

Center City Concerts supports monthly free concerts, open to all, at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in downtown Charlotte. The organization relies heavily on the financial contributions of its followers and the enthusiastic participation of a Board of Directors. The board is composed of unabashed music lovers; and some are themselves music makers. For our concerts, we have traditionally embraced the canon of European-American classical music. But we acknowledge today that we have much to learn, and even more to do.

Like so many in the South, we have both consciously and unconsciously benefitted from the long-term, insidious effects of chattel slavery. Once the backbone of southern economic prosperity, slavery's legacy of inequality still haunts the ideology, beliefs, behaviors, and policies not only of the city of Charlotte but also of every city, town and village in our nation. Icons and even the flag of slavery's staunchest supporters still decorate our streets and the halls of our state and federal buildings. We recognize that many of us have lived our lives knowingly or unknowingly complicit in the savage inequalities that exist today in the form of systemic racism. For that, we are deeply sorry.

The growing litany of Black lives lost to brutality, and especially the recent transformative death of George Floyd, has been a torch illuminating the dark recesses of our country's most blatant racist practices. The murders of unarmed Black men, combined with our judicial system's unwillingness or inability to hold the perpetrators accountable, have ignited a powerful movement toward a more authentic form of "liberty and justice for all" and inspired us as a board to take a strong stand in support of Black Lives Matter.

To that end we commit ourselves to diversifying the membership of our Board of Directors. With the guidance of new Black voices and their fresh perspectives, we pledge to expand our concert selections to be more representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of our city and of our country's musical heritage. Center City Concerts will intentionally identify and honor the works of Black composers and feature more Black musicians in our concerts. As individuals we promise to educate ourselves about the inglorious history of America's racism and become committed allies of the Black community in dismantling its effects in today's world. We pledge to challenge racist practices whenever and wherever we encounter them; and to be resolute in condemning racism in American institutions.

Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us that until all of us are free, none of us is free. With him, we still dream of a day when all Americans can live free of fear; free of obstacles to their educational and economic success; free to participate equally in the democratic process; and able to rest secure that their legal rights will be respected and protected. We dream of a day when every one of us can truly be *free at last*.

Together, we raise our voices to declare unequivocally: **Black Lives Matter!**