strategic plan, the Society has broken its planning into five areas of focus and development: support, capacity, outreach, events, and governance. Those areas, and the Society's overarching goals within them, are detailed below. *The way forward* entails implementing an ambitious, but balanced, program of projects and initiatives across these five areas.

SUPPORT

The American Musicological Society provides financial, professional, and infrastructure support to those working to expand our understanding of music and sound. This support is especially critical for those who lack institutional funding or are in the process of a career transition. It principally takes the form of awards, grants, and fellowships aimed at students and career academics working or studying within colleges and universities.

In the future, the AMS plans to maintain most of its existing programs while doing more to recognize and support research, exploration, and inquiry that results not only in academic publications or presentations,

but also in innovations in pedagogy, performance, and public-facing musicology across all media. The Society will ensure that many kinds of research are supported by its grants, showcased at its events, and publicly recognized by its prizes and awards.

CAPACITY

The human, digital, and physical infrastructure of the American Musicological Society is over-extended. The Society's staff members and volunteers are severely overburdened or inappropriately tasked, and many of its digital, financial, and technological systems are often outdated or inflexible.

This lack of capacity is a real hindrance to institutional adaptation, change, and improvement. It means that the Society often lacks the people, technologies, and resources to do what the times and its constituents demand. Thus, to achieve the goals laid out in this strategic plan, the AMS must expand its human and technological capacities.

Of course, adding staff members and upgrading digital infrastructure can be a costly endeavor. Thus, to support these goals the AMS will seek increased grant funding and unrestricted gifts with the goal of using this money to support administrative and infrastructure improvements. It will seek partnerships with peer organizations to achieve program synergies and economies of scale. And it will improve efficiency and reduce time-consuming processes by upgrading systems and streamlining procedures.

OUTREACH

The American Musicological Society is committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive space for all those interested in the study of music and sound. This is not just a guiding principle of this plan, but a moral imperative for institutions that, like the AMS, serve a pluralistic society. And to make real this commitment, the AMS must work harder to reach and engage the many members of its large and diverse constituency.

Thus, while maintaining support for its current programs and constituents, the Society will extend its offerings to many of the other groups of people interested in the study and exploration of music and sound. It will reach out to K-12 educators; people who teach musicological topics but were primarily trained in other fields; people working in the creative industries (music performance, radio, film, arts administration, etc.); and the musically engaged public.

Through events, publications, communications, and governance, the Society will work to build networks and audiences that include people whose career paths and perspectives have been historically under-represented within the AMS.

EVENTS

AMS members report that the personal connections and shared experiences fostered at the Society's Annual Meeting are among the most valuable and memorable of their professional lives; that AMS study groups and chapters provide a friendly and flexible point of entry; and that AMS workshops, conferences, and symposia help participants share their

ideas, grow their networks, and burnish their credentials.

However, in this time of environmental challenge, pandemic restrictions, and decreasing institutional support for professional travel from colleges and universities, it is clear that the existing roster of events is not enough and that the AMS must adjust its calendar of events to meet current needs and constraints.

For example, because it is harder and harder for many AMS constituents to travel to participate in the AMS Annual Meeting, the Society must find ways to engage people outside the context of the Annual Meeting. Because more and more AMS constituents are working in spaces where the typical academic presentation has little currency, it must support a wider variety of professional forums. Most of all, to appeal to a large and varied constituency, AMS must make its events hospitable to many kinds of conversations about research, teaching, learning, and professional development, and develop programs that are mindful of our carbon footprint.



GOVERNANCE

Members of the American Musicological Society enjoy and value having a voice in the workings of the Society. To support and deepen this participation, the AMS has in recent years instituted public calls for volunteers for service roles; expanded participation in the evaluation of proposals for the AMS Annual Meeting; and worked hard to ensure that committee appointments represent a range of perspectives. In the future, the Society will continue to strongly support and facilitate this type of participation.

Moreover, as external conditions change, the structures of AMS governance will need to adapt as well. To ensure sufficient volunteers for new programs as well as old ones, it will have to right-size and streamline the work of committees. To ensure that programs are managed sustainably, some work will have to be transferred to the AMS office from committees, study groups, and chapters that are either over or inappropriately tasked. (Bringing those programs into the operations of the AMS office will ensure that volunteer roles stay reasonably sized and that programs are run in accordance with AMS principles and best practices.)

And as the AMS Board of Directors seeks to represent a more diverse membership, it will have to be expanded to include appointed directors-at-large. This will ensure a breadth of perspectives, particularly of people working outside the professoriate.



STRATEGIC GOALS

SUPPORT

- Provide more opportunities for professional development and mentoring of people at all career stages and across a variety of career tracks
- Expand support and recognition for digital publications and public musicology
- Provide greater support for chapter and study group programming

CAPACITY

- Expand administrative capacity and modernize digital infrastructure
- Expand grantwriting and fundraising efforts to help fund capacity improvements
- Explore partnerships with peer organizations to harness economies of scale

OUTREACH

- Expand the Society's public musicology presence
- Improve the Society's marketing and outreach efforts and materials
- Connect with new audiences and constituencies

EVENTS

- Expand and diversify the AMS Annual Meeting
- Build a varied program of public events throughout the year
- Expand number and variety of members-only events to improve the membership experience

GOVERNANCE

- Ensure diverse and varied representation on the AMS Board of Directors and all committees
- Streamline and right-size committee sizes and responsibilities
- Strengthen transparency, communications, and service guidelines

The Work Ahead

To achieve the strategic goals laid out in the previous section, the American Musicological Society will have to be energetic and engaged on many fronts in the years ahead. It will have to strengthen fundraising *while* improving outreach *while* building staff capacity *while* expanding public events and much more.

To help organize this work and achieve these ambitious goals, the Society has developed a long list of projects and initiatives with clear timelines, deliverables, and budgets. These projects and initiatives, organized into the strategic areas outlined above, aim to address the needs of the Society's varied constituencies. Aspirational, but also pragmatic, they have been developed in accord with realistic assessments of constraints, costs, and the possibility that unanticipated events may alter what is both possible and desirable.

This section spotlights the most important or exciting projects that you can expect to see over the five years covered by this strategic plan. These include new grant programs, upgraded web and database systems, changes to governance and committee structure, and a host of new outreach and communications efforts. Together they are intended to convey a capacious vision of music studies that invites the participation of people who have many interests. Most of all, they are forward-looking and designed to help the Society meet future challenges and opportunities.

However, the projects and initiatives detailed here are not everything that the American Musicological Society will do over the next five years. The Board of Directors, the AMS staff, and the Society's

committees and affiliates will continue to think proactively about new programs, partnerships, and possibilities, directing their efforts in accord with the guiding principles discussed above. Yet, even this admittedly partial overview should make it clear that *the work ahead* is substantial and will touch every aspect of the Society's programs, governance, and operations.



SUPPORT

As part of its goal to expand support for all aspects of research, teaching, and learning focused on music, the AMS will implement initiatives to recognize and support work that results not only in academic publications and presentations, but also in innovations in pedagogy and public-facing musicology across all media. The Society will ensure that many kinds of professional activity are supported by its grants and showcased at its events.

FEATURED PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

Strategic Priorities Fund

This fund will incentivize constituents, committees, and affiliates to pursue programming that advances the Society's medium and long-term strategic goals. Three to five grants of \$1000 to \$2500 will be made annually.

Sustainable Mentorship Program

The Sustainable Mentorship Program, currently in its pilot stage, provides robust year-long mentorship and professional development support to individuals at every career stage. In the future, the SMP will be formalized and expanded.

Jackson Memorial Grant for Music Analysis

This new grant program will support research, write-up, and implementation grants for work (i.e., articles, digital projects, educational initiatives, etc.) on music analysis. Two to four grants of up to \$3000 will be made annually.

Study Group Activities Fund

The AMS will provide grants of up to \$1000 to support study groups' organizing and program development, comparable to the support provided to AMS chapters. Grants will be awarded semi-annually.

CAPACITY

The Society's programmatic ambitions exceed the capacity of its current staff and institutional infrastructure. If the AMS is to respond flexibly and effectively to the rapidly changing needs of its members and constituents, it must increase the capacity of the AMS office and the efficiency and versatility of its systems and infrastructure. This is an expensive endeavor and will require the AMS to raise resources for additional staff, explore partnerships with other societies, and fund investments in infrastructure and technology.

FEATURED PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

New CRM

The AMS will develop and launch a new constituent relationship management (CRM) database, with integrated message and ecommerce capacity. This CRM will improve data management, reduce legacy tech debt, and strengthen donor management.

AMS Website Re-design

The AMS will fully re-design and modernize its website, with the goal of improving its look, feel, user experience, and interactivity.

Application Management System

The AMS manages 45 different prize, grant, fellowship, and subvention programs. To simplify and standardize operations, it will adopt a single application management system to support deliberations for these programs.

Chapter & Study Group Websites

The AMS supports 15 chapters and 21 study groups. As part of its commitment to better support for its affiliates, the Society will undertake to launch, re-design, or upgrade websites for all chapters and study groups.

OUTREACH

To foster a welcoming community, the Society will expand its outreach to people interested in the study and exploration of music and sound, but who have not been historically well-represented in the AMS. It will improve the member experience and buttress fundraising by upgrading informational materials, expanding planned giving outreach, and providing greater communications support for AMS affiliates.

FEATURED PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

Biennial Report

The AMS has few materials showcasing the achievements of the Society. To remedy this, and provide greater transparency, the Society will publish a biennial report with financials, program updates, member spotlights, etc.

Planned Giving

To ensure ongoing financial resources, the AMS will do more to encourage and incentivize planned giving. This work will include holding donor education events, developing templates to guide the planning process, and strengthening donor outreach.

Membership Materials & Join Experience

The AMS will better communicate the value of membership and improve the join/renew experience by upgrading membership forms, onboarding processes, and web resources.

Donation Pages & Donor Experience

The AMS will improve transparency and the donor experience by publishing an annual "Update to Donors," upgrading donation forms and pages, and providing greater visibility for donors and sponsors.

EVENTS

The AMS will expand the annual meeting to include more professional development opportunities; organize a roster of professional and networking events throughout the year, and make its events hospitable to many kinds of conversations about research, teaching, learning, and professional development, while always remaining mindful of questions of accessibility and the Society's overall carbon footprint.

FEATURED PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

Performances

The AMS will encourage the Performance Committee and its chapters and study groups to organize more lecture-recitals and performance-related events throughout the year.

Fundraising Events

The AMS will hold special events to raise funds and attract the interest of potential donors. This includes fundraisers, informational events, program showcases and regional events that connect the Society to local sponsors.

Speed Networking & Speed Mentoring

The AMS will organize speed networking and speed mentoring events to help AMS members and constituents strengthen and expand their professional networks and connections.

Support for Study-Group & Chapter Events

The AMS will work to support study-group and chapter event organizing by providing access to virtual-event platforms, publicizing events, sharing through YouTube and Vimeo, and providing ecommerce and contract support.

GOVERNANCE

To maintain its commitment to participatory governance while also accommodating the creation of new programs, the AMS will right-size and streamline the work of committees. Some work will have to be transferred to the AMS Office to make volunteer service manageable in accordance with best practices. And the AMS will seek to better serve its diverse constituency by ensuring representation for a breadth of professional perspectives.

FEATURED PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

Study Group Liaison

The AMS will establish a board liaison to all study groups to serve as a conduit for communication to and from the Board of Directors and to assist in advising study group leaders.

Committee on the Annual Meeting & Public Events (CAMPE)

The Committee on the Annual Meeting (CAM) will be enlarged, reorganized, and renamed the Committee on the Annual Meeting & Public Events (CAMPE). This new Committee will guide and coordinate planning for both the AMS Annual Meeting and events throughout the year.

Education Committee

The Graduate Education Steering Committee will be reorganized and renamed the Education Committee, and will include subcommittees focused on graduate, undergraduate, and K-12 initiatives.

Culture of Giving

The AMS is heavily dependent on the financial support of a small group of generous members. To protect the Society's future, this burden must be more widely shared. Thus, the AMS will encourage a culture of giving and implement initiatives to widen the base of AMS donors.

Acknowledgments

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Members and Officers of the Board of Directors (2020–2021)

Steve Swayne
Suzanne G. Cusick
Naomi André
Joy H. Calico
Georgia Cowart
Samuel Dorf
Sarah J. Eyerly
Danielle Fosler-Lussier
Charles Hiroshi Garrett
Jason Geary
Bonnie Gordon
Lydia Hamessley
Eduardo Herrera
Alejandro L. Madrid
Noriko Manabe
Douglas Shadle, *ex officio*
Laurie Stras
Judy Tsou
Siovahn Walker, *ex officio*

About the AMS

The **American Musicological Society** is dedicated to expanding our understanding of music and sound through research, teaching, learning, and advocacy. To realize its mission, the Society runs a wide range of grant, fellowship, publication subvention, and award programs; encourages an open exchange of knowledge through its publications, meetings, performances, lectures, and public programs; and supports the professional lives of its members and constituents through workshops, mentoring programs, discussion forums, and other resources.

The Society's offices are located on the campus of New York University in New York City. Siovahn A. Walker, the Robert F. Judd Executive Director, and the four co-workers support and facilitate the work of roughly 300 volunteers to accomplish the Society's many activities.

Governance & Staff

Board of Directors

Steve Swayne, *President*
Georgia Cowart, *President-Elect*
Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Vice President*
Lydia Hamessley, *Secretary*
Douglas Shadle, *Council Secretary*
Siovahn Walker, *Executive Director*

Sarah J. Eyerly
Charles Hiroshi Garrett
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