



Winter 2020

Issue #1

Notes

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Niskayuna Friends of Music,

Music has been incredibly critical during the last nine months. People from around the world have come out to sing, to make music and to share their instruments. Music is a way for people to come together even while we have to be apart.

Friends of Music has continued to meet regularly over Zoom to ensure that Niskayuna music is supported throughout this pandemic. Friends of Music is providing each elementary school student with a bag to make certain that their music supplies remain clean and separated. This will also be helpful in providing virtual students with supplies. We have been working with middle school music teachers to provide incentives to their students to assist in keeping them engaged. Friends of Music was also excited to provide our high school musicians with masks to ensure safety during rehearsals. This has been extremely important for some of our band students who require special masks due to their instruments.

Niskayuna Friends of Music would especially like to thank the music teachers and the staff. Thank you for all of your hard work and for inspiring our students. We know music education is very important for students during a stressful day and a stressful time. Please realize how much we appreciate your dedication and commitment to our students. Thank you for the long hours that it took to put this concert together for all of us to enjoy.

Congratulations to our music students. Your hard work, persistence and determination throughout these challenging times have been noteworthy. Thank you for being brave and submitting your performance pieces individually so that this collaboration was possible. This concert has brought so much joy. However, it won't compare to the joy that we will experience when we can all come together again.

I would also like to thank our board and our members. Your continued support is crucial to our program. Since we have been unable to hold some of our routine fundraisers, your membership means more than ever.

Finally, before I sign off, I would like to thank Jodi Rossman for her many years of service as President of Niskayuna Friends of Music. Thank you for being such an advocate for the music program; we are forever grateful.

I wish everyone very Happy Holidays. While things might look different this year, I hope your season is filled with love, laughter, and of course, music.

Until we can all be together again, I send you the warmest wishes,

~Sarah Spindler

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Welcome to our Virtual Winter Concert! The music department faculty is working hard to deliver the best education possible to our students and we hope families are finding moments of joy whenever they can.

Our program has been adapted and as we continue through the school year we hope to include as many of our traditional experiences as possible.

High School ensembles and courses are running like all of the other programs at NHS. Thank you to FOM for supplying instrument bell covers and specialized masks for all of our singers and instrumentalists.

The middle school general music program is still in place and 7th and 8th grade ensembles began rehearsals by Google Meet in October. Weekly band and orchestra lessons are also available through Google classrooms for students in grades 6-8. (Grade 5 for string players as well.)

We are happy to announce that 6th grade ensemble remote rehearsals will begin the week of **January 11**. 5th grade orchestra students will begin online meets in January too! Teachers will reach out to families to let them know the schedule.

We are developing plans to recruit beginning band and orchestra students in the spring. We appreciate your patience and excitement as we work to figure things out.

The music department is especially grateful to Friends of Music for its support of our elementary general music program through the purchase of personal music kits for all of our K-5 students across the district.

ALL-STATE CONFERENCE

3 students were selected as participants for this year's All-State Conference. Congratulations on this honor! Performances will be broadcast in March 2021.

Josh Wang, Cello, Symphony Orchestra

Jacob Yanoff, Clarinet, Symphonic Band

Caroline Skrebutenas, Young Composers Honor Symposium

NYSSMA FESTIVALS

NYSSMA evaluation festivals will be held online this year. Students can register for the festival through the District Music Office and will then be sent links and other information to upload their audition. Recordings will be evaluated remotely and then returned to students within a two-week time frame.

PIANO festival information can be found online now at www.NiskyFOM.org. (Application deadline: Jan. 8)

ALL OTHER INSTRUMENTS: Information will be posted online in January for an April audition. (Application deadline: Feb. 26)

JAZZ audition information will be posted online later this winter for a May audition. (Application deadline: Apr. 2)

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

MUSICAL ENRICHMENT

The Empire State Youth Orchestra and other organizations are still working to provide meaningful experiences for students and families. Look online for more information about these wonderful opportunities to stay engaged with our music community.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

As 2020 comes to a close, I want to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation for the support everyone has shown our department and the entire school district. None of this has been easy but all of it has been worthwhile. Stay on the lookout for more updates as we head into 2021 and have a restful break.

~Eric Hughes



#NISKYTOGETHER



Niskayuna HS Concert and Stage Band performing "Amazing Grace" (arranged by Sean O'Loughlin) directed by Band Director Mr. Pandori, June 2020

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SPOTLIGHT NEWS

Friends of Music interviews Julie Wilson, General Music & Chorus teacher at Iroquois Middle School



Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Lancaster, NY, a suburb near Buffalo. Yes, I love the Buffalo Bills and chicken wings and everything else Western New York is known for.

How were you involved in music growing up?

I was involved in music at a very early age, starting in the church. I sang in the choir, played in the bell choir, and was in the Christmas musical shows. I took piano lessons and was in the chorus at school starting in elementary. Once I got to the high school, I started pursuing music more intently knowing I wanted to be a music educator. I took over directing the bell choir, was involved in every musical extracurricular at school, and exchanged dance lessons for voice lessons.

Where did you go to college?

I went to college at the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam.

What are your current responsibilities with Niskayuna?

I teach general music and chorus at Iroquois Middle School.

What are your goals?

I want students to look back and remember music class in a positive way. I want to teach students traditional and modern ways to enjoy music.

What are your favorite things to do outside of school?

I like to craft - sewing, embroidery, and especially crochet!

Do you have any advice to students studying music now?

Keep with it! Even if you know you are not going to pursue music as a career, it is a wonderful gift and talent to have!

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

Make sure to study all aspects of music, including the parts you don't like - it will help you in the future!

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES

So far this year, K-5 Elementary General Music classes are being delivered to all 1,900 students by 30-minute movies twice a week. Virtual Academy students can watch and participate at home. Students at school view and participate in their classrooms. These movies are prepared, produced, and taught by Mrs. Johnston. She is in her 25th year in the district and has taught at Rosendale, Birchwood, Iroquois, and Glencliff. To comply with health guidelines, lessons must be designed without sharing instruments, wind instruments such as recorders, without singing, and without dancing or moving away from their desks. Our director, Mr. Hughes, adapted a syllabus to follow. We are still learning rhythms, up and moving, doing listening lessons, identifying what Mrs. Johnston is singing in ear training (do re mi), doing actions and sign language to songs, and getting free resources from Carnegie Hall Explorers program for pre-made Hip Hop content just to name a few activities!

Mrs. Johnston has made this year an opportunity to bring in community resources, a pillar of our district's vision. We are truly blessed with families and former students who are giving their time and talents virtually to the movies going to the homes and classrooms of our students. Here are some examples: the Craig Kandlakunta family collaborated with Mrs. Johnston to teach a lesson on the Indian Festival of Diwali, including a song in a dialect of Hindi. The Wolff family of Birchwood has made a YouTube video for Mrs. Johnston to have the dad teach all the elementary students to use English Sign Language to a piece called, "Love In Any Language." Niskayuna alumnus and local musician Cody Okonski from the band Millington, made a 1G movie for 4th and 5th graders. In it he describes in a BBC quality presentation, his musical journey through Rosendale, Iroquois, and the High School to his career today, his gear in his studio, his blended genre, and more. He said he wanted to give back for what music class gave him. Mrs. Johnston's special area colleagues, Ms. Dudla and Mr. Furey in PE have folded in amazing lessons to support self-worth messages to our students by teaching their particular modalities around the song, "True Colors." Mrs. Johnston is particularly emphasizing how much each child's uniqueness is valued and needed, and that we should accept that in others and ourselves.

Mrs. Johnston says, "Producing movies efficiently and of quality was challenging at first and had a steep learning curve. It was humbling. However, my elementary music colleagues had a new unfamiliar path as well. We all should be proud." She particularly wants to thank Mr. Hughes for his support in her navigating an uncharted assignment. Additionally, big thanks to our department secretary Tracy Koste for compiling bags and bags of rhythm kits for every kindergartener and 1st grader as well as other items to add to the department music kits forthcoming. Finally, thank you to Friends of Music, a year of transition, but right there for our department as always. Special thanks to our new President. Thank you for the grant of drawstring music kit bags for every elementary student. Somehow you provided for a huge need. Join FOM is under the table of contents of every lesson I send! Stay safe everyone and know how amazing and appreciated you are.

Grades Four and Five Music
Dec 14-18 Lesson 1 Table of Contents

1. Cody's band Millington's ska/punk song "Cold in the City"
Punk dance instructor in Sydney, Australia
2. "True Colors" Ostinato A with marker AND pencil: extended version
3. NEW "Mix a Latke"
4. "Oliver Twist" movement game
5. Sign language alphabet "A" and "L"
6. Watch Birchwood family's video for 1st 3 signs "love", "any", and "language" "Love In Any Language"
7. Backstory of human beatboxer Neil from The Phillippines
showing his "True Colors" and being a positive role model for children



Join Niskayuna Friends of Music
www.niskyfom.org

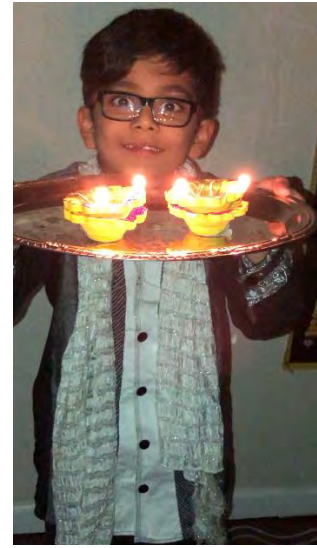


Sample Music Lesson, Table of Contents

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES



Maddie Adams, 5th grade Virtual Elementary music student patting the beat to "One Bottle of Pop" round



3rd grader Baj says Happy Diwali



2nd grader Asher keeping the beat at home



1st Grader Jaelyn Knows She Got the Right Answer



Second graders in Mrs. Martin's class at Rosendale acting out motions to a Halloween song in a music class video

~Holly Johnston

MIDDLE SCHOOL NOTES

GENERAL MUSIC AND CHOIR

Welcome back to middle school music!!

This year the general classes are focused on unit-based learning primarily through their Chromebooks. It's amazing all the things we are able to do. Utilizing these tools, students are learning about and able to demonstrate and share music theory, rhythm, music history, world music, electronic composition and are even able to play piano using the keys of their Chromebook!

7th and 8th grade choir have met before school based on their virtual day, alternating with band and orchestra respectively. During this time students have been able to learn songs and improve their musical technique. We are very excited to put together our first ever virtual concert!

Starting January, 6th graders will be able to join music ensembles before they get on the bus at 8:00 on designated days. 6th graders and parents should be on the lookout for more information regarding this to come. We are so excited to see you again!

The level of musicianship and independence on behalf of students is unparalleled this year. Without their dedication, and assistance from parents the planning for this endeavor would have been impossible. We thank everyone in the Niskayuna Music Community for all their help, understanding and support!

~Marilyn Brown, Jake Purington and Julie Wilson

ORCHESTRA NEWS

Orchestra students have been hard at work since September!

Our 5th and 6th graders are learning from video lessons and have been sending in videos to watch to help them with their playing. I am so impressed with how the kids are doing and love watching their videos and seeing their smiles!

Middle School 7th and 8th graders are doing lesson videos as well as Orchestra Meets! We have been working on orchestra pieces as well as scales and technique. It's great to see the kids in the live meets to see how things are going and just to chat with them! We are excited to share our virtual performance with families!

Parents should all be proud of their orchestra students. They have been incredible and I'm so proud of how hard all of our students are working! It is a completely different format, but the kids are so resilient and are charging ahead. It's been a fun adventure so far and I can't wait to see what the year ahead will be!

~Stacey McClenon

MIDDLE SCHOOL NOTES

BAND NEWS

The 7th and 8th Grade bands have been meeting virtually every other week since September while students are on their remote days. While we miss seeing each other in person, we are thrilled that we are able to rehearse as a group during a pandemic. Through the district providing each student with a Smart Music account, we are able to rehearse in real time online. Students have also been watching weekly lesson videos and submitting practice logs and videos through google classroom for feedback. We so miss the small group lessons in the Middle School rooms and are looking forward to the day we can return to this setting! We are really excited to present our first "virtual" concert on **December 23rd** - the students have been working very hard to record their parts for "Carnaval" (7th Grade) and "Super Heroes R Us" (8th Grade) and we know you will love the performance. A special thank you to all the students who came out of their comfort zones to record these - we know the presentation will be meaningful for families and the entire Niskayuna community. Thank you also to the Niskayuna Friends of Music for providing a little extra incentive to the students in the form of Dunkin' Donuts gift cards!

6th Grade band students have also been watching weekly lesson videos and submitting practice logs and videos through google classroom for feedback. While we have only had one chance to rehearse as a full group, we are THRILLED to announce that starting in January, we will hold full weekly 6th grade band rehearsals and live check ins. Mrs. Scherer will be getting the ball rolling on this very soon as she will be directing these rehearsals. We just can't wait!

~Phil Pandori (6th, 7th and 8th Grade Band Director)

HIGH SCHOOL NOTES

CHORAL CORNER

Thank you to all the students who are sticking with choral music (and parents for encouraging)! We are currently rehearsing in the auditorium, masked and twelve feet apart. It's different and challenging, but it's great to sing together. Your children are showing such courage and independence in that they are singing alone on their remote days and singing out during in-person rehearsals albeit far apart from others!

Many thanks to the Niskayuna Friends of Music for providing our singers with great (and very comfortable) masks! Even though we are unable to have our annual Caroling for CASH fundraiser this year, please head over to www.niskyfom.org to donate to this wonderful organization!

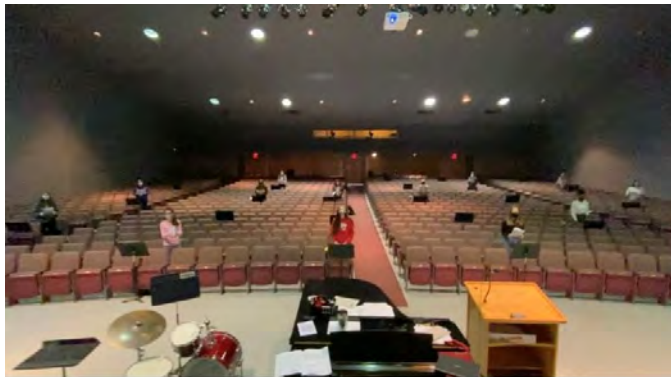
Social Media

Please follow Mrs. Pizzino-Catalano's school Instagram account, **Sing4ursupprrr**, for occasional postings about what students are doing inside the classroom!

Choral Uniforms

At this time, uniform requirements are on pause. When live performance opportunities become available and approved, information will be provided about uniforms.

HIGH SCHOOL NOTES



Photos of students rehearsing in the auditorium, 12 feet apart in masks!



The selfie - it's Ella McDonnell and Gabriella Pizzolo behind me



Ava Fallone in the FOM mask



Photo of mixing the virtual choruses in Final Cut Pro (at my counter...with a plate of cookies)

C. M. Pizzino - Catalano

~Christina Pizzino-Catalano

HIGH SCHOOL STRING ORCHESTRA

High School String Orchestra has been meeting in the hybrid format. I am amazed at how much these students have grown. It's my first year working with the High School students who I once had in elementary and middle school. We've been working on a lot of new pieces and having fun rehearsing. Their technique is improving with each rehearsal and we are able to cover a lot of material. They are ready to tackle any new tasks I throw at them. Their performance videos show how much they have been practicing and I thank them for all of their positive energy!

Parents should all be proud of their orchestra students. They have been incredible and I'm so proud of how hard all of our students are working! It is a completely different format, but the kids are so resilient and are charging ahead. It's been a fun adventure so far and I can't wait to see what the year ahead will be!

HIGH SCHOOL NOTES



~Stacey McClenon

HIGH SCHOOL BAND AND JAZZ

We are so thrilled to be rehearsing High School Band and Jazz Band in person this year, though things look a lot different! In accordance to CDC/DOH guidelines, each ensemble sets up with students 12 feet apart from one another, wearing specialized playing masks and bell covers for every instrument. Special thanks to the Niskayuna Friends of Music for providing each of our band students a specialized playing mask and bell cover for their instrument allowing us to play together live and in real time! As we are following the hybrid learning model, half of our class does this in-person while remote students join via Google Meet. Students switch places the following day. The smaller cohorts have allowed Stage Band and Jazz Ensemble to focus on improving our improvisation this year through learning "head tunes" and different ways to approach improvised solos. It has also afforded us the opportunity to form mini ensembles, or combos, with students alternating live instructional days. Concert Band has been rehearsing in the auditorium to fit the larger ensemble with 12 feet distancing, and we have improved our listening and rhythmic independence this year as a result of being so spread out. The Concert Band, Stage Band and Jazz Ensemble look forward to presenting a concert program to you on **December 23rd**. You will see a mix of live and remotely recorded pieces and I could not be prouder of the hard work of these students.

~Phil Pandori (HS Concert Band, Stage Band, Jazz Ensemble)

FRIENDS OF MUSIC

Friends of Music is excited to provide our High School musicians with masks to make sure they stay safe during rehearsals. This is especially important for some of our band students who require special masks due to their instruments.



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.

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.



2020-2021 Friends of Music Board & Committees

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Hospitality

Jessica Brennan

Congratulations to the following Niskayuna Students who were selected to join the Empire State Youth Orchestra

As a regional organization, ESYO attracts students from over 75 public and private schools throughout eastern New York State and western New England. Returning and potential members must pass a competitive audition for their positions. ESYO students range from 4th through 12th grade. The twelve performing ensembles rehearse weekly with professional musicians as conductors and coaches. A season's schedule includes over 30 concerts, requiring over 600 hours of rehearsal time.

Meredith Adams	String Orchestra	Violin
Ratna Kartheeka Bandaru	Repertory Orchestra	Violin
Kehan (Kevin) Bao	Concertino Strings	Violin
Sophia Barnes	Symphony Orchestra	Bass
Ruchir Bollapragada	Concertino Strings	Violin
Faith Borkowski	Symphony Orchestra	Violin
Vidhu Bulumulla	String Orchestra	Violin
Josie Calareso	Repertory Orchestra	Cello
Sean Calhoun	Repertory Orchestra	Violin
Eujeong Choi	Symphony Orchestra	Cello
Pallavi Datta	Symphony Orchestra	Violin
Arthur Leung	Symphony Orchestra	Violin
Vincent Liu	Concertino Strings	Violin
Kyle Markham	Repertory Orchestra	Cello
Sydney Markham	String Orchestra	Violin
Cristina Rojo	Repertory Orchestra	Clarinet
Amelie Striegnitz Knox	Repertory Orchestra	Viola
Josh Tso	Symphony Orchestra	Viola
Simran Utturkar	String Orchestra	Viola
Duncan Wall	Symphony Orchestra	French Horn
Melinda Wetzel	Repertory Orchestra	Oboe
Nathan Yan	Repertory Jazz Orchestra	Tenor Sax
Patrick Yang	Symphony Orchestra	Clarinet
Xuning Ying	Repertory Orchestra	Violin
April Zhang	Repertory Orchestra	Violin
William Zheng	Symphony Orchestra	Trombone



2020 marks the 250th birth anniversary of Beethoven!

"Oh, it would be lovely to live a thousand lives!"

~Ludwig van Beethoven

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Niskayuna Friends Of Music



Would Like To Extend The Deepest
Appreciation To The Niskayuna PBA



For their very generous support of our music programs and
for their dedication and service to our schools and community.