



15 October 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

I write in enthusiastic support for the Lyra Festival and Workshop, and advocate for any and all grants and support to maintain and increase its robustness. I have known about Lyra since its first season in Randolph, Vermont and have watched it become an increasingly powerful program both for the young artists who populate it and for the communities it touches. Randolph is both relatively small and also not as connected to the kinds of opportunities that come with linking up with an institution of higher education. So I was greatly pleased to see it migrate south to Smith College. The facilities of the college, while certainly more expensive, are also more in sync with what Lyra aims to offer its students both at the level of performance spaces and practice rooms. And the beautiful Olmstead designed campus and residential houses of Smith, as well as the cultural richness (music first and foremost), intensely pedestrian-accessible culture, and family friendly nature of Northampton offer ideal social spaces for their students. I expect that as Lyra grounds itself further in the Pioneer Valley, the network of highly qualified students and an appreciative audience will only increase, and that its already stellar reputation will also increase—deservedly so.

I am not a music professional, but I have been a devoted classical music listener all my life. Over the course of Lyra's first season in residence at Smith, I had the opportunity to take my two nine-year-olds to a few events in the program, including a remarkable master class with Frederic Chiu and the lovely final gala. (As it happens, my father was also there, so three generations of my family partook together.) My children's excitement was palpable; that kids not much older than they were could make such wonderful music brought the classical vocabulary that much more down to the ground for them, weaving it into their lives more profoundly. I can envision the successful outreach to young audiences that is so easy to do in this area that houses the Five College consortium and any number of primary and secondary schools where music is a high priority.

Lyra, and its teachers and directors are special. They are energetic, kind, exciting, and smart. They are seemingly indefatigable and utterly generous in how they produce community as they produce this remarkable festival and workshop, and they work both seriously and rigorously, *and* with an awareness of their students as kids whose growth and education is ongoing—an extremely difficult needle to thread. Yet Lyra does it beautifully. One day, I hope, I'll be the oldest generation, and I'll have the pleasure of listening a new generation of young musicians in a master class with a renowned artist, possibly one who went through Lyra first, with my children and their children. For now, I'll enjoy anticipating Lyra's next season in my own backyard. I wouldn't trade it for Tanglewood for a minute.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Alexandra Keller'.

Alexandra Keller

Professor of Film & Media Studies

Director of the Film & Media Studies Program