



Notes

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Niskayuna Friends of Music,

While it is cold outside, we started the year off with warm hearts. The first concert series was a huge success. It felt magical to experience live music. I am so proud of the hard work from the musicians and teachers. While we are disappointed that we were not able to experience concerts from the 4 - 6th graders, we cannot wait to hear what they have been working on.

We have many accomplishments to celebrate. Friends of Music provided specialized masks for the 5th - 8th grade band students. We are very grateful that now all band students in the district are able to play safely. We have also provided support for our All-State students. In addition, we are proud to provide an enrichment grant for a guest professor, Dr. Raymond Wise. He will be presenting to the high school choir students. As the school year continues, we will continue to provide educational support at all levels.

Thank you to everyone who made our pie sale a huge success! I hope everyone who ordered enjoyed the delicious treats. During the month of March, take a break from cooking and enjoy some delicious food from Mr. Wasabi (3/23 - 3/27). For more information, please see page 16. Thank you to all who have become members of Friends of Music. We could not do all of this without your incredible support. We have yet to reach our membership goals, so if you are considering joining, it is not too late. All the support is very appreciated, especially during this unprecedented time.

I look forward to continued live concerts. After time apart, I appreciate our community being together even more. On March 4th & 5th, the Niskayuna stage will be filled with singing and dancing as the high school presents Mamma Mia. We are definitely looking forward to hearing what this talented group has been working on.

Here's to a wonderful 2022. I hope music fills your year with hope and love.

With warmest wishes,

~Sarah Spindler

Thank you All who participated in the Friends of Music Pie Sale!

We want to thank the Mourningkill Farms Bakery for their partnership, Price Chopper for donating their freezer truck, the NHS Custodial Team for their delivery day support, our delivery day volunteers (Sarah Brown, Soma De, Carey Merrill, Gina Murray, Katrine Rush, Peter Sandvik, Sarah Spindler, Rebecca Stashower and Michelle Tibbetts-Esposito) and our wonderful Niskayuna community for buying pies and tea breads, and supporting music education in our schools.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Welcome to Music In Our Schools Month (Almost)!

The music department and Friends of Music are planning events to celebrate and we'd like all of you to take advantage of some special opportunities. Throughout this edition of NOTES you will learn about a district-wide Virtual Symposium for students and a unique series of concerts to showcase them in a chamber music setting. It was a truly difficult decision to postpone live performances in January but we are optimistic that we can resume concerts this month and next, and hope that all of our students can perform for you in person in the spring.

NYSSMA Update:

Festivals are scheduled to be in person this year!

The Piano festival is scheduled for March 11-12 at SUNY Schenectady. *(Registrations are closed.)* The annual Solo/Ensemble festival will be held April 8-9 at Schalmont High School. *(Registrations close on February 4.)*

Congratulations to all of our participants – it will take some extra work this year and we are so proud of you!

Mamma Mia! The Broadway Musical

Performances are scheduled for March 4 & 5. We are happy to present three shows to the public. Tickets are on sale and can be reserved at **WWW.SHOWTIX4U.COM**

Virtual Concerts

Elementary school concerts and the 6th grade concert were recently shared with students and their families online. We know the students worked hard preparing for them and there were many perspectives about whether or not live concerts were in everyone's best interests. We're glad their efforts could be recorded and enjoyed.

"Send In The Clowns"

That famous song by composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim (who passed away in December) is both beautiful and devastating all at once. I mention it here because I think that's how many of us are feeling right now. We're grateful to hear children making beautiful music again, all the while devastated by the thought that the finished product might never be shared beyond the walls of their rehearsal rooms or living rooms. But I think we can take comfort from the lyrics of another of Sondheim's songs as we continue through the pandemic and hope it gives you something to think about as well. *"My window pane may not give much light, But I see you, so the view is bright. If I can love you, I'll pay the dirt no heed. With your love what more do I need?"*

~Eric Hughes

MAMMA MIA!

Niskayuna H.S. presents...



TICKET SALE INFORMATION

TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE ONLINE UNTIL TWO HOURS BEFORE CURTAIN

Friday, March 4, 2022 – 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 5, 2022 – 2:00 p.m.
Saturday, March 5, 2022 – 7:30 p.m.
(SNOW DATE: Sunday, March 6, 2022 – 2:00 p.m.)

Pricing

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

ALL SALES ARE FINAL. ALL SEATING IS RESERVED.

PLEASE VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE TO PURCHASE TICKETS:

<https://www.showtix4u.com>

*Walk-up sales will also be available one hour prior to each performance,
however reservations are strongly recommended.

Please make checks payable to: Niskayuna H.S. – MAMMA MIA!

*Cash & Checks ONLY accepted at the box office

*Credit card orders accepted online

MAMMA MIA!

2022 Playbill Support

Deadline for Submission: February 11, 2022

[PLEASE CLICK HERE TO FILL THE PAPERWORK OUT ONLINE](#)

(no need to fill out paper copy if done online)

Contact Name: _____

Business: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

_____ Check if you want to use a previous year's ad. We will gladly update it for you!
[the program is printed in black and white]

_____ **\$100**
(Full Page)

_____ **\$75**
(Half Page)

_____ **\$50**
(Business Card)

**Please email a JPG, PNG or PDF file to : cpizzino-catalano@niskyschools.org*

**Full Page Ads include two (2) complimentary tickets to opening night on Friday, March 4 at 7:30 pm. Tickets will be set aside under the business name. The box office opens one hour before performances.*

Please include your check made payable to NHS MUSICAL and mail to:
Christina Pizzino-Catalano
Niskayuna H.S. Music Department
1626 Balltown Rd.
Niskayuna, NY 12309



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 5/31/2022.

SPOTLIGHT NEWS



Spotlight on Thomas Loomis

Friends of Music is thrilled to welcome all of our new music teachers to the district. In this issue we interview **Thomas Loomis**, General Music, Music Concepts & Chorus teacher at **Van Antwerp Middle School**.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Rocky Point, Long Island, New York. Go Eagles!

How were you involved in music growing up?

Growing up, I was always surrounded by music. My mother sang in the church choir, and my two older brothers took piano lessons (neither of them stuck with it for very long though...). I myself started piano lessons when I was about 6 or 7 years old, and started singing in the chorus at school soon after that. I've participated in NYSSMA

for both piano and voice, sang in All County and All State festivals, was a part of an auditioned chorus outside of school, started a band in high school... Honestly too many things to list! One of my favorite things to do when I was younger was to sit with my brothers and listen to the music from the video games we had.

Where did you go to college?

I attended SUNY Potsdam, the Crane School of Music where I received a Bachelor's degree in Music Education. My primary instrument was voice.

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

I absolutely love playing ping pong/table tennis. I haven't been able to play in a while, but it is something I greatly enjoy doing in my spare time. I've been playing with a penhold grip for the last several years and it's been a lot of fun having so much control over the spin, but I have been considering going back to shakehand grip because it puts less strain on my wrist - I wouldn't be as concerned if the piano wasn't as prevalent in my life!

What are your current responsibilities with Niskayuna?

I am currently responsible for teaching 6th, 7th and 8th grade General Music classes, some Music Concepts classes, and our chorus ensembles that meet before school (6th Grade Chorus, and 7th/8th Grade Chorus).

What are your goals?

Some goals that I have for myself are that I would like to be a part-time studio musician - someone who plays on records for other artists. I think that that would be a great opportunity to meet talented musicians, and also be a lot of fun to collaborate! But even before that, an even bigger goal of mine is to continue improving myself as a musician. I feel strongly about wanting to be productive and efficient, and so I study every day to be a better musician than I was the day before. To what end? Well, I'll have to see when I get there!

What are your favorite things to do outside of school?

I enjoy spending time with my fiancé, our cat (Poki), and I also very much enjoy making music on my computer. I prefer to use a program called Ableton, and while it can sometimes take a while before an idea starts to form, it's always really fun and gratifying to make music - whether it's on my own or in collaboration with others.

Do you have any advice to students studying music now?

Do/play/learn what you like, but also remember to challenge yourself! When I was younger, I always struggled with finding this balance. I would play or learn just what I wanted to learn 90% of the time, and only challenged myself 10% of the time. I was intimidated by learning something new or difficult, because it made me feel like I wasn't getting any better. Figuring out how to balance that in my life has made it much easier for me to approach something new and to master it in a way that feels productive, and like I'm making real progress!

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

It's all about the hustle - look for opportunities to play or showcase your music/talents, and when you can't do that, make those opportunities for yourself. One of the greatest things about all of the arts is that we get to put ourselves and our vision into something physical and real. It can be scary sharing that with other people, but it can also be really rewarding. If music is something you're considering as a career path, then be unapologetic and share your vision!

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES

Birchwood Elementary

The Birchwood Beagles have been busy in the music room! Our friends in kindergarten are having a blast learning about musical opposites—like long and short, fast and slow, loud and quiet, and more! 1st grade gave their big "Thanksgiving" performance virtually in November, and they were superstars! 2nd grade also gave their big virtual performance of the year in December - "Gingerbread Rock!" They loved it so much that the entire grade sang it outside on the playground together one day at recess. They fully embraced their roles as performers! Our 3rd graders have enjoyed reviewing the different instrument families as they are beginning to think about if they want to participate in band or orchestra in the future. We have also been exploring "The Carnival of the Animals" by Camille Saint-Saëns in preparation for our movie music unit! 4th grade performed "Breezes are Blowing" as a part of their "Meet the Tribes" Social Studies celebration of New York State Native American tribes. Students sang and played tubanos, shakers, and rainsticks for their performance. We're excited to be starting our next instrumental unit - World Drumming! 5th grade has been working towards putting together their own class "Stomp Out Loud" concert. Students are participating in the gathering of different household/environmental items to use as instruments, performing, dancing, recording, and editing of their concert. Additionally, 4th and 5th grade have been working hard in order to prepare for our winter concert. They can't wait to show their families what it's like to be an ensemble member in band, orchestra, and chorus!



~Rebecca Farrell

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES

Craig Elementary General Music News



Craig students are such fabulous musicians! With the chill in the air, we are keeping warm learning new skills, songs and ready to share what we know! Kindergarteners have been learning about opposites in music, and demonstrating those opposites on class instruments. 1st graders have learned and recorded two songs in class. They really enjoy connecting to and creating songs about families and playing quarter and eighth notes on rhythm sticks.



2nd graders have been learning how to demonstrate half notes and half rests, creating an ensemble in class.



3rd graders have been learning how to play piano and save their work using their chromebooks.



4th and 5th graders are having a great time planning musical winter trips across New York State, and just started learning about rhythms and World Drumming. The 4th and 5th Grade Choruses are very excited to present their very first virtual concert to friends and family!



~Marilyn Brown

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES

Hillside Elementary

Students are engaged in a variety of musical activities at Hillside Elementary School! Hillside Elementary School students are continuing to learn several songs for their virtual Hello, Hillside! celebrations. Kindergarten, first and second graders sing and dance to a wide variety of folk songs. Third graders perform some popular tunes on the xylophone. Fourth graders explore world drumming, performing on both the djembe and tubano. Fifth graders accompany their singing on the xylophone. Fourth and fifth graders participate in a choral experience, singing a variety of songs. The halls are alive with the sound of music!

~Sarah Sanson

Glenclyff Elementary

The halls of Glenclyff were filled with music as students across the school joined together in the Winter Sing along and the January Good Morning Glenclyff. Students in 4th and 5th grade performed their concert in the gym, socially distanced. Their hard work really paid off; they have improved so much!



4th Grade Chorus



Band

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOTES



Orchestra



5th Grade Chorus

~Abigail Luther

Rosendale Elementary



Rosendale 4th grade chorus students perform in Capital District Youth Chorale Holiday Concert, December 2021, Clifton Park, attended by Mrs. Johnston

~Holly Johnston

MIDDLE SCHOOL NOTES

General Music

Iroquois and Van Antwerp students were excited to use instruments again in the general music classes! 6th and 7th graders have been working on keyboards to read, practice, and record a myriad of songs. 8th graders had the opportunity to play guitar this year and learned to play a melody as well as chords to many pop songs.

7th and 8th grade Choruses were able to perform in person for the first time in a year and a half! The students truly shined in their winter concert this past December on the High School stage. Although the 6th grade Choruses were not able to perform in person this month, the students are working hard to produce a video recording to send out to all families soon, including a combined number! We cannot wait for you all to hear their beautiful voices together!



~Thomas Loomis, Elizabeth Massarone & Julie Wilson

7th Grade Band Meets Laura Estes



The 7th Grade Band will have the opportunity to meet the composer Laura Estes on a google meet during the month of March for “Music in Our Schools Month”. The band students are currently working on “Cook Strait Crossing” written by the composer. Cook Strait is a treacherous body of water separating the North and South Islands of New Zealand which has been a watery grave for many vessels. The piece is depicting the true story from history about the capsizing of a passenger ferry, the *Wahine* in 1968. Ms. Estes begins the piece with the sounds of the ocean, rain and wind, followed by a meditative plea for safe travels. There is something special for each instrument section and the piece features an array of percussion instruments depicting the sounds of a day at sea.

Mrs. Kokernak and the band students are looking forward to meeting Laura Estes and learning more about the process of composing a piece of music for band. Before retiring, Laura Estes taught middle school and high school band for 36 years most recently in the Cobb County School System in Georgia. We would like to say a special “thank you” to the Friends of Music for this exciting opportunity!

~Sue Kokernak, 7th Grade Band

Choral Corner

"Raymond Wise, Ph. D., a native of Baltimore, MD., began his musical career at the age of three, singing gospel music with his family singing group "The Wise Singers." Dr. Wise is currently on the faculty of Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana where he serves as Professor of Practice in the African American and African Diaspora Studies department and instructs courses in African American music. He also serves as the Associate Director of the African American Arts Institute, an IU division devoted to the perpetuation of performance of African American music and dance."

HS choral students are currently preparing for the NYSSMA Solo Festival at Schalmont HS (Mrs. Catalano's alma mater!) on **April 8 and 9** (*NOTE: WE ARE GOING TO AN EARLY FESTIVAL THIS YEAR AND STUDENTS SHOULD BE DILIGENTLY PREPARING THEIR SOLOS!). Students are studying works in a variety of languages 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.

12

HIGH SCHOOL NOTES



MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS MONTH®

Music in Our Schools Month Chamber Music Concert

The following HS choral students and instrumentalists will be collaborating on vocal chamber works on Wednesday, March 24 at 7:30 pm:

Choral Students: **Emma Cornish** (soprano), **Aiden Irish** (baritone), **Isabella Martinez** (mezzo-soprano), **Ella McDonnell** (soprano), **Emma Nobes** (soprano), **Elizabeth Ogonowski** (mezzo-soprano), **Yumu (Crystal) Peng** (piano), **Raghav Raj** (piano), **Mathena Rush** (piano), **Sophie Spindler** (soprano), **Connor Smith** (tenor), **Eden Sumner** (mezzo-soprano), **Lucia Vysohlid** (violin) and **Keller Wegter-McNelly** (tenor).

Instrumentalists: **Matthew Choi** (bells), **Matthew Esposito** (tambourine), **Aryeh Korevaar** (piano), **Kiemon Noel** (drum set), **Jack Swinton** (bass) and **Patrick Yang** (clarinet).

Outside Performances:

- Over 70 (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 5. They enjoyed candy canes and hot chocolate after a chilly, but fun and festive performance!
- **Studio Singers and Bel Canto Voices** raised **\$600** during their **Caroling for CASH** fundraiser on December 6! The event looked a bit different than years past with student groups popping up for short performances at localized spots in the community culminating in the traditional concert at Union Café. Thank you to the parents/guardians who helped transport students as well as Jessica Hollenback at Union Café for providing cookies and hot cocoa. Also, many thanks to the Rexford Fire Department, Niskayuna Town Hall, Van Antwerp MS and Iroquois MS for allowing students to sing at their venues. Finally, we appreciate our faculty chaperones/supporters: Mr. Hughes, Ms. Farrell, Mr. Loomis, Mrs. Sanson and Ms. Luther for braving the rain and cold to be with us!

*Students are able to receive community service credit/volunteer hours for the two events listed above. Please see Mrs. Catalano for verification or to obtain signatures for paperwork, if needed.

Please stay warm with great music in your lives and see you in May as we begin singing our way into summer!

C. M. Pizzino-Catalano

~Christina Pizzino-Catalano

CONCERT SERIES 1

In-person concerts after a gap of almost one and half years- thank you to our Middle School and High School students for your beautiful music and to the teachers for all your hard work!



FRIENDS OF MUSIC



2021-2022 Friends of Music Board & Committees

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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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Thank you for your support!

FRIENDS OF MUSIC

Dear Niskayuna Friends of Music,

What a year it's been! Never before have we been through such change and adaptation – including in our music programs. Thanks to our community's support of Friends of Music, we have kept music alive in our schools.

We are deeply proud of:

- Our **students**, who worked so hard to play and sing, either at home or in masks, six feet apart, learning new technology to make videos and recordings;
- Our **teachers**, who found creative new ways to teach music, inspiring students despite the shared disappointment of being unable to perform live concerts;
- Our **parents**, who answered the call to play a much larger role in helping students log on to meets, record videos and stay motivated to practice;
- Our **community**, who came together to celebrate Music in Our Schools Month last March through online concerts and performances.

At every turn, Friends of Music has been there to help. Providing masks for high school students; gifts cards and incentives for middle school students; personal music kits for elementary school students – and instrument bell covers for musicians in all grades.

We could not have played this vital role without the generosity of parents like you. That is why we are writing to ask you to support Friends of Music. More than ever, we want to keep our students making beautiful music!

We plan to provide grants for music enrichment, sponsor NYSSMA All-State students, present a Jazz Festival in April and provide senior scholarships. However, we know things can change quickly, and your support allows our parent volunteers to work with music teachers to provide essential tools to allow students to continue singing and playing together.

To make your donation via PayPal, visit: niskyfom.org. You can also mail a check to: Niskayuna Friends of Music, c/o H.S. Music Dept., 1626 Balltown Road, Niskayuna, NY 12309.

On behalf of our students, teachers, and parent board of directors, thank you in advance for your generosity. May music continue to bring joy to your family!

Eric Hughes
Maggie Vinciguerra
Sarah Bilofsky
Co-Chairs, 2021-2022 FOM Membership Drive

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to all the amazing volunteers at Niskayuna Friends of Music
and the extraordinary Niskayuna Music Department!

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- Berthold Auerbach



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