

# Brattle Street Chamber Players Leadership Transition Guide

*Created by Will Yao, May 2022*

This guide was crafted from data collected through 20 qualitative interviews of Brattle members, Brattle alumni, professional musicians, and student leaders at other universities, over the course of March, April and May 2022. The primary research aim concerned the questions:  
*What leadership model(s) or governance structure is most suitable for collective decision-making in small music ensembles, such as the Brattle Street Chamber Players? How can such a model be implemented?*  
*What are the virtues and challenges of collective decision-making in the context of small arts organizations?*

This guide is not a comprehensive report of the research findings, its purpose is to serve as a practical reference guide for BSCP future BSCP leaders, based on the finding of the research. Please consider this a living document, subject to modifications and addenda in future generations. Ideally, this document serves as a launching point for planning and project execution; it is not meant to be exhaustive or a checklist of any kind. Refer to *Memorandum of Findings* for a report of research results.

## Guiding principles for leadership in small music ensembles

**Organization transparency:** creating a context where it is clear to all Players how decisions are made what the leadership structure is

**Member autonomy:** granting all Players the level of trust necessary for them to contribute to crafting the identity of the ensemble and the realization the mission of the ensemble

**Group synergy:** forging an environment where Players are able to learn from one another in a frictionless and inclusive manner

**Sustained Engagement:** providing a value proposition to Players that motivates them to engage fully in the rehearsal process

**Empowerment by Example:** recognizing that it takes time for musicians to adjust to the Brattle model and develop the confidence and musical maturity to contribute during rehearsals, and thereby recognizing the importance of more experienced members setting an example in and out of rehearsals

**Norm Setting:** understanding how essential it is for the expectations, both musically and administratively, to be set

early on through clear communication, equipping new members and returning members with the tools to be set up for success.

## Recruitment/Auditions

Determine the objective **measures of evaluation** ahead of time and ensure that all ensemble members participating in the auditioning process are aware of them. In addition, determine the **voting system** that is going to be used ahead of time and set up necessary Google Forms. Make members aware that they can abstain from any voting process for any reason. Be clear in communicating the expectations of the audition and allow ample flexibility in scheduling for auditionees. Begin pubbing to potential new members over email and social the Summer prior to the Fall season and the Winter prior to the Spring season. Update the website with audition information well before the start of the semester.

## Concert Season Planning

Planning early each concert season will ensure smoother and more seamless project execution during the semester.

- Plan any intended **collaborations** with other arts organizations in the first two weeks of the semester and keep an ongoing line of communication with their leadership throughout the semester.
- **Repertoire** decisions for the season should be made prior to the second official Sunday rehearsal of the season. Determine with other Board members the process that will be used for suggesting and selecting repertoire prior to the first rehearsal (Delphi Method etc.). Communicate the decision to all Players. Create the necessary forms and documentation. If Brattle plans on performing a piece by a student composer that has not been composed yet, be sure to consider the intended length and style of the piece.
- Set a performance date with the Events Coordinator at the Music Department in the first two weeks of the semester. Consider carefully potential conflicting performances.
- In the Spring concert season get in touch with the Office for the Arts regarding **ARTS FIRST** in the first

month of the semester. Inquire about collaboration opportunities

- Confirm with Music Department Director of Administration dates that Paine Hall is unavailable for regular Sunday rehearsals. Book Holden Chapel or g20 as backup spaces.
- Reach out before the fifth Sunday rehearsal to guest artists via email (Parker Quartet, Becca Fischer, Sarah Darling) to schedule masterclasses for the second half of the semester when the ensemble is more familiar with the music

## Collaborations

Collaborations are a fantastic way to meet others in the Harvard arts scene and participate in fun performances that are a break from regular Brattle programming. Brattle has a strong relationship with the Harvard Ballet Company as well as Bach Soc and Harvard College Opera. Collaborations in the past have varied in format and time commitment, but they must be planned well in advance. Encourage Players to use their musical and artistic connections to suggest exciting new collaboration opportunities. Collabs may involve the entire ensemble or may involve a subset.

## Rehearsals

It is critical to norm the rehearsal space at the beginning of the semester, creating an environment where individuals know the expectations and can be autonomous in their adherence to the norms of the space during rehearsal without constant reminder or discipline. New members will benefit immensely from this and be equipped to pass it on in future generations. Set an expectation to start rehearsals promptly at 4:00pm, meaning members are expected to arrive earlier. Ensure a Board member has set up the stage and the parts appropriately well before 4:00pm. Encourage members to spend portions of rehearsals going out into the audience to listen. Schedule and take advantage of sectionals for trickier passages in the music. Utilize rehearsal structures, such as having section leaders and note takers to make the process more efficient (refer to *Memorandum of Findings* for more detailed descriptions of strategies). Make sure to tear down the stage after rehearsal.

## Community Events

Involving members through events outside of rehearsals is a way in which the ensemble can be productive in different

contexts and give members an opportunity to develop skills outside of a customary rehearsal setting. *Listening Parties* are opportunities for the group to get together without instruments to listen to the concert repertoire together while doing a score study. This develops skills in score reading and mental practice while giving members an opportunity to familiarize themselves with other sections. *Repertoire Meetings* are an opportunity for the

## Culture

The social cohesion of the group is another essential element of Brattle. Regular Brattle dinners after rehearsal are a big component in building this cohesion. Often, attendance is limited to the first few weeks of the semester, so encouraging members to attend is an important role for Brattle Board.

A **culture of feedback** ensures members feel able and empowered to express their thoughts on how to improve processes throughout the semester and creates a structure where it is as frictionless as possible. Create and maintain an anonymous Google Form for feedback and remind members that it is a method for communication. Create feedback guidelines with other members of the Board and make them clear in the form.

Social retreats

## Institutional Memory

Consistently make use of and update the Brattle Google Drive for meeting notes, Google Form data, and other documentation that is created over the course of the semester. Make use of an organizational system that ensures documents are easy to locate and reference among all members of the Board. The current drive has specific folders for certain topics, be sure to familiarize with it. The gDrive is also a resource for historical information about Brattle.

## Logistics

There are a fair number of logistical tasks that need to get done throughout the course of the semester but especially ramping up near performance dates. The following provides a roughly chronological collection of the main administrative tasks (not exhaustive).

Once repertoire is decided, ensure Board secures the necessary parts before the next rehearsal. If not under

copyright, Loeb Library is a likely source, or NEC library. If under copyright, contact Kaiser Music Publishing for performance rights and necessary payments. Store parts in the Brattle locker after each rehearsals, and make practice parts available digitally to Players.

Meet with Music Department staff member (office near Room g20) at least one week before the concert date to confirm loan of audio and video recording material for the concert date. Arrange concert photography at least one week in advance of performance date. Design program and write program notes using Brattle InDesign template. Design and disseminate posters starting two weeks before concert date. Assign poster shifts to members on specific days and for specific parts of campus as a means to create a more coordinated process.