

NEWSLETTER | JULY 2026



Greetings from our New Board President

It is both an honor and a privilege to serve as President of The Presser Foundation. I look forward to working with my fellow Trustees and our outstanding staff as we continue to advance Theodore Presser's enduring vision of strengthening music and music education.

I succeed Ellen Rosen, whose leadership has positioned the Foundation for its next chapter. Under Ellen's guidance, the Board completed an important strategic planning process that will shape our work for years to come. Her commitment to thoughtful governance, careful stewardship, and collaboration strengthened the Foundation and provided a clear roadmap for the future. On behalf of the Board, I extend my sincere gratitude to Ellen for her leadership and her many contributions. I am pleased that we will continue to benefit from her experience and counsel as a Trustee.

As I begin my term, my priority is to execute the strategic plan that this Board has developed together. Our responsibility is to ensure that Theodore Presser's generosity continues to make the greatest possible impact while remaining faithful to the Foundation's mission and responsive to the needs of today.

Mr. Presser believed deeply in expanding opportunities for those with the talent, dedication, and desire to pursue music. His support for aspiring musicians through higher education reflected his conviction that investing in promising individuals strengthens the future of music itself. As we carry that vision forward, we also recognize that musical talent is found everywhere, while opportunities are not always distributed equally. Helping bridge that gap by creating meaningful opportunities for students to pursue music is an important part of our strategic plan and a natural extension of our founder's vision.

Equally important is our commitment to music educators. Mr. Presser understood the lasting contributions of teachers whose influence extends far beyond the classroom. Continuing the Foundation's support for retired and financially vulnerable music teachers remains one of the most meaningful ways we can honor those who have devoted their lives to nurturing the next generation of musicians.

Together, these priorities - expanding opportunity for aspiring musicians, caring for those who have dedicated their lives to teaching along with our commitment to the general advancement of music in the region - will continue to guide our work. They reflect both our founder's enduring values and our commitment to ensuring that The Presser Foundation remains a strong and relevant force in advancing music and music education.

The Foundation's work is made possible through the dedication of our Trustees, committee members, Executive Director Teresa Rodgers, and the exceptional team who carry out our mission every day. I thank each of them for their commitment and look forward to working together as we build on the Foundation's remarkable legacy.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of The Presser Foundation. I am excited about what lies ahead and confident that, by remaining faithful to our mission, disciplined in our stewardship, and focused on thoughtful execution, we will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students, educators, and musicians in the Philadelphia region and across the country.

Chris Rinaldi
Board President

Equitable access to all musical experiences transforms
communities and fosters connection, well-being, and joy.

Vision Statement, Adopted 2025

GRANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

2026-27 Grant Applications Open

This year marks the launch of a refreshed general operating support application process. The changes reflect the Foundation's recent strategic planning work and ongoing conversations with grantees and applicants across the region's music community. The new guidelines also reflect our commitment to supporting organizations that work to expand access to music and music education. As always, our goal is to ask better questions, with less burden on applicants and more room to describe what makes their work distinctive.

One of the most significant changes is the **combination of our Advancement of Music and Special Projects grant programs into a single general operating support application process**. All eligible organizations seeking general operating support - regardless of the organization's age - will apply through one process. There will not be a Special Projects application process this year.

Advancement of Music

We refined eligibility and reorganized criteria into three categories to narrow our focus and clarify our priorities for applicants. We encourage all applicants to review the updated **Advancement of Music Guidelines** closely.

Eligibility

- **Geography:** Our geographic eligibility has shifted from roughly 28 counties to 19, slightly narrowing our grantmaking to a more concentrated area across Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Our previous boundaries were based on a 75-mile driving

radius from City Hall (Philadelphia), which was difficult to interpret in practice. This change allows the Foundation to invest more deeply in our region and develop stronger relationships across our footprint.

- **New Organizations:** We continue to welcome applications from organizations of all sizes and stages of development, while clarifying that applicants should have at least one full year of documented financial information.
- **Music Focus:** Our commitment to organizations primarily focused on music remains central to this grantmaking area. This year, we added a clearer threshold: the majority of organizational expenses should be dedicated to musical programming.

Criteria

Our grant guidelines and application are now organized around three criteria. We hope this structure makes it easier for organizations to understand what we are looking for and to speak to it directly in their applications:

1. **Organizational Strength** reflects an organization's overall health and readiness to deliver its mission, including leadership, financial management, and operational stability.
2. **Music Programming** considers the quality, consistency, and intentional design of an organization's musical offerings and evidence of learning and improvement over time.
3. **Music Access**, described in the framework below, is a new criterion, developed in our strategic planning process.

Music Access Framework

During the strategic planning process, the Foundation identified an area for increased focus: investing in organizations that dismantle barriers to music access. To do that well, we needed a clearer sense of what that work looks like today, and better tools for consistent decision-making. The [Music Access Framework](#), described below, is what we created as a result.

To deepen our knowledge and inform our work, the Foundation spent the past year conducting research on music access, including interviews and conversations with more than 150 organizations across our region. We are grateful to everyone who contributed their time and perspectives. Through that process, we sought to better understand the barriers that limit participation in music and music education, and the approaches organizations are already using to address them.

What we heard reinforced something we already believed: expanding access is not a one-time effort, but an ongoing commitment that requires sustained investment, often across an entire organization rather than a single program or department. That reality reinforces the Foundation's long-standing commitment to general operating support, which gives organizations the flexibility to do their work in ways that fit their organizations and communities.

We also recognized that adding Music Access as a criterion without offering a clearer picture of what that work can look like would be unfair to applicants. The Music Access Framework grew out of what we learned from those conversations. It is organized into five domains:

1. **Access and Participation**
2. **Diverse Musical Traditions**
3. **Voice & Agency**
4. **Community Connection & Belonging**
5. **Pathways and Progress**

The framework is not a requirement or a checklist. It is meant to reflect the many ways organizations, of all types and sizes, are already working to expand access, and to offer a shared language for that work. We hope it is useful not only for describing efforts in an application, but as a resource for organizations that want to learn more about what is happening across the field. The Music Access question in the application is optional, and organizations are encouraged to share whatever is most relevant for their work.

We look forward to learning from applications and feedback during this year's process and to continuing our partnership with the organizations that teach, perform, and present music throughout Greater Philadelphia.

As always, if you have questions about eligibility or criteria, please reach out to Rachael Gartner, Administrative & Grants Manager, at rgartner@presserfoundation.org.

EVENTS

Upcoming Next Movement

The Foundation looks forward to hosting Next Movement on Tuesday, September 22 from 12:00-1:15pm! More information and a registration link will be shared via social media and on our website soon. To learn more about Next Movement, check out [the website](#).

AWARDEE SPOTLIGHT

2024-25 Graduate Music Award: Felipe Hoyos-González

Composer Felipe Hoyos-González is a Doctor of Musical Arts student in Composition and Theory and the 2024-25 Graduate Music Award recipient from the University of Illinois. 'Reminiscencia' is the debut album of Huitaca Ensemble, the voice-and-electronics duo founded by Hoyos-González and singer Emily Venturella. Supported by the Graduate Presser Award, the album explores the relationship between human memory and identity through the expressive possibilities created at the intersection of voice, poetry, and technology. Across five works for voice and electronics, the project investigates memory not only as a repository of the past, but as a living process that continually shapes how we perceive ourselves and the world around us. Using techniques such as algorithmic composition and live digital signal processing, the human voice is expanded, transformed, multiplied, and reimaged, creating musical textures that blur the boundaries between the acoustic and electronic worlds.

A central element of the album is its close relationship with the poetic text. Rather than serving as a vehicle for the music, each poem became an equal creative partner, shaping the

musical language, formal structure, and expressive trajectory of each work. To realize this vision, Huitaca Ensemble commissioned original texts from poets and writers Trip Venturella and George Galo, whose distinct literary voices enrich the album's exploration of memory, identity, absence, and remembrance.

'Reminiscencia' became both a major artistic milestone and the beginning of a new creative direction for my work. Throughout the project, Emily and I approached the computer not simply as a technological tool, but as an extension of the human body and voice, an extension capable of amplifying expression, memory, and presence. This perspective allowed us to integrate technology into both the compositional and performance process in ways that deepen the dialogue between performer and electronics while opening new expressive possibilities for contemporary vocal music.



Receiving the Graduate Presser Award had a profound artistic and professional impact on my development as a composer and sound artist. The award made it possible to realize *Reminiscencia* with Huitaca Ensemble, strengthening my long-term artistic collaboration with Emily while helping establish the ensemble as an emerging voice dedicated to contemporary works for voice and electronics. As a composer who recently migrated to the United States, the project also became an important platform for sharing my artistic voice, building new interdisciplinary collaborations, and contributing to the contemporary music community through innovative approaches to electroacoustic performance.

'Reminiscencia' will be released in early August 2026, marking Huitaca Ensemble's first full-length recording and the culmination of several years of collaborative artistic research into the intersections of voice, poetry, memory, and technology.

NEWS & INFORMATION

Blog Posts & Newsletter

Guest Blog Post: Your organization can submit a guest blog post about your efforts and receive an unrestricted honorarium! Check out the guest blog post guidelines on our website.

Report Blog Post & Newsletter: The Foundation may also reach out to feature your organization based on information from your most recent grant follow-up report. Foundation staff will write the article and share a draft with you before publication.

Board & Staff Updates



Honoring Ellen Rosen

In June, our Board President, Ellen Rosen, was succeeded by Chris Rinaldi. Rosen led The Presser Foundation's Board with a steadiness that comes only from someone who has done the work of understanding where the organization is and where it needs to go. The strategic plan she helped steward stands as a written commitment to who we intend to be and how we intend to get there. Earlier in her Board leadership, she raised her hand in 2019 to establish the Foundation's first DEI Committee and carried that commitment through three years as Board President, centering our mission, the communities we serve, and equity as a governing value rather than a program add-on. She did this quietly, consistently, and never put it down. Rosen has been a thoughtful, principled, and generous leader and we look forward to celebrating her leadership this fall.

Honoring William McLaughlin, III

William McLaughlin, III has served as a Board Member of the Foundation since 2009, marking many of those years as Vice President, Executive Committee member, and Chair of the Foundation's largest grantmaking area, Advancement of Music. Throughout those years, McLaughlin has been a steadfast steward of the Foundation's mission and governance, championing artists, educators, and organizations with insight, rigor, and genuine passion for the art form. McLaughlin has also embodied the highest ideals of fidelity, thoroughness, and quiet dedication to the ideals of Theodore Presser and the generations of musicians whose lives this Foundation has touched.

New Officers & Committee Chairs

We are pleased to announce Board Members who are stepping into important Officer and Committee Chair roles for the 2026-27 year. We're grateful for their dedication to the Foundation's mission and look forward to the perspectives and expertise they bring to support music organizations throughout Greater Philadelphia.

Leading the Foundation forward, we are happy to welcome Chris Rinaldi to his new role as Board President. Rinaldi joined the Board of Directors in 2020 and has served on the Capital, Assistance, Finance, DEI, and Executive Committees. As the retired President and CEO of Jacobs Music Company and director on multiple music organization boards, Rinaldi brings a lifelong commitment to music education to this new role. As he has put it,

"Seeing firsthand how the pursuit of music education could transform lives, whether it was the individual focus of highly talented young people advancing to conservatory and performing careers or, more often, the lighting up of a young person's face when they participated in making music at any level, is when music education became my passion."

Officers

President – Chris Rinaldi

1st Vice President – Stanford Thompson
2nd Vice President – Rollo Dilworth
Secretary – Sharon Sorokin James
Treasurer – Mary Jane Bobbyock
Strategic Planning Officer – Ellen Rosen

Chairs

Advancement of Music – Peter Burwasser
Assistance to Music Teachers – David Kring
Capital Support – Ellen Rosen
Philadelphia Music Education – Stanford Thompson
Special Projects – William McLaughlin, III
Scholar Award – Mary Ellen Poole
Finance – Mary Jane Bobbyock
DEI – Rollo Dilworth
Nominating & Governance – Sharon Sorokin James

New Board & Committee Members

We welcome the following new Board and Committee Members.

- **Jonathan Edwards**, Board Member, Co-Founder and CEO of FamFrequency Productions, and educator, Philadelphia Music Education and Nominating & Governance Committees
- **Isabela Alvarez**, Advancement of Music Committee Member, Associate Attorney at Dilworth Paxson, specializing in philanthropic and nonprofit law
- **James Hamlet**, Finance Committee Member, CPA and Partner at Isdaner & Company, LLC
- **Mary Kate McGrath**, Philadelphia Music Education Committee Member, Partner at Post & Post, LLC, and Board Member of Philadelphia Youth Choral Ensembles
- **Karen Vesely**, Finance Committee Member, CFA charter holder and nonprofit-focused investment professional, and Finance Chair of Chester Children's Chorus

Officers

Chris Rinaldi

President

Stanford Thompson

1st Vice President

Rollo Dilworth

2nd Vice President

Sharon Sorokin James

Secretary

Mary Jane Bobbyock

Treasurer

Ellen Rosen

Strategic Planning Officer

Board Members

Zulma Arria

Melinda Burrows

Peter Burwasser

Honorary Trustees

Jeffrey Cornelius

William Davison, 4th

Martin Heckscher

Corey Smith

Radclyffe F. Thompson

Mark Wait

Vera Wilson

Committee Members

Isabela Alvarez

James Hamlet

Heather Landes

Phillip Lian

Mary Kate McGrath

Malcolm Pryor, Sr.

Nicole R. Robinson

Karen Vesely

Timothy Warfield, Jr.

Georges Buzaglo
Jonathan Edwards

Eve Hyppolite
Denise Iemolo

David Kring
Susan Lewis

William B. McLaughlin, III

Lei X. Ouyang
Mary Ellen Poole
Marietta Simpson
Terell Stafford
John Wright

Peter Witte
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Administrative & Grants Manager

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Strategy Director

Teresa Araco Rodgers

Executive Director

Abby Rolland

Communications Manager

Erica Breitbarth

Graduate Research Fellow

Kristin Valentin

Graduate Music Fellow