



Notes

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Music,

At the recent All-County concert, the speaker emphasized the diverse benefits of music education. Solving a math problem, painting a picture, or reading a book, lights up specific areas of the brain. However, making music is the equivalent of a “full body workout” for your brain. Musicians have stronger memories, enhanced problem-solving skills, and increased executive function. Music education can benefit all areas of learning. Being a musician teaches discipline and dedication. In addition, being part of the music community requires collaboration, creating friendships that last a lifetime.

We are extremely grateful for our members and corporate sponsors. They have enabled us to continue to support music education in Niskayuna. Thank you to everyone who participated in our pie sale. We hope you found this annual fundraiser as sweet as we did. Thank you to the high school choir students who went door to door during Caroling for Cash. It was incredible to hear beautiful holiday carols fill the streets of Old Niskayuna. Finally, a huge shout out to The Broken Inn for their generous donation from our guest bartender evening.

Because of our community, we have been able to continue to support music education in our district. We supported All-State musicians on their journey and have continued to honor grants for our district. In March, Friends of Music will host the Choral Festival at Proctors. This will be an incredible evening uniting choral students from 5th through 12th grade. We are also happy to announce that our middle school musicians will travel to Six Flags New England to perform. Niskayuna is happy to host NYSSMA this year May 3 and 4. We could always use some extra hands, so please reach out if you are interested in helping.

Lastly, be sure to save the date for our high school musical, *Oklahoma!* Shows will be Thursday, February 29 at 7:30 pm, Friday, March 1 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, March 2 at 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm. Tickets can be purchased at www.showtix4u.com (search Niskayuna). You do not want to miss this southern showstopper!

Concerts this school year have been off to an impressive start. Thank you to the students, parents, and teachers for your dedication. We are excited to see what 2024 brings!

With warmest wishes,

~Sarah Frank Spindler



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Welcome to Our Second Concert Series!

Concerts and music events are in full swing and we're glad you're here to join us!

Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!

Performances are scheduled for February 29 – March 2. We are happy to present four shows to the public. Tickets are on sale and can be reserved at WWW.SHOWTIX4U.COM

District Choral Festival

Our annual festival is back at Proctors Theatre! We are happy to present our 5th - 12th graders in a special concert on Wednesday, March 13 at 7:00p featuring guest conductor Shavon Lloyd.

NYSSMA

The piano festival is scheduled for March 8-9 at SUNY Schenectady. (*Registrations are closed.*) The annual Solo/Ensemble festival will be held here at the high school, **May 3-4.** (*Registration is now open.*) We'll be looking for parent and student volunteers to help us host more than 1,800 student musicians from around the region!

Suburban Council Music Festival

Congratulations to the following students who rehearsed and presented a concert at Columbia High School on Saturday, January 12.

High School Band – **Pic Kerins, Daniel Korevaar, Walter MacDonald, Priscayah Singh, Lucia Vysohlid**

Middle School Chorus – **Olivia Lessard, Ryan Makrin, Rohith Kulkarni, Elise Shaw**

Schenectady County Music Festival

Congratulations to the following students who rehearsed and presented a concert at Schalmont High School on Saturday, January 27.

Middle School Orchestra – **Skylar Hefley, Jameson Musson, Jeanne Rose Rooney, Audrey Qi, Sophia Pennie, Rory Evanoff, Howyue Kaydence Yeong, Aaron Lalla, Ryan Makrin, Elie Shin, Jaiya Shivnath**

Middle School Band – **Evan Buma, Sophia Meyer-Veen, Chloe Wang, Eli Hustedt, Evan Steller, Patrick Lyons, Victoria Myers, Renata Vysohlid, Theodore Aimi, Vincent Connell**

High School Chorus – **Lily Graham, Katherine Makrin, Priscayah Singh, Sophie Spindler, Megan Breslin, Emma Brooksby, Sophia Connell, Natalie Dessis-Dinneen, Alexis Tull, Maryn Gleason, Carolyn Kelly, Lauren McLearn, Stella Myers, Maria Samuel, Anna Geveci, Elena Kochneva, Sofia Trimarchi, Vivianne VanHoesen, Alex LaFargue, Jacob Ciesinski, Samuel Meyer-Veen**

~Eric Hughes

OKLAHOMA!

*Niskayuna High School
Department of Music*

RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN'S
Oklahoma!

Thursday, February 29 - 7:30 p.m.

Friday, March 1 – 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 2 – 2:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 2 – 7:30 p.m.

(Snow Date: Sunday, March 3 – 2:00 p.m.)

Pricing

Adult - \$16 Student/Senior Citizen - \$12

Premium Seating - \$20

ALL SALES ARE FINAL. ALL SEATING IS RESERVED.

www.showtix4u.com

TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE ONLINE UNTIL TWO HOURS BEFORE CURTAIN. Box office opens one hour prior to each performance; however reservations are strongly recommended.

**Cash & Checks ONLY accepted at the box office.*

MAKE A LASTING LEGACY



The Name-A-Chair Project

In order to ensure the future success of the Niskayuna Performing Arts Programs, the community members, parents and businesses are invited to contribute to the Name-A-Chair Project. The names of those making a pledge will be engraved on the arms of the new auditorium seats.

Our Goal

We'd like to kick-off our campaign with 100 seats engraved! Contributions will support improvements in the auditorium to enhance the acoustics on stage, sound technology, and lighting for the audience.

They also make great graduation gifts or to recognize a special musician in your life.

What is the Cost?

Each plate is \$150 for individuals and families or \$250 for businesses. We are a 501(c)3 organization and your employer may match your contribution.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Please check one:

- Individual/Family: \$150 per chair
- Business: \$250 per chair
- My contribution can be matched by my employer _____.

Please send this form with your check (made payable to Niskayuna Friends of Music) with "Name-A-Chair Project" written in the memo section to: Niskayuna Friends of Music, Niskayuna High School, 1626 Balltown Road, Niskayuna, NY 12309

Line 1:

Line 2:

There are 44 characters including letters, spaces and punctuation available per plate, divided into two 22-character rows. No messages please - only names of individuals or businesses will be engraved.

Engraving can include graduation dates, such as "Mary Smith, 1999".

Please return by 5/31/2024.

An Interview with Ms. Dee Steeley, Former Niskayuna Music Teacher



Where did you grow up?

I grew up downstate in Middletown, NY. I was always in chorus and loved to sing. Even my kindergarten teacher wrote that I had a sweet singing voice and loved music. In 4th grade I studied the sax, but that wasn't a good fit for me. I sang in select ensembles in high school, participated in All County festivals and had the privilege of being selected to sing with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. I started my college journey in Potsdam, and ended up with a Music degree in Music Theory, Music Literature and Music History from West Chester University, in Pennsylvania. I moved to Albany to pursue a Master's Degree in Music Education. My teaching career began at Coxsackie-Athens School District, where I taught choirs and general music for 7 years, and then made the wonderful move to Niskayuna in 1993, where I taught at Iroquois for 26 years.

When did you know that you wanted to go to music school?

I really knew I wanted to be involved in music when I sat in the concert for band (with my sax), and heard all the music around me. I was so inspired! But more than that, I always loved to sing and loved my high school choral director.

Tell us about the early days and some memorable moments of the Niskayuna music program.

When I came to Niskayuna in 1993, I was so surprised by the talents and musical abilities of the students. Soon after arriving, both VA and Iroquois purchased a Yamaha keyboard lab program for the general music classroom, an all hands-on learning for middle level students. For the time, it was state of the art and I loved teaching it and especially loved seeing the excitement of the students. We were a very unified department, all using the Gordon Music Learning Theory, which included ear training in our classrooms. Some of the best memories were participating with the choirs in Choral Majors NYSSMA (26 performances and evaluations in all), and also taking the 7/8 grade choirs to NYC each year to experience a musical venue and also a Broadway show. A highlight was seeing Bernadette Peters in Hello Dolly! A unique experience was forming a barbershop quarter with four talented choir guys, singing a cappella, 4-part harmony! No surprise one of them is currently on Broadway. Being at Niskayuna supported my desire to obtain National Board Certification, which I have had for the past 20 years, and was the 4th teacher in NY State to get certified at my level. The whole process allowed me to reflect on my teaching practices, the students and their growth. I absolutely loved forming our select middle school vocal ensemble, Mezzo Voce.

What are your experiences in the music world outside of Niskayuna?

For the past 15 years I have been a NYSSMA solo piano and vocal adjudicator. This past year I became All-State certified for voice. Throughout my entire career I have had private vocal and piano students, many of whom have participated in NYSSMA. Over the years I have also been a guest conductor.

Do you have any favorite extracurricular activities that you want to share?

Since retiring, I have gotten very involved with exercise! I currently work with a personal trainer, doing weight lifting, and also became a certified Zumba instructor! Each August I attend an international convention in Orlando to share a week with Zumba instructors from all over the world. It is truly my new passion! Since I miss the classroom very much, I am also subbing at Nisky! I love to be back, interacting with the students and my friends.

Do you have any advice to students studying music now?

For those students in the music program, try to get every minute of joy out of practicing, lessons and rehearsals. These situations are so unique and provide such fulfillment, friendships and pride.

Do you have any advice to students who want to pursue music as their career?

For those students who want to major in music, follow your passion. Work hard, practice, learn everything you can, ask questions. And if you go into education, always remember that you never know who you are really impacting each day in the classroom. Always focus on the students and appreciate their little successes as well as big. I have truly loved teaching music for my life's work. Passion is a powerful motivator.

NISKY ALUM RETURNS TO TEACH WORKSHOP

Nisky Alum Returns to Teach Double Reed Workshop

Hannah Staudinger, class of 2014, will visit Niskayuna on March 24th and March 25th to conduct a masterclass and play in a recital with our oboe and bassoon students in grades 7-12. This is a special program planned to celebrate “Music in Our Schools Month”.

Hannah is a freelance oboist and educator based in Boston, Massachusetts, who performs regularly across the New England area with groups such as the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra, Vista Philharmonic, and Streetlight Manifesto. She currently serves as the principal oboist of the Kendall Square Orchestra and Boston Civic Symphony.



Hannah is an experienced educator who is interested in the cross section of education and repertoire. She has given a number of lectures and recitals based on her research found in her paper, *Repertoire within Education: An analysis of Oboe Repertoire for High School Adjudications*. Hannah holds a Master's in Oboe Performance from Boston University, and Bachelor's degrees in Oboe Performance and Music Education from the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. Currently, Hannah is a Doctoral Candidate at Boston University studying with Mark McEwen of the Boston Symphony.

We are very excited to have Hannah work with our double reed students in a Masterclass on Sunday, March 24th. On Monday, March 25th, Ms. Staudinger, alongside our Nisky oboists and bassoonists as well as other guests, will perform an informal recital at 7pm in the NHS Auditorium. If you have ever wondered about the complexities of playing a double reed instrument, or if you just want to hear beautiful music, please come and check it out!

~Susan Kokernak

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES

Craig Elementary News

Craig students are keeping very busy this winter with so many things to learn and do in music! Kindergarteners have been learning about opposites; fast and slow, sound and silence and this month, long and short. They've also had fun experimenting these sounds on classroom instruments!

1st graders have had a great time creating their own lyrics to winter songs including *That time of Year* and *Aiken Drum*. 2nd graders have had a great time learning about the orchestra, the science of soundwaves in the instruments and enjoyed their first 4th & 5th grade concert performance. They really demonstrated amazing audience manners! 3rd graders have had a fantastic time starting their recorders, and set examples of audience manners as they also enjoyed the 4th and 5th grade concert assembly. 4th and 5th graders have been working so hard this winter as well! In addition to preparing for their Winter Concert, they've been learning to play world drums while polishing their music skills! Phenomenal job in the concert! 5th graders have also been diligently working to prepare for the Choral festival in March. They are really looking forward to performing with the other schools in our district in March!



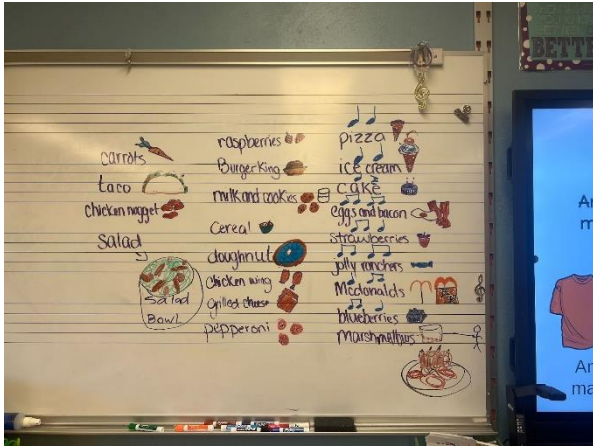
~Marilyn Brown

Glencliff Elementary News

Congratulations to the 4th and 5th graders as they complete their first concert of the year! Kindergarteners are exploring classroom instruments and musical opposites. 1st graders are working on their knowledge of quarter notes, quarter rests, and pairs of eighth notes to complete their own attire for *Aiken drum*, compose with popsicle sticks, and will be using their body to make music as we do some body percussion. 2nd graders are learning about the instrument families and the tale of *Peter and the Wolf*. 3rd graders are especially excited to begin their recorder journey, learning to make beautiful sounds. 4th and 5th graders are learning Drumming in addition to preparing for future concerts.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES



~Abigail Luther

Hillside Elementary News

Students are engaged in a variety of musical activities at Hillside Elementary School! They are continuing to learn several songs for their monthly *Hello, Hillside!* celebrations. They recently performed the tune, *Circle of Light*, for their January *Hello, Hillside!* celebration.

Kindergarten and 1st graders continue to sing and dance to a wide variety of songs, while exploring different sounds. 2nd graders explored *Peter and the Wolf*, learning about the instruments of the orchestra. They'll soon begin preparing for their March musical, *Sing Me a Story*. 3rd graders will be learning how to play the recorder. We are so excited! 4th and 5th graders recently spent time performing in drum circles. We had so much fun! They are eager to perform their winter concert on January 31st!

The halls are alive with the sound of music! We are grateful for the opportunity to make music. Many thanks to the Niskayuna Friends of Music for continuing to support our young musicians. We appreciate all you do for us!



4th Graders at Hillside Enjoy Performing in a Drum Circle!

~Sarah Sanson

MIDDLE SCHOOL NOTES

Suburban Council Music Festival

Middle School Chorus and High School Band had the pleasure of sending nine students to the Suburban Council Music Festival on January 12th and 13th. The students participated in intense rehearsals over two days and performed their concert the second day. With an exciting twist of losing power an hour before the concert, the students finished rehearsing and performed half of the concert in the dark! Dramatically, the power came back on during the final note of the band performance, allowing the chorus and orchestra to perform with lights. When asked, the students said they loved their experience, including the power outage. Congratulations to all involved!



Middle School Chorus Students: Elise Shaw, Ryan Makrin, Rohith Kulkarni, and Olivia Lessard



High School Band Students: Daniel Korevaar, Walter McDonald, Pic Kerins, Priscayah Singh, and Lucia Vysohld

~Julie Wilson and Thomas Loomis

BOCES Students from VA Creating on a Composing App!



~Holly Johnston



HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

Choral Corner

We're having a great year in the HS Choral Department! Rehearsals are energetic, efficient, fast-paced and fun! What better way to earn your arts credit, hone your musical craft, and develop good and healthy vocal technique? The students are so dedicated and are beginning to work on more difficult repertoire as they become more skilled, better sight-readers, and well-rounded individuals.

HS choral students will soon be preparing for the NYSSMA Solo Festival which we will be HOSTING at Niskayuna High School on May 3rd and 4th. Students will be studying works in a variety of languages to present to judges from all over the state. During the month of April, there will be weekly timeslots available for students to receive extra help and coaching. There will be an opportunity to sing for peers in their large ensemble classes for feedback and to help shake any nervousness in anticipation of the performance.

We will be looking for a plethora of volunteers to make this a successful event. Please be on the lookout for some information on how to help!

Congratulations to seniors **Jacob Ciesinski** and **Lucia Vysohlid** who were recipients of the Thursday Musical Club Scholarship. These students received funding for private lessons from this wonderful community vocal group and were presented with a certificate during their large ensemble rehearsals.

Congratulations to the following students who were accepted into the Schenectady All-County Mixed Chorus: **Megan Breslin, Emma Brooksby, Jacob Ciesinski, Sophia Connell, Natalie Dineen, Anna Geveci, Maryn Gleason, Lily Graham, Carolyn Kelly, Elena Kochneva, Alex LaFargue, Katherine Makrin, Lauren McLearn, Samuel Meyer-Veen, Stella Myers, Maria Samuel, Priscayah Singh, Sophie Spindler, Sofia Trimarchi, Alexis Tull** and **Vivianne VanHoesen**. Students worked with guest conductor Shavon Lloyd (our choral festival guest!) at Schalmont High School (Mrs. Pizzino-Catalano's alma mater) during the weekend of January 25!

Congratulations to **Lily Graham, Lauren McLearn, Samuel Meyer-Veen, Stella Myers, Coumba Ndiaye, Aidan Page, Priscayah Singh, Silvanah Singh, Sophie Spindler** and **Aria Wetzel** – they will perform at Albany Pro Musica's HS Choral Festival at SUNY Albany on February 17. In addition, **Lily Graham, Aidan Page,** and **Sophie Spindler** were accepted into the prestigious honor choir.

Outside Performances:

- ***Studio Singers and Bel Canto Voices*** raised **\$3100** (WOW, A NEW RECORD!!!!) during their Caroling for CA\$H fundraiser on December 4! Thank you to the parents/guardians who helped transport students as well as Jessica Hollenback at Union Café for providing cookies and hot cocoa. We also thank Mrs. Spindler (FOM president) and Mrs. Boretti (FOM treasurer) for their time and effort in organizing this fundraiser. Finally, thank you to FOM for providing pizza to the students who volunteered.
- 60+ (WOW, more than half the program) ***High School Choral*** students joined together in song at Niskayuna Town Hall's Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony on December 8. They enjoyed candy

HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

canes and hot chocolate after a wonderfully attended community performance on a night of perfect weather (worth extra credit for Q2)!

- Thank you to all of the WONDERFUL parents/guardians who donated or helped with the **An Evening in History** reception. The audience and performers enjoyed iconic NYC foods including bagels, pizza, cheesecake, and hotdogs after celebrating 400 years of New York City through historical speech and song. Thank you to Homestyle Pizza, Manhattan Bagel, Blue Rose Cheesecake and Bake Shop, and Newest Lunch for providing the delicious food. Please consider visiting and supporting these local businesses. Thank you to the Niskayuna Friends of Music (ALWAYS, always thank you to FOM) for sponsoring the hot dogs!



Bundle up and enjoy the final winter months. Personally, I've been cooking many warming soups and stews with the Van Morrison Pandora station on in the background.

C. M. Pizzino - Catalano

~Christina Pizzino-Catalano

Jazz News

The High School Jazz groups have had many performances so far this year between regular school concerts as well as An Evening in History, the Annual Holiday Assembly and our tour of the Middle Schools and side by side rehearsals. We look forward to our culminating event, the Annual Niskayuna Jazz Fest on April 17! We will be welcoming in Greg Evans, Director of Jazz Studies from Binghamton University - a world class educator, jazz pedagogue and musician.



*Greg Evans, Director of Jazz Studies
Binghamton University*



8th Grade Band & HS Concert Band



HS & MS Jazz

~Philip Pandori

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Rosendale School Liaison

Sarah Brown

Past President

Jodi Rossman

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Jessica Brennan

Thank You, Niskayuna!

The 2023 Pie and Tea Bread Sale was a wonderful success, with more than 300 baked goods purchased to sweeten the winter holiday season. The Friends of Music appreciate the community's support for this annual fundraiser. We are also grateful to the Mourningkill Farms Bakery for their steadfast partnership, Niskayuna High School for approving use of the Old Caf on delivery day, Kitchen Manager Robert Depot and his team for preparing freezer space, the outstanding custodial team led by Karen Lasher for assisting in the delivery, unloading, and sorting of desserts, and our wonderful volunteers: Nancy Gort, Sarah Spindler, Michele Tibbetts-Esposito, Barbara Montgomery, Chris Nobes, Nicki Ogonowski, Michele Boretti, Bridget Stein, and Carey Merrill. We also thank Nisky NOW for receiving the pies and tea breads that purchasers were unable to pick up. We hope everyone enjoyed the delicious items, and look forward to next year's sale!

GE Foundation Matching Gifts Program

FOM has joined the list of charitable institutions that are supported by the GE Foundation Matching Gifts Program. Through this program, individual contributions of \$25 or more from employees and/or retirees are matched dollar for dollar. Eligible gifts may be registered online on our *membership page* or by phone at 1-800-305-0669.

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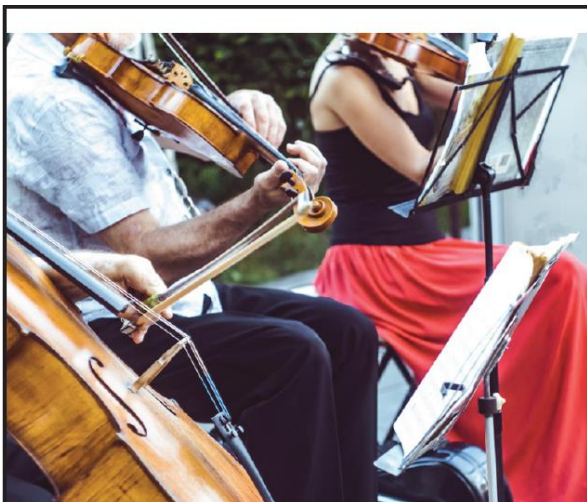
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- Friends of Music window cling

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NOTIFY US AS SOON AS POSSIBLE if you are becoming/renewing your sponsorship, so your logo is included on our website and in all publications. Donations to Niskayuna Friends of Music are tax-deductible to your business. Email any questions to: Sarah Bilofsky at: niskyfomcorpsponsor@gmail.com.

Two ways to submit your Sponsorship Payment:

1. **Online:** Visit www.niskyfom.org and complete the online sponsorship form, upload your logo or business card through the website and make full credit card payment using PayPal.
2. **Check:** Email Sarah Bilofsky at: niskyfomcorpsponsor@gmail.com with your sponsorship level and include a digital logo or scanned business card. Then, mail your check to:

Niskayuna Friends of Music
Attn: Community Sponsorships
District Music Office
1626 Balltown Road
Niskayuna, NY 12309

Please include both color and black and white versions of your logo or business card, if possible. This allows us to fully optimize your logo for both online and print publication. Thank you!