

Des Moines Community Orchestra
2025 – 2026 Annual Members Meeting
May 12, 2026
Meeting Minutes

- I. Call to Order (Kevin Allemagne)
 - a. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.
 - b. A total of 58 orchestra members were present.
 - i. All members attending in person were asked to sign in at which time they received a numbered ballot to vote for the new DMCO Conductor/Music Director.
 - ii. Two members called into the meeting and voted by proxy.
 - c. In general, the membership commented that the concert was successful.
 - d. Staplin (capacity of 1100) was estimated to be about three-quarters full.
 - e. The post-concert reception was well attended (5 sheet cakes were distributed).
 - f. Kara sent a message to all orchestra members thanking them for an excellent performance.
- II. Treasurer's Report (Shaunda Murphy)
 - a. Assets
 - i. As of December 31, 2025 all DMCO accounts were moved from Bankers Trust to West Bank.
 - 1. One factor that was considered for changing banking institutions was due to West Bank's commitment to supporting the arts in the community.
 - 2. West Bank provided underwriting for the spring 2026 concert with a \$3000 donation.
 - ii. Shaunda noted in her report significant financial growth when compared to 2021.
 - b. Liabilities and Equity
 - i. Accounts payable included estimates for expenses associated with the spring concerts (Staplin rental and reception). Invoices were received on May 11, 2026. The fee for Staplin was around \$2800. This was more than originally estimated due to extra time needed in the facility along with audio and video services.
 - 1. Fees for Staplin were comparable to Sheslow.
 - 2. There are extra expenses associated with Staplin (e.g., \$600 to put up the sound shells).
 - c. Profit Loss by Class
 - i. Revenue for the current season (September 1, 2025 – May 9, 2026) according to concert was reviewed.
 - 1. Spring concert donations were not included in the spreadsheet.
 - a. At the time of the report, DMCO received \$1037 in donations for the spring concert including one check for \$500.
 - ii. Gross profit increased by 39%.

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1. DMCO received \$23,620 in grants for the year including \$15,000 from Prairie Meadows.
 - a. The Prairie Meadows grant can only be used for equipment or instruments (can not be used for operating expenses) and must be spent by July 1, 2026.
 - b. Approximately \$4000 has been spent for percussion equipment.
 - c. Additional items authorized to be purchased include an A clarinet, black concert folders, sound panels for the brass, and a string bass bow.
 - i. Two amp speakers purchased in May 2025 were not covered by the grant because they were bought before July 1, 2025.
 - d. Last year when the orchestra applied for the grant, all section principals were contacted and asked to submit a list of equipment needed. This information was included in the grant application.
2. Shaunda contacted The Dana Company to review the DMCO insurance policy.
 - a. An accurate listing of assets and value is needed.
 - b. In June 2026, an inventory of percussion equipment and music will be performed, and should be completed before July 1, 2026.
3. Current cost for renting rehearsal space at GUMC is \$1750. The GUMC board of trustees recently informed DMCO that the annual rental fee will be \$2550 starting next year. This represents a 46% increase.
 - a. Kevin negotiated with the GUMC board of trustees to have a gradual rent increase. Next concert season (2026 – 2027), the fee will be \$2100. The following season (2027 – 2028), the fee will increase to \$2550 and be locked in for the next 3 years.
 - b. Kevin reported to the orchestra that DMCO and GUMC continue to enjoy a collegial and productive relationship. He further reported that GUMC did not utilize the established protocol for informing DMCO about the rental increase; however, at this time, DMCO will work with GUMC to accommodate the request to increase rental fees.
 - c. If either party wants to terminate the lease, notification must be sent 18 months in advance.
 - d. Safety and security issues have also been addressed in the new rental contract.

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3. The Prairie Meadows grant is included in the revenue total. Therefore, \$11,000 more in expenses will be added after all the grant funds are spent.
 4. Small ensemble performances generated revenue that goes into the general fund.
 - e. Motion to approve the Treasurer’s Report was made by Josh Whitver and seconded by Greg Woolever. Motion was unanimously approved.
- III. President’s Report (Kevin Allemagne)
- a. 2025 – 2026 Accomplishments
 - i. DMCO financial stability was strengthened.
 1. Corporate and individual donations increased.
 2. Concert attendance and musician participation in the orchestra also grew.
 - a. Interest in joining the DMCO has increased. This can present issues with accommodating everyone in the available rehearsal and performance spaces. There is a formalized process for new members joining. The conductor, DMCO board and section principals will work together to find appropriate personnel for the concerts.
 - b. A dedicated personnel manager may be useful but won’t be considered until a new conductor is identified.
 3. Community partnerships with various agencies were expanded.
 - a. Des Moines Public Schools is interested in outreach at several schools and will pay a fee for performances.
 4. Media visibility was increased for the spring concert.
 - a. Broadcast time was given to DMCO on all three main TV stations (Channel 5, 8 and 13). No fees were paid since DMCO is a non-profit and does not charge for tickets.
 - b. Kevin and Kara were interviewed by John Busbee on The Culture Buzz.
 - c. Questions were asked about communication between the orchestra and community through the DMCO website.
 5. A woodwind quintet program was launched.
 - b. 2025 – 2026 Challenges
 - i. Fundraising and financial stability topics were discussed.
 1. All members are encouraged to attend meetings and events in the community to increase DMCO visibility and network.
 2. Grant writing was again mentioned.

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- ii. Potential issues with performance and rehearsal space associate with increased orchestra membership were mentioned.
 - iii. Kevin requested help with data management and record keeping, particularly with organizing the DMCO database.
 - iv. Social media, marketing and identity
 - 1. Interest in the orchestra has noticeably increased.
 - 2. All three conductor candidates recommended changing the name of the orchestra to project a more professional organization.
 - v. Curtis Barr noted that the trailer used to haul equipment has a couple problems.
 - 1. One of the tires has a slow leak.
 - 2. The lights do not function.
 - 3. Curtis will help coordinate repairs.
- c. Recognitions
- i. Several orchestra members were recognized for their service.
 - 1. Kara Mather and Madison Smith for librarian support
 - 2. Nick Brown for technology support and programs
 - 3. Greg Woolever for assistance with programs
 - 4. Oanh Bui for work on the posters
 - 5. Hoang Bui, Krista Baskerville, Shaunda Murphy, Amy Magra and Susan Brennan for help with reception refreshments
 - 6. Kathy Naja for social media coordination
 - 7. Curtis Barr for transportation
 - 8. Percussion section for equipment transportation
 - 9. Jonah Tibbits for recording the concert and photography
 - 10. Jose Calderon for assistance with video and photo production
- d. Tentative 2026 – 2027 Concert Dates
- i. The regular concert season dates are subject to change depending on the new conductor.
 - 1. Sunday, October 25, 2026 (Fall)
 - a. Staplin has confirmed this date. Other venues cannot accommodate any days in October.
 - 2. Sunday, February 21, 2027 (Winter)
 - a. Sheslow may have to be considered as the venue because other locations are not available.
 - 3. Sunday, May 16, 2027 (Spring)
 - a. Staplin confirmed this date.
 - 4. Sunday, December 6, 2026 (Messiah)
 - a. This date will need to be confirmed by GUMC.
 - ii. The 2026 summer musical with Tallgrass is Sideshow.
 - 1. Performance dates are June 11, 12 and 13 with a rain date of June 17.
 - iii. The 2027 summer musical with Tallgrass is Sweeney Todd.

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- e. Publicity
 - i. A reception/press conference will be held during the summer to welcome the new conductor.
 - ii. Plans are being made to reformat the DMCO website with updated photos of the orchestra both as a collective and individual members. There will also be bio pages.
- f. Attendance Expectations
 - i. Policies for attendance were approved last year.
 - 1. Members are expected to attend all rehearsals for a particular concert. If the member is aware of a conflict or obligation that requires them to miss more than two rehearsals, they will communicate this to the section principal and conductor to determine if alternative seating arrangements need to be made and whether the member can play on that concert.
 - 2. Unless approved in advance by the conductor assigned to the concert and the member's corresponding section principal, dress rehearsal attendance is mandatory.
 - 3. These policies will not apply to emergency situations or illness.
- g. Business and Organizational Practices
 - i. 2026 – 2027 DMCO Board Members
 - 1. Current board members remaining on for the 2026 – 2027 season
 - a. Kevin Allemagne
 - b. Krista Baskerville
 - c. Shaunda Murphy
 - 2. Current board members willing to serve an additional 2-year term
 - a. Larry Brennan
 - b. Nick Brown
 - 3. Current board members ending their term
 - a. Curtis Barr
 - b. Rebekah Hickok
 - 4. New board members
 - a. Amy Magra
 - b. Kara Mather
- IV. Selection of the New DMCO Conductor/Music Director (Kevin Allemagne)
 - a. Carl Johnson, the former DMCO conductor, was excused from the meeting.
 - b. The DMCO board members explained the interview process for each candidate.
 - i. Eight applications were received. The number was reduced to three final candidates.
 - 1. Jonathan Strum
 - a. Des Moines Symphony concertmaster (a position he has held for 35 years)
 - b. Morrill Professor of Music, Emeritus at Iowa State University

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- c. Doctor of Music in violin, musicology and higher education
- 2. Joshua Barlage
 - a. Current Managing Director for the Des Moines Symphony Academy
 - b. Current Music Director and Conductor for the Fort Dodge Area Symphony
 - c. Previous conducting experience with the Columbus Symphony Youth Orchestra and Opera Columbus
 - d. Bachelor of Music
- 3. Kara Mather
 - a. Extensive experience in public school music education and ensemble leadership
 - b. Founding director and conductor of the Monticello Community Strings Orchestra
 - c. Active violinist with the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra, the Des Moines Symphony and DMCO
 - d. Served as librarian and guest conductor with DMCO
 - e. Co-founder of the Johnston Orchestra Club
 - f. Bachelor of Science in music education and Master of Education
- ii. Each candidate met with board members to discuss their interests in serving as the next conductor/music director.
- iii. Each candidate selected the music for and conducted one concert during the 2025 – 2026 season. All DMCO members were able to interact with the candidates throughout the process.
- iv. Several metrics were considered during the selection process.
 - 1. Musical and artistic competence
 - a. Clarity of musical vision
 - b. Score preparation
 - c. Technical conducting skill
 - d. Repertoire breadth
 - e. Aural acuity
 - f. Adaptability
 - 2. Rehearsal technique and leadership
 - a. Efficient rehearsal pacing
 - b. Communication style
 - c. Diagnostic skill
 - d. Positive motivational style
 - e. Respect for musicians' time
 - 3. Interpersonal and community fit
 - a. Emotional intelligence
 - b. Approachability
 - c. Humility and collaboration

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- d. Respect for diverse skill levels
 - e. Communication off the podium
 - f. Commitment to inclusivity
 - 4. Organizational and visionary leadership
 - a. Programming philosophy
 - b. Long-term artistic vision
 - c. Partnership with the DMCO board
 - d. Fundraising and public presence
 - e. Administrative reliability
 - f. Commitment to education/outreach
 - c. The floor was opened to all members so that they could discuss their opinions, critiques, experiences and observations for each candidate.
- V. Voting
 - a. All members present that could vote (49 out of 58) were given ballots and instructions.
 - i. First choice was assigned a score of 1
 - ii. Second choice was assigned a score of 2
 - iii. Third choice was assigned a score of 3
 - iv. The candidate with the lowest total score was the selected conductor.
 - v. The orchestra was to be contacted by email after the elected candidate accepted the offer and the other two candidates were notified of the decision.
The new conductor was also to be announced on the DMCO website.
- VI. Adjournment
 - a. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m. without an official motion.
- VII. Immediately following adjournment, the DMCO Board held a meeting to decide who would fill officer roles and set the dates for upcoming meetings.

Minutes were respectfully submitted by Amy Magra.