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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Supporters worry Boston University Tanglewood Institute may relocate

Posted by Matt Rocheleau October 3, 2013 12:14 PM

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Note: This story was updated Friday, Oct. 4, to include comment from Boston University Tanglewood Institute director Phyllis Hoffman.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The future of the Boston University Tanglewood Institute is under review, and supporters worry that the university may decide to relocate the 47-year-old, internationally recognized summer training program for young musicians.

The program enrolls more than 350 students, ages 14 to 20, each summer on a sprawling campus in Lenox. The aspiring musicians visit the Boston Symphony Orchestra's nearby summer home, the Tanglewood Music Center, to share rehearsal and performance space with the orchestra and attend a range of master classes and activities, some of which are led by orchestra members.

Phyllis Hoffman, director of the institute, said Friday that the institute will continue to be held at the Lenox campus through at least the next summer season in 2014.

But, "The overall future of the program will be under review during the coming months."

BU spokesman Colin Riley said in a statement that the university is "reviewing the status of BUTI to determine if we're making the best use of limited resources to advance the mission of BU's College of Fine Arts."

"The review is ongoing and no decisions have been made," added his statement earlier this week, confirming a report over the weekend by The Berkshire Eagle newspaper based in Pittsfield.

Amid fear and speculation that the university may try to relocate the institute due to the cost of maintaining the current location, supporters of the institute recently launched an email campaign to drum up support to keep the institute in Lenox and near Tanglewood.

"As BUTI's 2013 season came to a close, rumors tainted the accomplished atmosphere with doubts about the continued existence of this remarkable program in its famed home right down the road from the Tanglewood Festival Grounds," the e-mail from supporters said.

"Unfortunately, the clouds have not lifted: While its programs continue to flourish, the Institute is being evaluated for relocation due to the financial strain on Boston

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University to maintain the remote campus,” the email added.

The e-mail said that decisions from the review were expected to be announced by the end of September. But the university and institute have announced no decisions or a conclusion to the review so far.

Tito Muñoz, a conductor, taught at the institute this past summer as a guest conductor.

He said he heard part of the reason relocation is being considered is that at least a couple of the buildings on the campus need major renovations or be completely rebuilt.

“Some of the campus is becoming un-useable,” he said. “It’s a shame because the grounds are so beautiful – it’s amazing.”

“The program itself is considered the top, if not one of the top, programs for high school classical musicians in America,” said Muñoz. “It’s something that kids all apply to if they’re considering any type of profession in this field. It’s so well-respected and so well-known in the classical music world.”

“And, I think relocating it would really take away the word that makes the program so unique and so attractive, and that is Tanglewood,” he added. “The fact that it’s there is what makes it so special”

The institute was founded in July of 1966 when Boston Symphony Orchestra music director, Erich Leinsdorf, invited leaders of Boston University’s College of Fine Arts, to create a summer training program for high school musicians “as a counterpart” to orchestra’s Tanglewood Music Center, according to [BU’s website](#).

“Leinsdorf’s vision was of a program to challenge young musicians to perform at the highest level and allow them unprecedented access to the Tanglewood Music Festival,” the website says.

State records show that in 1980 BU paid \$590,000 to buy the institute’s about 60-acre property, located at 45 West St. in Lenox, from the then-bankrupt, now-defunct Holliston Junior College.

The town last year assessed the property value at just over \$6 million.

The site houses several buildings, including Groton Place, an all-stone mansion built in 1903 that houses program offices, some student housing, common areas, and a dining hall.

The institute runs summertime workshops and programs specified by interest, including orchestra, vocal, wind ensemble, piano, composition and harp. Students also enjoy free, unlimited access to Boston Symphony Orchestra performances to shows at the Tanglewood Music Center.

“This interaction with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Tanglewood Music Center distinguishes BUTI from other summer music programs and offers aspiring young artists a superior, inspiring, and transforming musical experience,” BU’s website says.

“Tanglewood is a magical blend of the formal and informal, of joy and hard work. No one who spends a summer at Tanglewood leaves untouched by the experience.”

The programs range from a two-week stay, which costs each student about \$2,800, to an eight-week stay, for which each student pays about \$7,500.

To be accepted to the program, candidates pay a \$75 fee with their application, which must include a recommendation and either an audition that can either be submitted as a recording or done in person.

The institute "is recognized internationally as the premiere summer training program for aspiring high school-age musicians," the BU website says. "Many alumni have gone on to advanced musical training and careers as professional musicians."

Samuel Solomon attended the institute for three years as a student when he was younger and has more recently been a faculty member there for 10 years.

"It is, in and of itself, a top-notch program with top-notch faculty, but what sets it apart from other great summer festivals is the location," he said by email. "The students are provided an unparalleled education on top of that offered by the Institute because of their access to Tanglewood concerts, rehearsals, and masterclasses as well as the community of musicians that spend their summers there."

He too said the campus' facilities are aging and that there is not enough indoor space for rehearsals

"Our facilities manager has been working wonders for years on a shoestring budget, maintaining the property and keeping it safe for the kids to be there, but he needs significant capital investments to do the necessary renovations to modernize these buildings before we can hope to start adding facilities," Solomon said.

"The rumors of BU looking to distance themselves from this property are perhaps understandable from a money perspective, but if you factor in the contribution this program makes to the greater classical music community, it's a no brainer -- the program must stay at 45 West Street in Lenox," he said.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mjrochele@gmail.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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