

## Niskayuna Named a Best Community for Music Once Again

For the second consecutive year, the Niskayuna Central School District has been recognized for its outstanding commitment to music education with a Best Communities for Music Education designation by the NAMM Foundation (National Association of Music Merchants). Music Director **Matt Cremisio** announced the Best Communities for Music Education award on March 25 to a very proud and appreciative audience at the District Orchestra Festival.

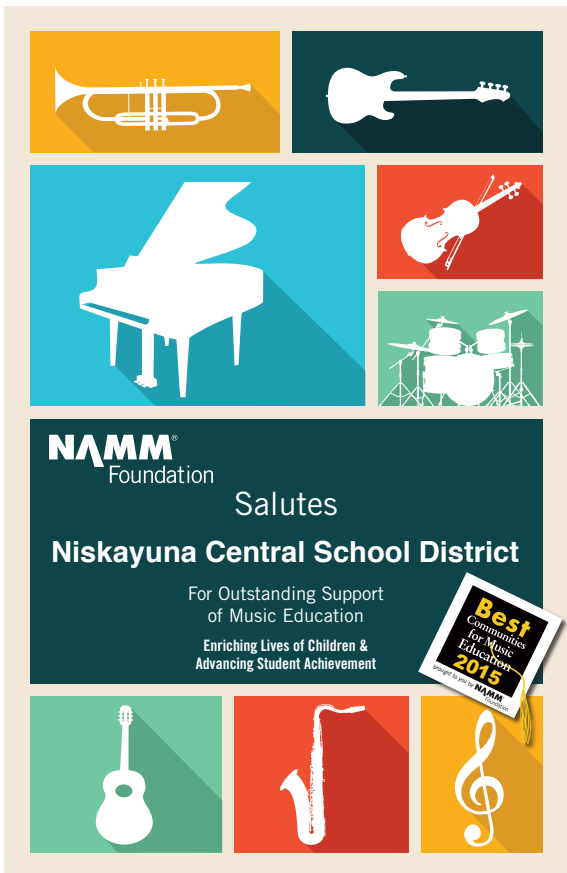
"Designations are made to districts across the country that demonstrate an exceptionally high commitment to music education and are keeping music education alive in our schools," Cremisio said. "Niskayuna was selected as one of only 388 districts across the U.S. to receive this prestigious distinction in 2015. It is with great pride and honor to recognize the Niskayuna Music Faculty, students, and community. Congratulations!"

Now in its 16th year, Best Communities for Music Education affirms districts that have demonstrated exceptional efforts toward maintaining music education as part of schools' core curriculum. The BCME survey requires districts to answer detailed questions about funding, graduation requirements, music class participation, instructional time, facilities, support for the music program, and community music-making programs.

The Best Communities for Music Education program brings national attention to the importance of keeping music education as part of schools' core education and music's vital role in student success in school. Community music programs have been drawing increased attention this school year because of a landmark study by Northwestern University brain scientists. These researchers found new links between students in community music programs and academic success in subjects such as reading. Beyond the Northwestern study, other reports indicate that learning to play music can boost academic and social skills, such as processing math and learning to cooperate in group settings.

Niskayuna's commitment to excellence in music education is well known across the region and beyond, especially through our NYSSMA participation. With the support of Niskayuna Friends of Music, students learn from and play with music professionals through workshops, guest lectures, and multi-day artist-in-residence visits. Each year, Niskayuna student-musicians delight audiences in our community with 30-plus concerts across all levels, including our district music festival held at Proctors Theater and our much-loved Jazz Festival.

Thank you music faculty, students, parents, FOM members, volunteers, administrators, board members, and the towns people of Niskayuna for supporting music education in such a significant way!



# DIRECTOR'S DESK

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## Welcome Spring!

As we draw close to the end of a highly successful and memorable year of Music Education and the Performing Arts at Niskayuna, there are many student and program highlights to celebrate! Perhaps the most prestigious recognition bestowed upon the music program this year is the "2015 Best Communities For Music Education" designation. This accomplishment could not have been achieved without support from our music faculty, parents, students, district, and community. Thanks to everyone whose hand, heart, and voice has made this very special award possible.

## My Thanks To Our Friends of Music

I remain in awe of the dedication, professionalism, and outstanding support this dynamic organization has afforded our students and faculty. It has been my pleasure to work with a highly collaborative and student-centered Executive Team this year. Thank you **Diane Hartig, Mindy Whisenhunt, Fred Shellard, and Suzanne Stansbury**; your leadership and advocacy have helped transform visions into realities, resulting in increased opportunities for our Niskayuna music students.

In addition to the executive team, I would also like to thank the following FOM board members who are ending their term: **Rosie Bishop/VA Liaison, Celine Fletcher/HS Student Liaison, Debbie Gutowski/HS Liaison, Janette King/Rosendale Liaison, Sue Kokernak/VA Liaison, Kristen Rackliffe/Membership, Sam Salem/Glencliff Liaison, Alessandra Shellard/HS Student Liaison, and Michele Shellard/Newsletter**. Your many hours of service has benefited the music program and strengthened the organization. Thank you!

## To All FOM Volunteers, School Liaisons, and Committee Members

To those who have assisted throughout the year in many and varied ways.....from receptions, to ushering, to NOTES, to backstage and warm-up room assistance, to helping with numerous FOM programs and events.....my sincere thanks and fond appreciation for all you do to support music education in our public schools.

## To the Concert Logistics Student Team

My thanks to all our HS students who have stepped forward to help form our much needed Concert Logistics Team. These students have assisted in various "behind the scenes" leadership roles, including but not limited to: lighting, stage crew, recording, set-up, hallway guidance & monitoring, and PR. My thanks to following students: **Elias Assimakopoulos, David Buhrmaster, Quenton Cain, Celine Fletcher, Trevor Grigas, David Jones, Jillian Margolies, Maddie McCarthy, Gideon Schmidt, Alessandra Shellard, and Paul Tan**.

And finally, my heartfelt thanks and appreciation goes out to my administrative assistant, **Tracy Koste**. Throughout the year Tracy has been a remarkable resource and advocate for our department. Her attention to detail and extraordinary efforts in coordinating all printed concert programs, assistance with district music events, transportation requests, and other related department matters is deeply valued and appreciated. Thank you, Tracy~

On behalf of the Music Department, thank you for all you do to support your child and their endeavors in the arts. Have a safe, wonderful and relaxing summer!



# MORE FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

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## District Orchestra Festival

In March, we proudly hosted the All-District Orchestra Festival at Proctors Theater in downtown Schenectady. This year's festival featured students in the Orchestra Program, in grades 5 - 12, along with featured guest conductor, **Dr. Edward Cumming** from the Hartt School of Music. Our young musicians and ensemble directors worked tirelessly as they prepared an outstanding performance and most memorable grand finale showcase! A huge thank you and heartfelt gratitude to my outstanding and dedicated orchestra music faculty, the students and their families, Proctors Theater, and Niskayuna Friends of Music who subsidized the associated costs related to this awesome opportunity for our students! (For more information on the Festival, see pages 6-7.)

From left to right: **Mr. Mooney, Mrs. Brown, Ms. Broadwell, Dr. Cumming, Mr. Cremisio, Mrs. McClenon, and Mrs. Fountain** at the post-concert reception. Thanks to Hannaford Supermarkets for donating the cake.



## Jazz Festival

Parents, students, faculty, administration, and community were treated to a swingin' evening of music as Niskayuna celebrated their annual Jazz Fest in April. The concert proudly featured our instrumental Jazz Ensembles, Studio Singers, and guest artist, **Nick Marchione!** Thanks to Starbucks for providing coffee and to the following volunteers who provided refreshments: **Kelly Anderson, Mary Beth Arcidiacono, Aniko Bobok, Catherine Canavan, Celine Fletcher, Janette King, Sue Learner, Ellen Lin, Nathalie McDonald, Ericka Medina, Mary Schmidt, Michele Shellard, Nancie Stella, Stephanie Vernoooy, and Brenda Ziegler.**

## Elementary Instrumental Recruitment - Parent Night

Please join us for a special parent night and informational meeting on Tuesday, June 2 at 7 p.m. in the High School Auditorium. Students currently in Grade 3 (with an interest in Orchestra) and students in Grade 4 (with an interest in Band), along with their parents, are invited to attend.

This is an opportunity to meet our elementary instrumental faculty and learn more about our program, including expectations and the numerous benefits our program offers your student musician. An informational handbook will be provided at the meeting for your review. This handbook will be a valuable resource for you and your student musician for years to come.

***Additionally, parents may sign-up for their individual student/parent/teacher conference following the evening presentation. Please bring your calendars! Again, this is for all those interested joining our elementary instrumental program in September. Orchestra is currently offered for students beginning in Grade 4, and Band for students beginning in Grade 5.***

# MORE FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

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## **"Summer Sonata"**

July 20 – 23 and 27 - 30

Grades 5 - 8 for Orchestra, Grades 6 - 8 for Band and Choir

The Nisky "Summer Sonata" music program is a fun, two-week music program designed for upper elementary and middle school students who are already members of the NCSD Band, Choir, or Orchestra. Eligible students will be entering grades 5 - 8 for Orchestra and grades 6 - 8 for Band and Choir. This exciting opportunity is for students who enjoy music and wish to continue developing their musical skills during the summer with Nisky Music Faculty!

Students will further their musical aptitude and performing skills in both large ensemble and small group settings. Also, students will further their music appreciation and knowledge through conversation and "hands-on" projects in: Musical Theatre, Music History, Music Theory, Music/Jazz Improvisation, Opera, "Music Around Us," and Music Technology. (Students visit our high school recording studio and work in the music department computer lab.)

Classes and ensemble rehearsals will be conducted Monday - Thursday from 9 a.m. to 12 Noon, beginning Monday, July 20. Upon completion of the two-week program, students will present a culminating afternoon showcase for their family, friends, and community on Thursday, July 30 at 12 Noon in the High School Auditorium. All are invited to a light afternoon luncheon provided by Niskayuna Friends of Music immediately following the afternoon showcase. The program registration fee is \$225.

Every effort will be made to allow students to participate in multiple groups for those who are currently enrolled in more than one school ensemble (ie: combination of band, choir, or orchestra). In the event this is not possible, students involved in multiple ensembles should list their order of preference on the application form.

Application forms are available to all students in the District Music Office or at [www.niskyschools.org](http://www.niskyschools.org). The forms should be returned to your school music teacher or to the District Music Office at the high school. **Registration deadline is Friday, June 12.**

## **Survival Kit for the New Music Parent**

We'd like to share an informative and inspirational website, <http://www.musicparentsguide.com>, created by Grammy nominated music educator, **Anthony Mazzocchio**. This website includes practical information about how to teach children to embrace repetition and take ownership of their learning. It debunks the myth that some kids are just musically gifted and explains why music lessons are valuable life lessons.



# NYSBDA HONORS

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Each year, the New York State Band Directors Association (NYSBDA) holds a symposium in Syracuse, NY during the first weekend in March. Five middle school students from both Van Antwerp and Iroquois and three high school students were selected to participate in the 2015 NYSBDA MS and HS Honor Bands. From a pool of finalists from across the state, they were among the 200 students ultimately selected to perform in the Honor Bands.

Their selection was based on extraordinary achievement on their NYSSMA solos from the previous spring, as well as musical experience and teacher recommendations. The honor bands are All State caliber ensembles, and our eight students have brought much pride to the Niskayuna Music Department through their achievement!

Congratulations to the students pictured below who were selected to participate in this year's symposium!

-Mr. Pandori



High School students pictured from left to right: **Brittany Feuerstein**; **Noah Wilkerson**; **Olivia Canavan**.



Middle School students pictured from left to right: **Payge Lecakes** (8th grade- VA); **Kristina Handy** (8th grade- VA); **Ayla Celik** (8th grade- VA); **Risa Fromowitz** (7th grade- Iroquois); **Lisa Dong** (7th grade -Iroquois).

# Volunteers Contribute to

The orchestra faculty would like to extend a big “Thank You” to the entire music faculty, school staff, Friends of Music, and parent volunteers for the generous help you provided during the Orchestra Fest. The festival was remarkable because so many wonderful people were willing to do their part to make it a success!



**Teresa Broadwell** presents a "thank you" bouquet to **Stacey McClenon** who served as Festival Coordinator.

Thanks to the following parent volunteers: **Vero Alcorn, Eric Amberger, Mary Beth Arcidiacono, Tammy Bernard, Michelle Boehmer, Molly Bracken, Marilyn Brown, Marlene Brownell, Barbara Burgess, Jennifer Contompasis, Ellen Daviero, Karen Davis, Melissa Dobson, Lynell Engelmyer, JoMarie Ethier, Tasha Ferguson, Joanne Ferrara, Laura Graham, Diane Hartig, Huichu Hsu, KaiteJones, Kate Kayastha, Nadine Kernick, Janette King, Susan Kopcha, Sue Learner, Lori LeBlanc, Tina Lee, Amanda Potter, Bill Potter, Curtis Robinson, Gina Robinson, Sam Salem, Mary Beth Schlesinger, Sandra Schujman, Sofia Stolkarts, Denise Stevenson, Angela Tao Sun, Jessica Tang, Emily Titsworth, Lei Wen, Sue Wheeler, Shannon Xie, Lisa Young, Yuan Zeng, and Lora Zilberman.**

Students learned so much over the three days of the festival, and our guest conductor, **Dr. Edward Cumming**, did a great job working with our students.





# Orchestra Festival Success

Here are some student comments that I am happy to share with you...

*"It was cool! I have never been on a stage playing with high-schoolers and middle schoolers. It was awesome! My favorite part of the night was the grand finale, 'Ode to Joy.' I had 72 measures of rest on that!"*

*"You don't have to only play the notes on the page. It is okay to adjust an arrangement to make improvements."*



*"I liked when Dr. Cumming interviewed the students. It was funny."*

*"I remember being in the District Orchestra as a 5th grader. It's cute to see the younger ones play. They really do play well."*

*"Seeing Mr. Purington and Ms. Pizzino-Catalano sing and act was really funny!"*

*"Proctor's is so beautiful! I can't believe we get to play on this stage."*

*"I now understand why we had to practice so much!"*

*"I can't wait for the next Orchestra Festival to be able to do this again."*



*(Photo Credits: Joey Nuqui)*

Thank you again to all of the parents for your support!  
**-Mrs. McClenon**

# HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

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## From the HS Choral Corner

We extend our gratitude and congratulations to our students, faculty, staff, parents, and community for such a successful and musically enriching 2014-2015 school year. Please consider supporting the many local arts organizations that flourish during the summer. Many of our students are participating in summer lessons, camps, classes, and other musical opportunities. We wish these students the best of luck and congratulate them on their desire for extended study.

Congratulations to **Olivia Kim** and **Zoe Lynds** who both participated in the Mendelssohn Club of Albany's Vocal Competition. Zoe won the Joy B. Misenhimer Encouragement Award, open to any student in the competition who demonstrates outstanding singing potential.

We also congratulate **Lex Alston, Shannon Foley, Gus Jones, and Mariah Mizbani** who performed with C-R Kids' Production of *Carrie*, the Musical at Cohoes Music Hall during the first weekend of May.

**Catie LeCours** will be performing with Glimmerglass Opera in August as Penelope in the world premiere of Ben Moore's *Odyssey: A Children's Opera*. Please visit [www.glimmerglass.org](http://www.glimmerglass.org) for ticket information.

## Choral Uniforms

All students and parents should receive their form about ordering choral uniforms for the 2015-2016 school year by May 15. Order forms and payment are due on Friday, June 19.

**ALL USED UNIFORMS MUST BE DRY CLEANED AND TURNED IN BY FRIDAY JUNE 12.** Any uniform that is damaged or in poor condition will not be accepted for resale and will be discarded. Proceeds from any uniform turned in for resale that does not have the correct paperwork attached (in order to contact the seller) will be donated to Friends of Music. Older uniforms from Ladies First may not be sold, but may be donated for the "Caroling for CA\$H" fundraiser.

More information and forms are available on Mrs. Pizzino-Catalano's website at: <https://sites.google.com/a/niskyschools.org/niskayuna-high-school-vocal-music/uniforms>.

## Outside Performances

~Look for **Studio Singers** on their Niska-Day float, so generously provided by the town, on May 16. In addition to their performance on the float, please join us at noon in the entertainment tent where this group will kick off the event on the Craig School grounds.

~**Bel Canto Voices** will once again provide music for the Memorial Day Ceremony at the High School on Friday May 22 at 10:30 a.m.

~On May 28 at 7:10 p.m., **Bel Canto Voices** will present their final examination quartets in *Crossroads*, before the concert. Students have been collaborating on madrigals and motets in Italian, French, German, Latin, and English.



# HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

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~**Studio Singers** will present their final examination Cabaret Concert on Tuesday June 9 at 10:45 a.m. in the Choir Room. Students will present solos and duets from standard jazz and musical theatre repertoire. All families, friends, faculty, staff, and community members are welcome to attend. Simply sign-in at the front entrance to receive a visitor badge if you are coming from off of the campus grounds. We will share in a potluck lunch after the performance.

Many thanks to Niskayuna Friends of Music for their continued commitment to our school music program. I would like to express my appreciation to the music department and director for their commitment to educating our students in a field we love and continuing to strive for excellence. Thank you to our parents and community members who support our students in their musical endeavors. Please know how much your attendance and support means to the children and to me. Finally, and most importantly, my best wishes go to the students who continue to help this music program reach new heights with every passing year. Because of your dedication, hard work, and love for music and learning, we can truly accomplish anything!

Have an amazing and restful summer. **To our seniors:** we are very proud of your many accomplishments, both musical and beyond. May you keep music with you as a comforting, inspiring, and welcome companion while you step out into the “real world.”

I look forward to seeing returning students in the fall and making great music with them!

-Mrs. Pizzino-Catalano



## ESYO Jazz Ensemble



Niskayuna High School jazz musicians featured in concert with the Empire State Repertory Jazz Ensemble on March 20, 2015. The concert was held at the high school and is conducted by **Mr. Cremisio**.

Pictured back row are **Quinton Cain**, drums; **Conor Graham**, bass; front row **Elias Assimakopoulos**, trombone; **Alessandra Shellard**, tenor saxophone.

*(Photo Credit: Jim Kokernak)*

# MIDDLE SCHOOL NOTES

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## 6th and 7th Grade Bands

We were delighted to be visited by guest composer/conductor **Kevin Mixon** in March! Each group performed one of his compositions and worked with Mr. Mixon for a full band rehearsal prior to the concert. One of the students' favorite pieces was the energetic "Junkyard Jam." Mr. Mixon also spent time at Van Anwerp Middle School working with general music classes. We thank Niskayuna Friends of Music for making his visit possible through enrichment funds.

It has been a great year with both ensembles! While I am sorry to say goodbye to the 7th graders after working with these marvelous students for several years, I look forward to watching them continue to grow as student musicians with **Mr. Fisk** in the 8th grade band next year. I also look forward to working with the extraordinary 6th grade band as 7th graders next year!

-Mr. Pandori

## Gazebo Jazz

On May 29 at 7 p.m., the Middle School Stage Band and Middle School Jazz Band will be performing at the Niskayuna Town Hall Gazebo as part of the Summer Gazebo Concert Series. The concert is free to the public and should be a fun, WARM, night of jazz music!



"...I honestly feel like if music were more a part of our daily lives, this country would be a better place."

-Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl

# ELEMENTARY NOTES

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## Rosendale News

It's finally time at Rosendale for a first grade favorite song, "Springtime, It's Springtime." We are singing it with gusto!

Also singing it is our 137- voice chorus as we prepare for our Spring Concert on May 13. The chorus will be joined on one number by the fifth grade band drummers, led by **Mr. Slingerland**, using the new World Drums purchased by Friends of Music. All fifth graders have been busy studying a mini-unit on **Louis Armstrong** by improvising on their recorders to "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Third graders began recorder study in February and have earned two ribbons. In Kindergarten, students are taking the lead by making up their own rhythm patterns and starting songs without prompts. Second grade is learning all things tonal by analyzing solfege patterns and singing patriotic and cowboy work songs. Finally, our fourth graders are playing strong on their blue ribbon piece, "Recorder Warrior".

Thank you to everyone who is a part of Niskayuna Friends of Music for your enrichment grants- both past and present-- which make each day a pleasure to teach here at Rosendale School.

-Mrs. Johnston



## An Elementary Band Farewell Poem....

Eight months have passed since band started,  
For students at Birchwood, Craig, Glencliff, Hillside, and Rosendale, a new passion  
imparted!

All District Band rehearsals have been a great success,  
Now sit back, enjoy the concert, and watch students impress!

Thank you to our guest conductors, **Dave Fisk** and **Kevin Mixon**,  
Who've helped teach us to play with conviction!

Parents, thank you for helping us take care of all the unplanned, and  
Students, we look forward to your musical journey continuing in sixth  
grade Concert Band!

-**Mr. Slingerland** and **Mr. Pandori**





# NOTEWORTHY

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## Student Spotlight

**Cassie Smith** is a delightful young lady who is a seventh grade student at Iroquois Middle School. She has been playing clarinet for three years and is a member of the Middle School Symphonic Band. Her lesson teacher is **Mr. Pandori**.

The clarinet which Cassie uses for lessons and concerts has a meaningful and interesting history behind it. The instrument has been a mainstay in her family, beginning with Cassie's great-grandfather, **Linus Houck** of Oneonta, NY. Mr. Houck was a music teacher, music store owner, and composer. He handed down his clarinet to Cassie's mom, **Kelly Jacobs-Smith**, who played throughout her elementary and secondary school years and during college. When it came time in fifth grade for Cassie to choose an instrument, she considered various options but ultimately chose the clarinet—and the opportunity to play her great-grandfather's beloved woodwind.

Cassie is a fourth generation clarinetist and credits her mom for inspiring her to continue the family tradition. She also plays classical guitar and enjoys singing in the middle school chorus. She likes reading, computer games, and playing tennis with the Iroquois team.

This summer, Cassie will be attending Niskayuna Friends of Music's "Summer Sonata" camp. We wish her continued success in her musical endeavors and look forward to seeing her in concert with a very special clarinet in hand.

## FOM Annual Meeting

Friends of Music's annual meeting will take place on Monday, June 15 at 7 p.m. in the NHS Choir Room. At that meeting, the 2015-16 officers and budget will be voted on. Everyone is invited to attend. If you are interested in getting more involved with FOM, please contact a FOM board member. (*See listing on right.*)



## 2014-2015 FRIENDS OF MUSIC BOARD MEMBERS

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Alessandra Shellard/Student

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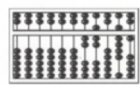


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# NHS Music Department SENIOR BANQUET



Our annual Senior Banquet will be held Monday, June 8th, 5:30 – 7:30 at the MOHAWK RIVER COUNTRY CLUB. Seniors and their parents are invited to a special evening that includes great food, great friends and a fond farewell.

Please join us as we celebrate your many years of hard work and terrific music-making by completing the form below. Cost is \$20 per student or adult. Feel free to contact **Eric Hughes** (ehughes@niskyschools.org) with any questions or concerns.

WHAT: Senior Banquet  
WHERE: Mohawk River CC  
WHEN: Monday, June 8  
5:30-7:30

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number Attending: @ \$20 each:

Total: # \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Niskayuna Friends of Music.  
Due Date is Friday, June 5.