

Dear Peabody Students,

On June 30, when we announced our plans to begin the fall semester with a mix of in-person and online classes, lessons, and ensembles, critical data measuring the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic were trending in a positive direction, supporting the idea of a cautious return to campus that would include applied and performance-related activity. In the weeks that have passed, the public health situation in Maryland and across the country has deteriorated, with worrisome signs that community transmission could accelerate in the weeks ahead, leading Peabody to now revisit these plans.

Accordingly, after much consideration, we have made the determination to return to fully remote instruction for the fall 2020 semester. We have come to this decision in consultation with leadership and public health experts across Johns Hopkins, with the health and safety of the Peabody community as our top priority, and in recognition of the unique challenges inherent in the Conservatory's instructional model, including but not limited to recognizing that a preponderance of our inter-state commuting faculty would face significant challenges to being on campus. Please know that the different plans you may hear announced by Johns Hopkins University's Homewood campus schools are driven primarily by differences in the size and nature of programs, classes, and activities between our schools and campuses.

While we are certainly disappointed not to be returning to campus in the short term, our preparations for the coming academic year have included a strong focus on strengthening our capabilities and infrastructure for remote instruction, given that under our previous plan all classroom instruction was slated to remain online and that most of our international students would be participating exclusively online. With this level of preparation, I am confident that our students and faculty together can now maximize the potential for artistic and educational advancement during these exceptional times.

To that end, I believe we have a unique opportunity to combine the best of what traditional performing arts training offers at Peabody with state-of-the-art technological training, creative approaches to programming and performance, and the artistic flexibility needed for an unpredictable world. The performing arts will survive this pandemic, and Peabody students will be better prepared to carry music and dance forward in new ways. We have emphasized values of adaptability and flexibility in the training of our students in recent years through the Breakthrough Curriculum, and now, the current situation has offered a real-world example of how quickly things change, and how they will continue to change, impacting how performing arts organizations and artists may operate in the future.

ACADEMICS

Our plan for a completely remote program includes applied lessons, chamber music and other ensembles, technique courses and repertoire studies – all areas we had previously planned to be able to offer in person. As noted, academic courses for this fall were already planned to be delivered in a fully remote format. Across the curriculum to prepare for this, faculty have been configuring courses which can be taken asynchronously, to accommodate students in all time zones.

With the very sudden move to remote teaching and learning last spring, we had to adapt very quickly to an unexpected reality. While there were some challenges in such a swift transition, many discovered surprising advantages to teaching and learning remotely, inspiring a fresh approach and new energy. Over the summer, building on those initial adjustments, faculty and staff have devoted more than 1,200 hours to learning best practices for remote instruction and course design and exploring a broad range of technology teaching tools through The Peabody Digital Teaching Collective. Peabody also shared its newly developed expertise with more than 3,500 artists and educators from around the globe in a series

of Lunch-and-Learn webinars spotlighting innovative pedagogy. Additional trainings for applied faculty are ongoing even now.

Since spring, we have seen countless examples of artists both within and beyond the Peabody community harnessing technology to realize new levels of artistic achievement and inspiration. As we translate that creativity into our curriculum, students will be challenged to complete new performance-based projects rooted in technology. Ensembles will continue to offer a broad range of meaningful experiences for 21st-century artists. With many virtual opportunities available to us, students will engage in small and large group projects that build ensemble skills and community. Work will include virtual performance and collaborative ensemble projects; hands-on experience in recording for musicians; partnership with creators from across disciplines; conversations and workshops with esteemed musicians, dancers, composers, and conductors from across the country; and deep listening and diverse repertoire study.

The office of Academic Affairs continues to offer [academic advising](#) and [tutoring](#) services by phone or Zoom, and has updated the [policies](#) outlining options for deferred enrollment, part-time enrollment, and an alternative capstone project, very much in the spirit of finding creative performance modalities. While our faculty have spent the summer preparing courses to be delivered online, the Conservatory will extend the spring grading policies through December. Classes will automatically be graded without a letter grade, but students will have the option of selecting letter grades for some or all of their classes.

It is of course critically important that students and faculty have the proper technology resources to be successful in a remote education environment. To that end, Peabody offers [detailed recommendations](#) for computers, peripheral devices, and minimum network connectivity standards for students. JHU student discounts are available for some of the recommended devices, and [financial aid](#) may be available to ensure students have the tools they need this fall.

Access to campus spaces will continue to be limited and monitored by the Dean's Office, with permission to work on campus granted on an as-needed, case-by-case basis. Students and faculty are advised not to come to Baltimore with an expectation of using campus facilities. The [Arthur Friedheim Library](#) continues to make arrangements for remote access to its collections and materials, and [LAUNCHPad](#) is offering virtual career coaching appointments, online events to help students network and plan for their futures, and a curated selection of resources for artists.

TUITION and FINANCIAL AID

Tuition is based on the cost to provide a world-class Peabody education. We are committed to maintaining that standard of excellence by providing complete access to the expertise of our faculty, curriculum, and support resources. Every student who chooses to will be able to continue to make progress towards their degree. And the unique environment in which we will practice our art this fall offers benefits in that it is pushing all of us to exercise both intentionality and flexibility in our creative work.

Given our commitment to maintaining the high-quality programs that students expect from Peabody and delivering the academic content and credits required to advance, and the very significant additional investments we are making in order to do so, Peabody – consistent with Johns Hopkins University – is not reducing tuition for this academic year.

At the same time, we recognize that the global pandemic is creating unexpected financial burdens for many families, and we are prepared to help meet these burdens to the extent possible. I encourage any students whose circumstances have changed to contact the office of [Financial Aid](#).

Student Employment opportunities, also a means of financial support, will be remote-only and will be limited. To comply with labor laws, domestic and foreign, only students who are physically in the United States will be eligible to work. All students who are eligible for Federal Work Study and have accepted their Federal Work Study award as part of their aid package, but are unable to find employment, will be considered for financial assistance from Peabody based on their need and available funding at the time of the request.

STUDENT LIFE and HOUSING

This change in our plans for instruction also changes previously announced plans for on-campus housing and dining facilities, which now will not be operational this fall. If you have concerns that your living situation is not secure or can demonstrate hardship, please contact the office of [Student Affairs](#).

At the same time, we know that a campus life outside of academic studies is important to our students. Student leaders and Student Affairs staff continue to envision innovative ways to build community so that you can enjoy the social, creative, leadership, and engagement benefits associated with an active campus life. You will hear more about new and revamped student activities opportunities in the coming weeks.

[Backstage: Peabody's New Student Orientation](#) will be delivered online and program content is being continually added throughout the summer.

As the stress and uncertainties of the COVID pandemic continue to take their toll in myriad ways, I encourage you also to practice self-care and take advantage of the [wellness resources](#) available to you as a Johns Hopkins student: both general wellness and [COVID-specific resources](#). The office of [Student Affairs](#) also remains available to answer questions and offer resources.

CONTINUED DIALOGUE

We understand that students may have questions about what they can expect in their experience this fall. To address any questions you may have, I will be hosting additional virtual town hall meetings early next week. Students will receive an email invitation to attend on Monday, August 3, beginning at 6:00pm for new students and at 7:15pm for returning students.

In addition, we will continue to update the student [resource page](#) on our website, and encourage you to contact the office of [Student Affairs](#) with questions about your particular situation. You may also wish to speak with your studio teacher to get a better sense of what you will experience in lessons this fall. In light of this latest news, we will be reaching out to students with a simple survey form, and ask you to inform Peabody of your enrollment plans by August 17.

There is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted higher education across this country, with conservatories and schools of performing arts facing some of the most complex challenges of any institutions. Several of our peer institutions have similarly announced plans to move online exclusively for the fall, and others are likely to follow. As a division of Johns Hopkins University, Peabody is fortunate to be guided in our decision-making by some of the world's leading experts in public health and epidemiology. There may be no ideal solution to the question of how to do what we do during a global pandemic, but – given the current trajectory of the virus – I am confident that the decision to begin the coming academic year in a remote instructional format is the best option to protect the health and wellbeing of our students, faculty, and staff while continuing uninterrupted performing arts training of the highest level.

There is no doubt in my mind that the world needs what we as artists do, now, more than ever. At the same time, this pandemic has forced us to rethink what performance looks and feels like and has accelerated the pace of innovation in our field. These changes began long before COVID-19 but are now being driven exponentially. This experience has also reminded us and highlighted the fundamental importance of helping humans connect through art and that the new paths for those connections will emerge. And for that reason, artists must possess the excellence, creativity, flexibility, and resilience to lead the way. Let that be our focus as we approach an altered fall semester at Peabody.

Sincerely,

Fred Bronstein, Dean