



projectSTEP

FISCAL YEAR 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

DEAR FRIENDS,

As I reflect over the last year, it is remarkable to me how different we are from a year ago - and yet how much we have remained true to our mission and continue to build on our extraordinary, 36-year foundation of music excellence. In August 2018, we began the search for a new Executive Director, and that process concluded in January 2019, when we welcomed Alyssa Lee to the Project STEP family. Alyssa hit the ground running: just days after beginning her tenure, she was off to Detroit to represent STEP at the annual conference of the Sphinx Organization. Founded in 1997, Sphinx exists as a “social justice organization dedicated to transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts” – which so clearly echoes our mission of providing high-quality string instruction to talented students from populations that have historically been underrepresented in classical music. Project STEP has a long history of affiliation with the Sphinx Organization, and we are proud of the Project STEP alumni who received recognition in the annual Sphinx Competition while they were students in our program, including Mariana Green-Hill, Tony Rymer, Lev Mamuya, and Tristan Flores.

Continuing a long tradition of memorable performances: the Project STEP Honors Quartet was featured in a pre-concert performance for A Far Cry in January 2019; also in January, our students participated in a MLK Concert at the All Saint’s Church in Dorchester; in March, the Project STEP students were invited to perform prior to a concert by the Boston Symphony Orchestra Chamber Players, at the First Church in Roxbury; and in mid-May, the year was brought to a marvelous conclusion with the annual Spring Recital, where we also honored our graduating seniors. One additional performance that was of special note was held in March 2019, as a memorial to a dear friend of Project STEP: Dr. Daniel Palant.

Dan first joined the Board of Project STEP in 1995, and he held our organization close to his heart for 23 years, before his premature passing in August 2018.

On behalf of all my colleagues on the Project STEP Board of Directors, I wish to express our deep gratitude and appreciation to the members of the professional staff. During the months when we were searching for a new Executive Director, they took on the challenge of keeping the organization running smoothly – and did so with competence, grace, and good humor. My thanks to Leigh Kelter, for serving so ably as our interim ED; and to Jin Kyung-Joen, Jodie McMenamin, and Matt Smith for immediately stepping up and doing whatever needed to be done. One more “thank you” must go to Board member Karen McInnis; as the Board Treasurer, Karen graciously assumed all of the financial responsibilities usually fulfilled by the ED, in addition to her role as Treasurer – which was no small task.

Lastly, we are deeply indebted to our friends and donors for your generous and caring support; our very existence is due to your commitment to Project STEP and our students, and the faith that you have in us, to fulfill our mission. Thank you.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diane M. Austin".

Diane M. Austin
President, Board of Directors

A young girl with curly hair and red flower clips is playing a violin. She is wearing a floral dress and is looking intently at the instrument. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on her and the violin.

OUR MISSION

Project STEP (String Training Education Program) recognizes that certain racial and ethnic minorities are vastly underrepresented in classical music. Its mission is to address this imbalance by identifying musically talented underrepresented students from Boston and surrounding communities, and providing them with comprehensive music and string instrument instruction. It sets the highest standards for disciplined study and performance, and offers a platform for students interested in pursuing classical music careers as well as other courses of study.

Core Values

(1) We believe that the classical music profession should reflect racial and ethnic diversity.

(2) We believe that children, if identified at an early age and immersed in long-term, rigorous music instruction, can flourish as professional classical musicians and as individuals, regardless of their ultimate career choice.

(3) We believe that our students can reach their full potential when held to high standards and provided with the support and active engagement of teachers, mentors, family members, and alumni.

(4) We believe that music can change lives and that the disciplined study of classical music enhances educational opportunities and opens doors for our students and their communities.

"We envision a world in which the classical music profession reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of our communities."



PROGRAMS

Project STEP provides a continuum of music instruction that begins with our FOCUS program and continues through Grade 12. FOCUS introduces kindergartners from underrepresented populations to the study of music at an early age, generating enthusiasm and providing a bridge to further study at Boston-area music schools. It is also an entry point to the next level of Project STEP.

In 2019 we partnered with William M. Trotter School in Dorchester and Mario Umana Academy in East Boston from the Boston Public School system to offer music programming to their kindergarten classrooms during the school day and on the weekend we received in-kind space from the New England Conservatory allowing us to serve a total of 150 kindergartners, and continues through Grade 12.

Through a highly selective recruiting process, small groups of highly talented students are invited to join Project STEP's Core program (grades 1-12) through one of two entry points, either from FOCUS or by audition. Students who are selected to continue their musical studies in Project STEP's Core program receive weekly private lessons, theory and/or solfège classes, chamber music, orchestra, summer music camp support, and an instrument. In addition, they receive enrichment opportunities including masterclasses and residencies with renowned chamber ensembles, and tickets to dozens of concerts each year. Project STEP is a model for creative youth development. In the course of studying music, young people develop social, creative, problem-solving, collaborative, and critical thinking skills. These skills are widely transferable and enable youth to reach their full potential as musicians, students, and productive members of society.

A photograph of a woman and a young boy sitting on a grassy field. The woman, on the left, has short grey hair, wears sunglasses, a striped long-sleeved shirt, and a name tag that reads "Deborah Ward" and "Representative For Our City Step 2018". She is smiling and looking towards the boy. The boy, on the right, is wearing a blue polo shirt, a dark baseball cap with a red logo, and plaid shorts. He is also smiling and looking towards the woman. In the background, there are white event tents and other people. A blue banner with the text "FAMILY ENGAGEMENT" is overlaid on the image.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

By building extensive student and family support systems into the program itself, Project STEP is able to hold students to - and help them reach - high standards of achievement. Incoming families are paired with “buddy” families, which allows older children to mentor incoming children and experienced parents to provide guidance for new parents. Families spend hours together each Saturday in the lounge at Symphony Hall while their children are in class, and all parents are part of the Parents’ Council which meets monthly for ‘parent pulse checks’ and workshops on practical issues related to their children’s music education. That Council elects two representatives to the Board of Directors who serve as full voting members and help shape

the organization’s policies. These parent representatives facilitate communication between parents and staff. At the end of each year, Project STEP hosts a Spring Recital with a fundraising component planned and executed by the Parents’ Council. STEP’s depth of support for parents and families creates an atmosphere of encouragement, ownership, and responsibility. Parents are crucial to our students’ success, and their active involvement is one of STEP’s greatest strengths. Photo courtesy of Boston Symphony Orchestra.



2018/2019 SNAPSHOT

This past year was filled with outstanding achievements from our students, events, concerts, collaborations with world renowned musicians, workshops, and over 80 hours of community service performed by our students.

HIGHLIGHTS:

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY — The Project STEP community celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. King. This event held in Dorchester, MA included performances, spoken word, and a focus on race and social justice in our communities. In addition STEP students played at the Museum of Fine Art's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Open House. Our students presented two sets of programs for thousands of visitors who came to celebrate the legacy of Dr. King.

PRE-CONCERT PERFORMANCE IN BSO COMMUNITY CHAMBER CONCERT SERIES - STEP's students performed at First Church in Roxbury, MA.

PRE-CONCERT PERFORMANCE FOR A FAR CRY CONCERT AT JORDAN HALL, NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY- Project STEP's Honor's Quartet performed.

SOLO PERFORMANCE WITH THE BOSTON POPS- Student Isabel Garita-Chin played a solo performance with the Boston POPS at Franklin Park, conducted by Keith Lockhart.

PERFORMANCES & MORE:

A Far Cry Masterclass, Apple Hill String Quartet Recital/Masterclass, Brookhaven Retirement Community, BSO Community Chamber Pre-Concert Performance, Dr. Daniel I. Palant Memorial Concert, FOCUS Recitals, Friends of the Public Garden Performance – A Community Conversation: The Power of Public Monuments and Why They Matter, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Concert and Discussion, Museum of Fine Arts Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Concert, Owen Young Masterclass, Spring Recital & Parent Benefit | Graduating Senior Recital, Winter Concert with the Treble Chorus of New England and Andover Public Schools featuring STEP's Quintet, Winsor Music Benefit Concert.

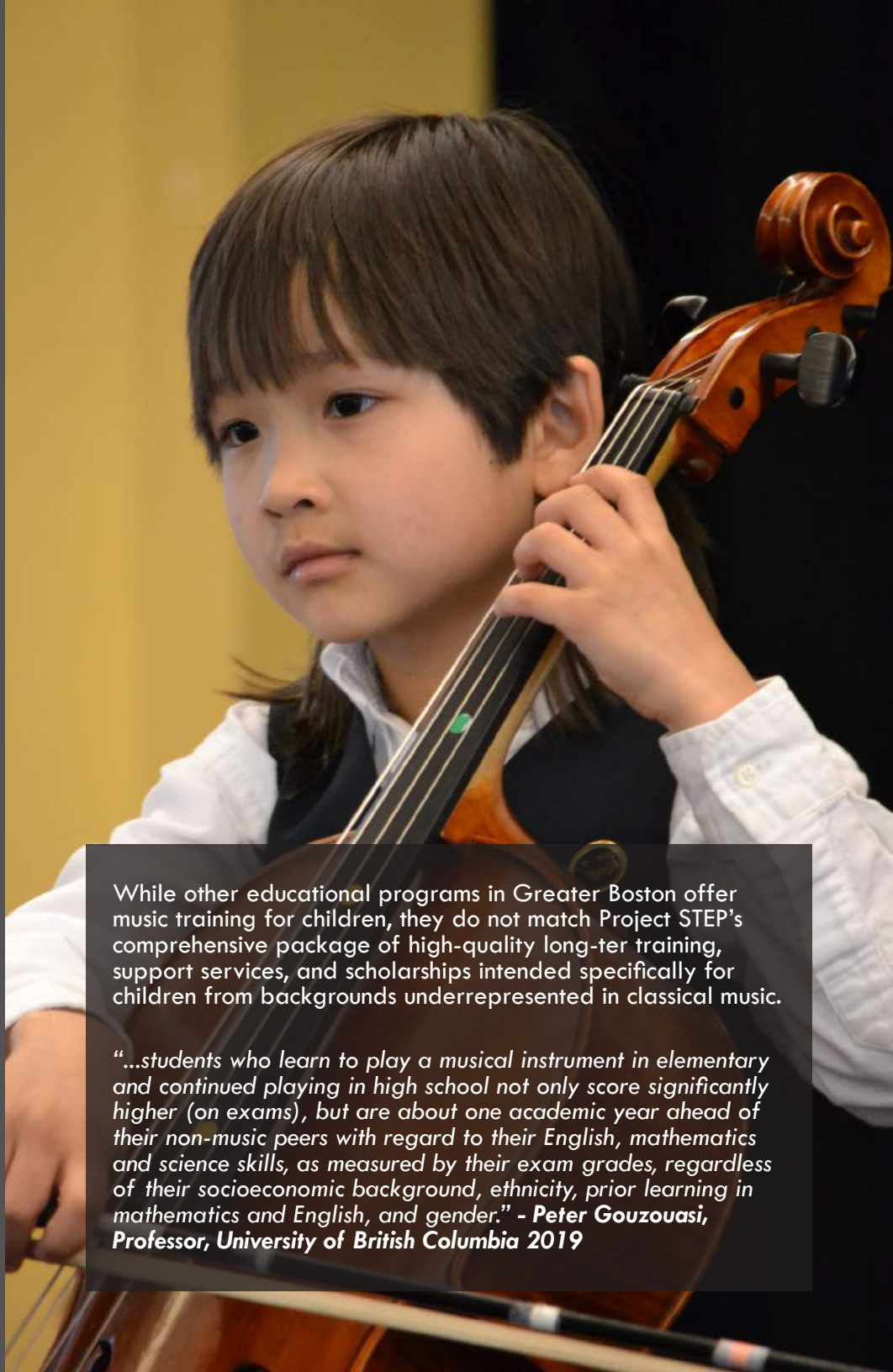
IMPACT

Through Project STEP, children from ethnic backgrounds historically underrepresented in classical music gain knowledge, skills, and opportunities that help them to become successful musicians, students, and young adults. During their years of intensive training, our students are challenged to achieve and maintain high levels of musicianship. The perseverance, self-discipline, confidence, problem-solving skills, and strong work ethic they develop in the process prove to be invaluable in their future musical and non-musical pursuits. Our students build leadership skills by mentoring younger students, taking leadership roles in chamber ensembles, and performing in community service events in their own neighborhoods. Tasked with taking care of their own musical instruments (on loan from STEP), students develop a sense of responsibility. In lessons, students are invited to critique their own playing and offer suggestions on how they could improve. This constant back-and-forth with teachers gives students more responsibility for their own progress, and results in strong student/teacher relationships.

Describing Project STEP's impact, the mother of one student wrote: *"Our oldest son is in Project STEP. This year has been phenomenal for him. The private lessons and the classes at NEC have helped his social, emotional and academic development. He is a better listener; his confidence has increased in all areas of his life; and academically he is soaring because of his ability to pay attention longer and better. This, of course, has rubbed off on his younger siblings, especially our second son who is almost six years old."* In this way, Project STEP has an impact extending well beyond the students themselves.

After up to 12 years of training and support in Project STEP, our students become strong musicians and accomplished young adults who are prepared to succeed as classical musicians as well as problem solvers, critical and creative thinkers, and team players. 100% of Project STEP's graduates go on to college or conservatory after graduating from high school, and excel in music studies, competitions, and academics. The outcomes of our Core Program activities fall into three areas of major growth for our students:

- 1) Strengthened identity
- 2) Creative skill development
- 3) Workforce readiness

A young child with dark hair is shown from the chest up, playing a cello. The child is wearing a white shirt and a dark vest. The cello is a rich brown color. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow.

While other educational programs in Greater Boston offer music training for children, they do not match Project STEP's comprehensive package of high-quality long-term training, support services, and scholarships intended specifically for children from backgrounds underrepresented in classical music.

"...students who learn to play a musical instrument in elementary and continued playing in high school not only score significantly higher (on exams), but are about one academic year ahead of their non-music peers with regard to their English, mathematics and science skills, as measured by their exam grades, regardless of their socioeconomic background, ethnicity, prior learning in mathematics and English, and gender." - **Peter Gouzouasi, Professor, University of British Columbia 2019**

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Teacher Susan Jarvis and Noah, 2006

Noah Umberto Kelly (2018 STEP Graduate) was born in Quito, Ecuador in 1999. He started his classical violin studies at the age of 6 through Project STEP's FOCUS program and was one of Mariana Green-Hill's first students. Noah was honored to be chosen as the recipient of the 2016-2017 Eleanor L. Campbell Scholar award which is given to one Project STEP student based on merit, dedication and an outstanding level of community involvement through outreach performances, ambassadorship and good will. A highlight of Noah's time at Project STEP was in 2015 when he represented Project STEP at the National Art and Humanities Youth Programs Awards' reception hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House.

While a student of Project STEP, Noah was also a dedicated member of the New England Conservatory Preparatory School and he continued his studies through Walnut Hill School for the Arts. This past summer, Noah fulfilled his passion for Irish traditional music by traveling to Ireland for two months. Noah was selected to compete in the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil, an Irish music competition run by Comhaltas Ceoilteoirí na Éireann, an international organization dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of Irish music, dance, language, and culture. Noah plans to continue to pursue a career as a fiddler, violinist and improviser, and is currently attending New England Conservatory as a Contemporary Improvisation major.





SUMMER CAMPS

Each summer, STEP's students can attend multi-week day or overnight music camps, and advanced students tour internationally with youth orchestras (to Brazil and Central Europe this year). Touring and attending excellent camps locally (Rivers School Conservatory), nationally (Bowdoin International Music Festival), and internationally (Cremona International Music Academy, Italy) helps our students to mature as young adults, and enables them to develop social skills, resilience, and self-reliance.

Away from academic and other day-to-day obligations that compete with music, students enjoy relaxed but determined goal-oriented music-making in combination with fun and healthy outdoor experiences. Their identities as music students are heightened by being surrounded with campers who share and celebrate their passion. The combination of intensity, beauty, structure, physical freedom, and bonds formed among campers and members of the faculty, contribute to lifelong memories.

This summer, our students attended camps that included Apple Hill Summer Chamber Music Workshop (NH), Bendada Music Festival (Bendada, Portugal), Berkshire Summer Music (MA), Bowdoin International Music Festival (ME), Camp Encore/Coda (MA), Cremona International Music Academy (Cremona, Italy), Four Strings Academy (MA), Greenwood Music Camp (MA), HeifetzPEG (VA), Indiana University Summer String Academy (IN), New England Conservatory Suzuki Explorers (MA), NYU Summer Strings Intensive (NY), Point CounterPoint (VT), Rivers School Conservatory (MA), Sphinx Performance Academy (Cleveland Institute of Music, OH), and Suzuki Institute (Montreal, Canada).

This incredible opportunity is provided to every Project STEP student for one to six weeks each summer. In order to help cover the costs of these programs and make them accessible to all of our students, we combine funds from Project STEP with scholarships from the camps themselves and special support from the following generous funders: **The Dr. Daniel I. Palant Memorial Fund, The Janey Fund, The Mary Saudek Jaffee Fund, The Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation, The Willow Tree Fund, and Winsor Music.**

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Reflecting the 2018/2019 calendar year

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2018/2019

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***Gifts in Memory of
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& GOVERNMENT SUPPORT***

Bank of America Charitable Foundation
The Bellevue Fund
Charles H. Bond Trust
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Boston Society of the New Jerusalem
Robert Lloyd Corkin Charitable Foundation
Joan P. and Ronald C. Curhan Family Fund
D'Addario Foundation
Eugene B. & Nina L. Doggett Charitable Fund
Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation
Martha Struthers and Donald C. Farley, Jr. Family Foundation
First African Foundation
The Gregory E. Bulger Foundation
Harman Family Foundation
The Janey Fund
Kanter Kallman Foundation, Inc.
The Klarman Family Foundation
The Kravitz Family Foundation
Liberty Mutual Foundation
Lincoln and Therese Filene Foundation, INC.
Linde Family Foundation
Mabel Louise Riley Foundation
The Mary Saudek Jaffee Fund
Massachusetts Cultural Council
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Mu Phi Epsilon Foundation
The National Endowment for the Arts
Novartis US Foundation
Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation
Savage Family Foundation
The Michael T. Sherman Foundation
The Willow Tree Fund

FINANCIALS

Sources of Income FY2019

Support from Individuals	\$353,210
Support from Foundation & Government Grants	\$322,190
Investment Income	\$64,500
Donated Space, Instruments, Services	\$47,100
Program Fees & Honoraria	\$42,400

Total Income **\$829,400**

Use of Funds FY2019

Program	\$433,100
Administrative	\$213,700
Fundraising	\$58,300

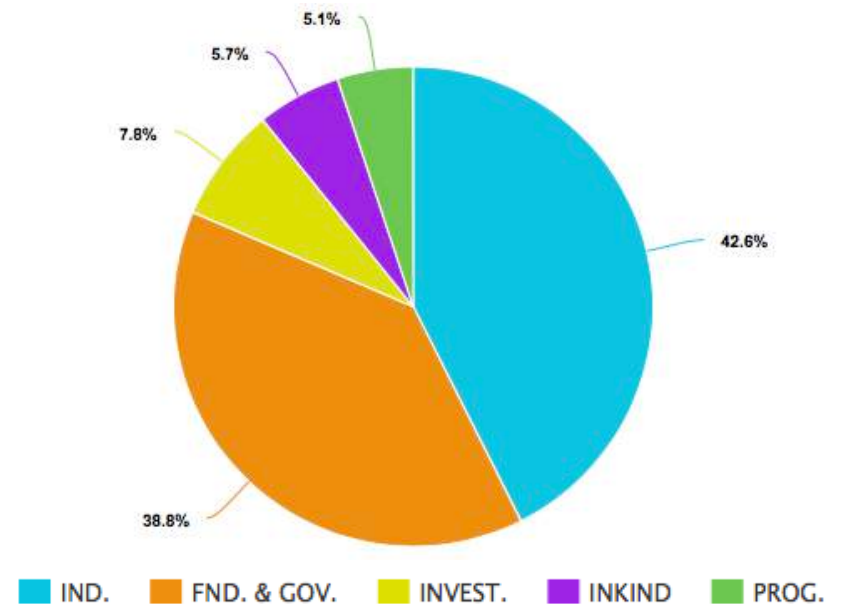
Total Expenses **\$705,100**

Change in Net Assets from Operations \$10,100

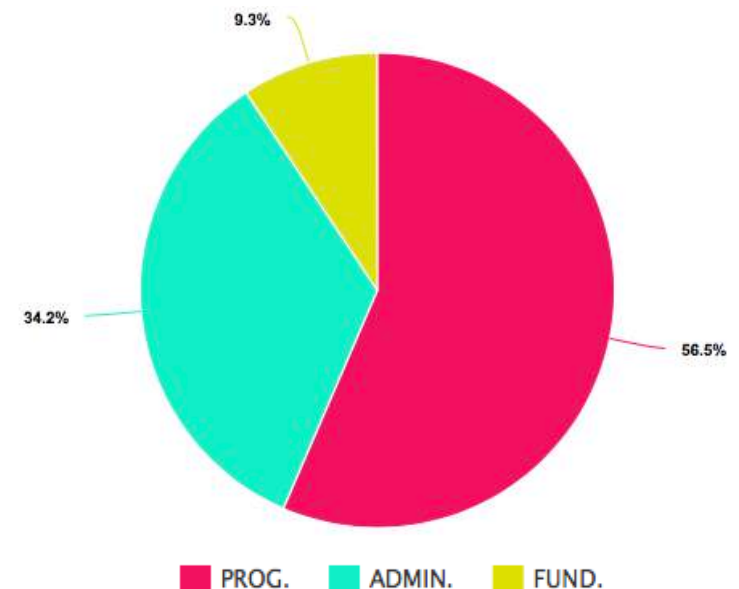
Change in Value of Investments \$114,200

Change in net assets **\$124,300**

SOURCES OF INCOME \$829,400



USES OF FUNDS \$705,100



FINANCIALS

Project STEP, Inc.
Statement of Activities
Year Ended June 30, 2019
(With comparative totals for 2018)

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total 2019	Total 2018
Support:				
Contributions	\$ 597,400	\$ 78,000	\$ 675,400	\$ 634,700
Program fees	42,400		42,400	18,700
Investment income	50,300	14,200	64,500	125,500
In-kind contributions	47,100		47,100	51,500
Net assets released from restrictions	88,200	(88,200)	- 0 -	- 0 -
Total Revenue & Support	825,400	4,000	829,400	830,400
Expenses:				
Program	433,100		433,100	425,700
General and administrative	213,700		213,700	214,000
Fund raising	58,300		58,300	104,600
Total Expenses	705,100	- 0 -	705,100	744,300
Change in Net Assets	120,300	4,000	124,300	86,100
Beginning Net Assets	1,561,400	537,000	2,098,400	2,012,300
Ending Net Assets	<u>\$1,681,700</u>	<u>\$541,000</u>	<u>\$2,222,700</u>	<u>\$2,098,400</u>







projectSTEP

Symphony Hall
301 Massachusetts Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
617-267-5777
ProjectSTEP.org

Partners:



All Photos by: Abdi Ali, Alberto Casiano , Boston Symphony Orchestra , & Project STEP