

Gayle Hoogstraten Award for Arts Leadership – Administrator

Audrey Lipsey



Audrey Lipsey, Executive Director of Crescendo Academy of Music (CAM), is beloved by those who know and work with her. Words used to describe Audrey focus on: Excellence, Leadership, Community, Enrichment, Education, Talent, Quality, Inclusion, Resources, and Equality of participation for all ages, abilities, and economic and social status. Audrey is the cornerstone of the arts in the area; her contributions to the music scene, countless. Her role in the musical education of children has given them a place to escape from the world. She has given these children a place to nourish their minds and hearts, learn the power of hard work and dedication, and learn to find joy in the arts. She has given them an oasis.

Nominated by Joseph G. Reish, CAM Board member, he describes Audrey as the consummate Executive Director of an arts organization at work.

Statements herein bear witness to her administrative prowess in growing the number of students, grant monies achieved, donations received, number of scholarships awarded, and innovative music education programs for toddlers to adults. Audrey's former students, community arts leaders, current and past CAM board members, instructors, parents of students and a grant-funder gladly responded to my invitation to submit remarks in support of Audrey's nomination for the Community Arts Leadership Award as a preeminent Arts Administrator.

Andrew Koehler, Chair of Music, Kalamazoo College; Conductor, Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra; Conductor Kalamazoo Philharmonia.

In Kalamazoo, all roads lead to Audrey Lipsey; she is central to the musical life of this community; it might well collapse without her holding the disparate parts together. She shepherds the crucial pipeline of young string players who hope to one day join the ranks of more mature ensembles by leading the Kalamazoo Junior Symphony Orchestra's preparatory string program. Anytime anyone asks "where should I study music?" the answer is Crescendo, a testament to the house Audrey built.

Linnea Thomas, Former student of Audrey; Parent of Music Together students; Parent of Violin student; CAM Board Member and former Vice President.

In her over 30 years with Crescendo Academy of Music, more than half of which Audrey has been the Executive Director, she has led CAM in its growth from a small organization with only strings instruction to a music academy with more than 40 highly qualified faculty. She accomplished this through vision, steadfastness and collaboration. Audrey is a generous leader, giving all of herself in order to create the best for students, families and the Kalamazoo community. The positive and supportive environment of Crescendo begins with her.

Bryan Zocher, Executive Director, Kalamazoo RESA Education for the Arts.

Audrey is the rare individual who excels as both an artist and an arts organizational leader. Not to mention the high caliber of music educators that Audrey attracts and retains. This alone would serve as evidence that Audrey is worthy of being recognized.

Lee Fletcher, Executive Director, Kalamazoo Junior Symphony Orchestras; CAM Board member and Chair.

I enthusiastically recommend Audrey for the Arts Administrator award, she deserves this distinction, transforming the Young Strings Academy into a full-service academy in Kalamazoo.

A large percentage of Junior Symphony and Prep String members come from the private studios of Crescendo. I have had a long and rewarding relationship with Crescendo Academy of Music (CAM) from its inception. During its early years, I served as a board member and as board chair. CAM has also been a longtime collaborative partner of the Kalamazoo Junior Symphony, partnering on scholarships to best serve all qualified students from both organizations.

Diane M. Eberts, Crescendo Academy Music Board of Directors (1998-2004); Past-President; Retired educator, Kalamazoo Public Schools; Community Volunteer.

Audrey has distinguished herself as an excellent performer, teacher, arts administrator, conductor, Asst Concertmaster of KSO, strings coach, church choir director, leader of highly regarded string quartet, concert soloist. She has combined vision, wisdom and administrative skill to oversee the expansion of program offerings and faculty to meet the demand for music lessons and other programming. She is one of the most requested teachers at CAM, instilling both musical and personal growth in her students, encouraging them to become well rounded with a life-long love of music and music making.

Richard M. Hughey, Jr., Executive Vice President/CEO, IRVING S. GILMORE FOUNDATION.

From my perspective as a musician, a believer of the importance of music in our lives and a representative of Kalamazoo's funding community, I think no one worthier of this recognition than Audrey. Crescendo is thriving. Much of Crescendo's successes are attributable to the empathic, caring, thoughtful, passionate, professional and tireless efforts of its Executive Director.

In addition to private study at Crescendo, under Audrey's leadership, careful planning has produced innovative offerings that incorporate acclaimed training methods such as Orff and Music Together and a variety of group participation programs and performance opportunities that provide diverse and enriching musical experiences for our community's citizens.

- Orff Training engages the minds and bodies of young children through a mixture of singing, dancing, acting and the use of percussion instruments. Xylophones, metallophones, and glockenspiels are often used in these lessons presented with an element of play, which helps children learn at their own level of understanding.

- Music Together classes are for children, birth through age 5 and their parent(s) or caregiver. The award winning curriculum is used in a playful, developmentally appropriate environment which utilizes singing, moving, playing instruments and making music. Music Together Generations classes expand the regular mixed-age classes by adding elder grandfriends to the class, and are held in an elder facility.

- Marvelous Music, a collaboration between the Kalamazoo Symphony and CAM, incorporates CAM's Music Together and KSO's Musical Storybooks presentations providing a foundation of life skills that includes active participation, focus, movement, music skills and reading readiness for young prep school children held at area youth at-risk programs such as Head Start and the YMCA Children Center.

- The Kalamazoo Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra is a plucked string ensemble consisting of mandolins, mandolas, mandocellos, guitars, and bass.

- Community Voices is an extraordinary ensemble that offers musical experiences for teens and adults with a variety of mental and physical challenges. It is led by a board-certified music therapist with assistance from community teaching artists.

- Crescendo Fiddlers meet during the summer months, and perform for several different farmers markets and other events throughout the summer and early fall.

Arts are always the first to go during a financial crisis, yet through all these years Crescendo has been around, Audrey has never faltered but she has led her organization through countless desperate times when the music community of Kalamazoo was under duress. She has remained steady and has personally seen to it that children continue to have the opportunity to study and be exposed to music. There is no question that the quality of living goes down when the arts are not readily accessible: for who can live without music?

Many children in less fortunate circumstances go through life wishing with all their hearts that they could have an opportunity to find solace in playing music but simply are not offered the opportunity to study music. Audrey has provided all of the children in Kalamazoo and all the surrounding districts with the amazing opportunity to study music. These services to the community cannot and should not be taken for granted.

Audrey's career has been nothing short of exceptional, primarily through her service to others. Audrey is not one to seek out accolades or draw attention to herself-no, quite the opposite. But this is all the more reason to admire this mild, gracious and humble person. Without question, Audrey is an important role model, someone who leads by example and an amazing leader who carries out her exemplary work with supreme elegance and grace.