



Notes



Note from the President

As you read this, we have finished our weekly snow storm with it's accompanying ice storm. I write as we are in the long cold part of winter, awaiting spring. The high school music department is deep into getting ready for the musical, and many of us are preparing for the Proctors Music Festival featuring our choirs. We have just finished some elementary school concerts, and again, I am so thrilled to be able to be a part of this music program. The faculty continue to work tirelessly towards excellence, and our students continue to thrive.



The music we hear our children performing makes the gray of winter brighter. Music celebrates the full range of human emotion, and it's wonderful to have this time built into our days.

I continue to be grateful for the Friends of Music board of directors and volunteers that work to make these events appear seamless and effortless. We have a few openings for volunteer positions; if you are interested in joining a terrific team and getting more involved in the musical community let one of our members know. We would love to have you join our team. Enjoy tonight's concert, a magical moment in time. In the meantime, I will leave you with a quotation:

"Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent."—Victor Hugo

Jodi Rossman-FOM president

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

As we celebrate Music In Our Schools Month, there is so much to appreciate and take in! Winter brings our annual musical to the high school. This year it is "Little Women," based on the classic Louisa May Alcott novel. Congratulations to the cast, crew and orchestra on an outstanding run! The students' dedication, hard work and love for performing always guarantees high-quality, memorable performances. Special thanks to the adult volunteers and others who make the musical such a great success.

On **March 13th**, we will be celebrating the District Choral Festival at Proctors Theatre. Our Guest Artist and retired colleague **Paula Brinkman** is working with students in rehearsals and will conduct all of our ensembles at the concert. We are so grateful to Friends of Music for underwriting such a meaningful event for our community. Thanks for your support!

We are excited to revive our Name-a-Chair Project. See the bulletin in this edition of NOTES to find out how you can support the performing arts at Niskayuna and leave a lasting legacy in the auditorium.

The New York State Band Directors Association hosts its annual Symposium in Syracuse this month as well. Two high school students were selected for the honors ensembles. They are: **Patrick Yang**, clarinet (Concert Band) and **Calvin Wetzel**, trombone (Jazz Ensemble). We know they will make us proud. Congratulations on your achievement!

The Suburban Council Music Festival will be held in **Ballston Spa in April**. Congratulations to the following students who will participate:

Students were also selected to participate in our Schenectady All-County Festival in January:

HS CHORUS

Noah Best, bass
Corrina Blood, alto
Jordan McCann, soprano
Ella McDonnell, soprano
Katarina Mills, soprano
Millee Modasra, soprano
Makenna Pack, soprano
James Potter, alto
Marl Talattad, tenor

MS CHORUS

Soprano
Layla Agamy
Megan Breslin
Emma Brooksby
Ian Jaques
Katherine Makrin
Nicolas Marin
Sarah O'Connor
Aidan Page
Mathena Rush
Sophie Spindler
Luke Splendido

HS ORCHESTRA

Grace Kayastha, violin
Olivia Reeves, violin

HS BAND

Maddie Lasher, bass clarinet
Tokunbo Oshinowo, trumpet
Nick Riendeau, tuba
Cassandra Smith, clarinet
Caleb Tysz, trumpet
Duncan Wall, horn
Calvin Wetzel, trombone
Patrick Yang, clarinet
Daniel Zhang, tuba

Alto
Pallavi Datta
Lily Graham
Isabella Martinez
Emma McLearn
Priscayah Singh
Sofia Trimarchi
Alexis Tull

Baritone
Mihir Kulkarni
Martin Mills

MORE FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

MS ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

NingNing Ying

Vidhu Bulumulla

Violin 2

Hayley Elsbree

Charlotte Hull

Tarun Jacob

Selena Yao

Rojan Javaheri

MS BAND

Greta Merrill, flute

Kirsten Felicitas, flute

Christina Rojo, clarinet

Elicia Esmeris, clarinet

Maya Healy, horn

HS JAZZ

Calvin Wetzel, trombone

Matthew Chao, trombone



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, businesses are invited to donate to the Name-a-Chair campaign. The names of those making a pledge will be engraved on the arms of the new auditorium seats. The 1,000-plus seats in the auditorium will have engraved brass plates inset on the wooden arms. Your engraving will remain for the life of the auditorium.

What Is The Cost?

The minimum donation is \$150 per chair arm for individuals and families or a minimum of \$250 for businesses. This donation is tax deductible.

There are 44 letters including spaces and punctuation available per plate, divided into two rows.

No messages please-only names of individuals or businesses will be engraved. Engraving can include graduation dates, such as "Mary Smith, 1999".

Name_____

Address_____

Phone_____

Please check one:

- Individual/Family @ \$150 per chair plate
- Business @\$250 per chair plate

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:

SPOTLIGHT NOTES

Friends of Music interviews Amanda Baker, String Specialist at
Glencliff, Hillside and Iroquois



Where did you grow up?

I'm originally from the Midwest. I was born in Illinois, then lived in Wisconsin for a couple of years. My family moved to the Capital Region just before I started 7th grade.

How were you involved in music growing up?

Growing up, my main instruments were violin and guitar. I started playing the violin in 6th grade (which was the year our instrumental music programs started in Wisconsin), and I started learning guitar the year after. As a violinist, I was a member of my middle school and high school orchestras at Shenendehowa, and was also part of our chamber orchestra in high school.

Where did you go to college?

I attended Schenectady County Community College, where I got my A.S. in the Performing Arts- Music with a concentration in classical guitar. After this, I went to the State University of New York at Fredonia and majored in Music Education. I received both my B.M. and M.M. in Music Education from Fredonia. As a graduate student, I became the Graduate Assistant for the Music Education Department, which was a fantastic opportunity and a

fun experience. I focused on string instruments and elementary general music in my studies.

Do you have any favorite extracurricular activities that you'd like to share?

I was a member of the Fredonia Guitar Quartet for one year in college. The challenging guitar repertoire helped me to grow as a performer. Besides being in the Quartet, I was also a member of the Fredonia Guitar Ensemble and Chamber Guitar ensembles. One of my favorite experiences as part of the FGQ was performing in Fredonia's Children's Concert Series. We created a guitar performance for preschool aged children and did a couple of free performances at local schools and the library.

What are your current responsibilities with Niskayuna?

I am currently teaching 4th and 5th grade string lessons at Glencliff and Hillside. I also conduct the 6th Grade Orchestra and teach 6th grade lessons at Iroquois Middle School.

What are your goals?

My goal is to challenge my students and help them discover how fun and rewarding creating music can be. I hope that I can inspire my students to become lifelong music learners.

What are your favorite things to do outside of school?

Outside of school, I enjoy reading, playing video games, and hiking with friends.

Do you have any advice to students studying music now?

I was in a situation where I started learning an instrument in 6th grade, then suddenly moved to a new district, in a new state, where everyone around me had started playing an instrument much earlier - in 4th grade. This was an overwhelming experience for me at first. However, it turned out to be a fantastic opportunity. While I was catching up to my peers, I began to understand that the key to improving at music is practicing consistently, and that practicing and challenging yourself can be fun as well as rewarding. I think that the key to becoming an accomplished musician is embracing new challenges and approaching music with a growth mindset.

What is some advice for students planning to make a career with music?

I think that being persistent might be the most important part of succeeding in music school, and establishing a career after music school. Try to go for as many opportunities as you can in college, and be prepared for some setbacks along the way. Instead of being discouraged, it's important to remember that this is part of the learning process and will help you improve as a musician and performer. It's so worthwhile to pursue something that you enjoy doing!

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES

Elementary Band Notes

We are all so very proud of all the Birchwood, Craig, Glencliff, Hillside and Rosendale band students who performed in their Elementary Winter Concerts. The students, who have only been playing their instruments for a few short months, shined bright on their instrument solis as well as their full band pieces.

We look forward to preparing three full band pieces for our spring concerts during the first three weeks in May. Among other pieces, each band will be premiering a Rock Medley (including sections of We Will Rock You, Crazy Train, and Iron Man) – you will not want to miss it!

Sue Kokernak, Andrew Lammy, Phil Pandori

Hillside Elementary

Students are engaging in a wide variety of musical activities at Hillside Elementary School! Hillside students are learning several songs for their monthly Hello, Hillside! performances. Students performed a winter sing-along in December, performing fun tunes like Gingerbread Rock and My Favorite Things. In January, Hillside students sang the song Optimistic, by Donna Amorosa. This was done in conjunction with celebrating the word optimistic as part of the Positivity Project. Kindergarten and first graders sing and dance to a wide variety of songs including the partner dance, Jump Jim Joe! Second graders are preparing the musical, Sing Me A Story by Jill and Michael Gallina to be performed in April. Third graders are excited to perform on their new recorders! Fourth graders are “solo singing” for their classmates and have fun performing on xylophones. Fifth graders are exploring and performing on a wide variety of instruments. Fourth and fifth graders are working hard in chorus to learn new music for their May concert. Fifth graders are working hard in chorus to learn their Choral Festival music. Come support our Niskayuna choral students on **March 13th** at Proctors Theatre! Music is alive at Hillside Elementary School!

A special thank you to the Niskayuna Friends of Music for your ongoing support to our music program!

Sarah Banker



5th Graders at Hillside Enjoy Performing on a Variety Of instruments including our new xylophones

Iroquois Middle School Grade 6 General Music

Two sixth graders singing a song from Spanish class in their General Music class.

It is a wonderful time to be a sixth grader in Niskayuna. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to add the



new district Chrome Books to our current music instruction featuring Yamaha keyboards. Our music class contains such units as: steady beat, rhythm, tempo, music history using listening logs, American musical theater, keyboard playing, and elements of music theory. The students are delightful and open to further study in general music.

Ms. Johnston

Girls are sharing a song in music class that they learned in Spanish class - see picture left

MORE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES

Greetings family and friends! Our music students are doing well, enjoying many fine instruments, songs and activities. Additionally, I have some a new initiative to share.

Kindergarten music students are quite impressive at taking turns now that we have begun playing barred instruments with mallets. These xylophones are purposely sized for children and have been purchased for us by the Niskayuna Music Department over a long-range equipment replacement project.

Grade 1 are also playing a huge set-up of the



xylophone family instruments and will begin their first formal circle dance soon. They have already performed in November on stage for their Thanksgiving feast.

Grade 2 students performed “Gingerbread Rock” for their families in December in cooperation with the second grade teachers’ curriculum unit of study. We are now starting songs featuring a fairy tale character to integrate with classroom studies of that genre of literature.

Our third graders have played the Westminster

Chime pattern of London’s clock, Big Ben on choir chimes. They are now extremely excited to begin their unit of recorder playing. All recorders are now purchased by the district for each third grader instead of being bought by families as in the past.

Grade 4 has performed three times already! They presented two songs and the “Dance of the Deer” for their families and friends at “Meet the Tribes” in December using three new mallets paid for by the Friends of Music. They repeated their Iroquois Nation-related performance for the whole school at a **Birchwood K-5 Morning Meeting**. In **grade 5**, we are moving at a fast pace toward rolling out our fine Birchwood tradition of “The States Fair”. The entire fifth grade has been dancing like pros doing “The Twelfth Street Rag”, featuring a Charleston move from the Roaring Twenties! They have also studied the background of and memorized “The Star-Spangled Banner” and learned to sing Ray Charles’ “Fifty Nifty United States” song. We have even squeezed in a look at Scott Joplin’s “The Entertainer” for Black History Month and Ray Charles’ rendition of “America the Beautiful”.

We hope you enjoyed our Winter Concert where the Birchwood band, orchestra, and chorus performed. We performed an African song with a tubano drum purchased by Friends of Music and a new publication “The Defining Moment” with a background track purchased by Friends of Music.

In the **IMN program 3-5** music class, we made cardboard guitars and played both common melodies and creatively on numerous instruments. The **K-2 class** loves to be on video and hear themselves recorded playing and singing.

MORE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES

New Initiative: Online Music Google Classrooms

I have established online google classrooms for classes to visit for the following grades: **K-2 IMN, 3-5 IMN, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5.** **Grades K-2 IMN, Grade 2 and Grade 3:** Watch for a notice home instructing how to accept your child's invite to their google drive into **Mrs. Johnston's** classroom for them. **Grade 5 Chorus students** are also preparing to perform at the District Choral Festival at Proctor's Theater. All district-wide choirs **Grades 5-12** will be singing that night.



Niskayuna Friends of Music is a wonderful organization of volunteers providing their time, energy, and funds for the Music Department. Would you consider joining at <https://niskyfom.org/> You can also scan the following QR Code as a direct link to joining Friends of Music.

Recent Purchases by Friends of Music for Birchwood's Music Program

2018: Three Suzuki Mallets for **Grade 4** "Meet the Tribes" and other lessons
2018: The soundtrack for the Birchwood Chorus' Winter Concert song, "The Defining Moment"
2018-2019: Expenses for

the District Choral Festival at Proctor's, including bringing in a guest conductor **Nineteen African drums**, one of which was used at the Winter Concert **Ms. Johnston**

Students are a part of a wide variety of musical activities at **Glenclyff Elementary School**. Kindergarten and first grade danced and sang their way into the new year, second graders designed their own instruments, third graders composed, and our fourth and fifth grade band, orchestra, and chorus students just completed their first concert of the year in January! The fifth graders are once again hard at work preparing music for the **Choral Festival**, which will showcase elementary to high school chorus students singing together in harmony. The fourth grade is preparing music for their **May** concert while the third grade has begun their recorder journey, much to their delight. **Kindergartners through 2nd graders** are about to put on their dancing shoes to explore choreographed movements and folk dancing. There is never a dull moment in the music room at Glenclyff!



Ms. Luther

The **7th Grade Stage Band** performed their first concert of the year on **Thursday, February 7th**. Many of the students were featured on solos and the group performed beautifully for their first experience in the jazz style. The band is looking forward to performing at the Jazz Fest on **Wednesday, April 10th at 7pm** in the Niskayuna High School Auditorium.

The **7th Grade Stage Band** also has two students who have been accepted to the Suburban Council Music Festival – Middle School Concert Band. This festival and concert will take place on **March 29th and March 30th**. Congratulations to **Elicia Esmeris** on Clarinet and **Kirsten Felicitas** on Flute!

Sue Kokernak

MIDDLE SCHOOL NOTES



The **MS Jazz Band** was proud to perform at the December Board of Education Meeting honoring the National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists. This was the fourth year that the band had the honor of performing at this meeting. Thank you to **Dr. Tangorra, Ms. Gemmill, and Mrs. Gagnon** for organizing this opportunity. We look very forward to performing at the Niskayuna District Jazz Festival on **April 10th**. The group will perform with guest artist/clinician and singer and tenor saxophonist **Camille Thurman**. Thurman is acclaimed by Downbeat Magazine as a "rising star" singer with "soulful inflection and remarkable, Fitzgerald-esque scat prowess" and hailed by All About Jazz as a "first class saxophonist that blows the proverbial roof off the place" - you will not want to miss seeing the band perform with this dynamic artist. We hope to see you there! roof off the place" - you will not want to miss seeing the band perform with this dynamic this dynamic artist. We hope to see you there! We hope see you there!

Phil Pandori



HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

From a Student's Perspective

This past November I had the honor of participating in the National Association for Music Education's Mixed Choir in Orlando, FL. As a junior, I was selected to go to the **NYSSMA All-State Conference** as a member of the Treble Choir. In New York, all juniors who go to All-State are invited to audition for All Nationals. In May of last year, I submitted a video audition to the choir after being invited. In June I received by acceptance letter.

We were sent the sheet music for eight pieces approximately two months prior to the concert date and were expected to have our parts learned and mostly memorized when we arrived so that we could spend our three rehearsal days making artistic choices and melding as a choir. Everyone was very prepared and we were able to put together a wonderful program, ultimately performing seven of the eight pieces without music. I would encourage everyone who is offered this opportunity to submit an audition—it was a once in a lifetime experience and one that I'll never forget. Many thanks to **Mrs. Catalano** for her wonderful teaching, to **Mr. O'Connor** and **Mrs. Germain** for their help with my video audition, and to Friends of Music for their support.

Alexandra Burgess



Alexandra Burgess and Mrs. Catalano



MORE HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

Choral Corner

We hope you are having a joyous Music in Our Schools Month!!! We are honored to welcome back **Mrs. Paula Brinkman** as the Choral Festival guest conductor! Mrs. Brinkman is an outstanding educator who offers a wealth of knowledge having been a member of the music faculty for over 33 years as well as a community member/parent of three Niskayuna graduates. Now a resident of North Carolina, she is the founder/director of the **Wilmington Choral Society** which has grown from 43 to over 100 singers in ten years!



HS choral students are currently preparing for the NYSSMA Solo Festival at Schalmont HS on **April 5 and 6** (*NOTE: WE ARE GOING TO

AN EARLY FESTIVAL THIS YEAR AND STUDENTS SHOULD BE DILIGENTLY PREPARING THEIR SOLOS!). Students are studying works in English, Italian, Latin, French, and German to present to judges from all over the state. During the month of March, 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.

Niskayuna will be hosting the NYSSMA Choral Majors Festival from **April 15-17**. Nearly 20 elementary, middle and high school choral ensembles from the area will be performing for two judges in the high school auditorium over a span of three days. We look forward to hearing the great work and vast repertoire that is being studied in other area music programs.

Congratulations to the following students who will sing with the Schenectady All-County Select Mixed Chorus on **January 25/26** at Mohonasen HS: **Corrina Blood, Jordan McCann, Ella McDonnell, Katarina Mills, Millee Modasra, Makenna Pack, James Potter** and **Mark Ian Talattad**.

Outside Performances: Nearly 90 (WOW!) High School Choral students joined together in song at Niskayuna Town Hall's 6th Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony on **December 9**. They enjoyed cookies and hot chocolate donated by Shop Rite after a performance in the gazebo. The Daily Gazette streamed the performance live on their Facebook page!

Studio Singers and **Bel Canto Voices** raised \$1500 during their **Caroling for CASH** fundraiser on **December 3!!!** Student quartets strolled through Old Niskayuna in Victorian costumes singing carols and collecting funds for the Niskayuna Friends of Music. The day culminated with a group performance at Union Café. Many thanks to the parents who helped transport and chaperone students, to Jessica Hollenback at Union Café for providing the concert venue (along with cookies and hot cocoa!) and to FOM for providing lunch for the student volunteers.

Look for **Studio Singers** on **Saturday, May 18** at Niska Day, first performing on a float in the parade and then kicking off the day in the entertainment tent on the Craig School grounds at noon.

Thank you for continuing to encourage your children to surround themselves with enriching musical opportunities, for your concert attendance and for your continued support on a daily basis. We look forward to seeing you on warm May evenings to steer the 2018-2019 school year towards a close with a fantastic round of final concerts.

Christina Pizzino-Catalano

MORE HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

April 12 & 13 have been set as the dates for the FOM Summer Scholarship auditions at the high school. See your child's music teacher for more information. Students in grades 6-11 are eligible.

Our popular two-week program, **SUMMER SONATA** will take place **July 15-18 & 22-25**. Information will be published soon!

Since April is Jazz Appreciation Month we are happy to welcome saxophonist and vocalist Camille Thurman to work with our jazz students. This is one of our most popular concerts of the year as it features all of our jazz ensembles and Studio Singers. We hope to see you at the District Jazz Fest on **April 10th** at the high school!

High School Band Notes

The HS Concert Band looks forward to their next concert on **March 7th**. We are especially excited to be performing for the **7th Grade Band** at this concert. As most of the 7th Graders will be moving on to the Concert Band in a couple of years, we have planned an exciting program including: "Celebration" by Randall Standridge, "The Seal Lullaby" by Eric Whitacre, "Orion's Sword" by Alan Lee Silva and one of the most wild and flashy band pieces we've performed, "Alligator Alley" by Michael Daugherty. We look forward to this "mini band fest" in March!

Congratulations to the following band students for being selected to perform at the Schenectady County Music Festival. These students were selected to the All-County Band among competitors from all Schenectady County and Voorheesville Schools: **Maddie Lasher, Tokunbo Oshinowo, Nick Riendau, Cassie Smith, Caleb Tysz, Duncan Wall, Calvin Wetzel, Patrick Yang and Daniel Zhang**

Phil Pandori



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Darcy Rosenthal

Hillside School Liaison Position

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OUR TALENTED MUSICIANS



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