



upbeat

Notes from the Concord Conservatory of Music

SPRING 2019

PianoX: A MUSICAL COLLABORATION

PIANO **P**laying the piano is routinely a solo experience that is, unless you are a piano student at CCM. On March 2nd, 34 of CCM's piano students performed in orchestral fashion on seven grand pianos at the Steinway showroom of M. Steinert & Sons in Boston. The Piano Xtravaganza concept was inspired by CCM Piano Department Chair Keith Kirchoff's own experience as a young student in Minnesota, where he performed in a similar setting. During each piece, which was written for two or four parts, two students played at each piano and were directed by either piano faculty Lorna Henderson or Kitty Cheung-Evans.

Our students quickly learned the skills of collaboration: listening, watching, keeping time, and working as a team. It was an exciting afternoon and involved extra commitment from not only our students, but also their instructors and their families to be prepared and attend the rehearsals. For this, we say thank you and look forward to next year. 🎵

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New iPads:

BRINGING TECHNOLOGY INTO THE STUDIO

The field of education is running full tilt toward curriculum entirely integrated with technology. These days schools, businesses, and even homes have been enhanced with computers and smart devices. While some fear that the rise of electronics in everyday life simply enables distraction and “rots the brain”, not all of technology is video games and Instagram.



A sight-reading app is used by many of our students to develop the sight-reading skill by training the eye and brain to move forward with confidence and it gives immediate feedback.

This year, CCM has officially welcomed technology into its classrooms. Thanks to a generous donation, CCM was able to deploy a fleet of 10 iPads, each loaded with an array of applications for the use of students and faculty during lessons.

CCM is using iPads to augment the learning experience. There are many uses for iPads in the music studios where they can serve not as distractions, but as useful tools. The iPads can be used by students and teachers for everything from recording and listening to themselves play, to composing new music, or studying music theory. Several faculty have already incorporated iPads into their lessons, and CCM hopes to have all the faculty fully trained in the many applications of the iPads in the coming year.

Piano Department Chair Keith Kirchoff teaches piano, composition, and music appreciation and has already been able to see how the iPads make a big difference in the

classroom. Kirchoff explained how he uses the iPads with his students every day and says the program “gives us as teachers so many more resources to aid in our lessons”. Kirchoff mainly uses an app called ForScore with his students. The app allows him to download scores and annotate them with notes. At the end of the lesson, the notes can be emailed to the student or parents for use at home. The app can be used for “demonstrations, additional practice, sight reading, or even something as mundane as a backup copy in case students forget their music”. Kirchoff and his students are excited to use the iPads in lessons because they allow for a level of spontaneity. He can pull up a reading or score within seconds and Kirchoff says that in some cases he’s even been able to show students the original manuscript of the piece they’re working on.

Piano faculty Chieko Loy has also been happy to implement the use of iPads in her lessons. At the moment, she only uses the iPads for sight reading, but finds it very useful for targeting specific skills her students need to work on. Loy says, “I like [the app] since I can modify it to each student’s level. I can adjust... the range [of notes] and target the problem spots.” Loy wants to explore other uses for the iPads in her lessons including playing videos.

At the moment, CCM’s iPads are set up with a collection of thirteen applications specifically chosen to enhance music lessons. Each application was chosen with students convenience and learning in mind. One application slows down recordings without changing the pitch, which allows a student to play along with the music at less than performance pace. Another is simply a digital notebook where faculty can record lesson notes and even record videos, and then send the file to the student or student’s parents for use at home.

Ultimately, the goal of the iPads is to give students and faculty every possible advantage in their musical journey—to fulfill every “now wouldn’t it be great if...” moment—because learning music is difficult and we want our students to focus not on whether they have their music, but whether they can read, play, and enjoy it. 🎵

Community Event: SCRAMBLING MUSIC & ART

CCM hosted the final day of West Concord's ArtWeek with activities that pleased musicians, visual artists, and those of us who appreciate the arts. On Saturday, May 4th, CCM buzzed with excitement—musicians joined their new bluegrass bandmates to jam, people came to listen and learn about bluegrass from CCM faculty member Ian Goldstein, and everyone witnessed the reveal of West Concord's ArtScramble.

The afternoon began with the Bluegrass Band Scramble. Rich Stillman, accomplished banjo player, and CCM faculty member led the fun and immersive Scramble. Musicians' names were drawn from hats, and they were placed in new bands to spend the next two hours pulling together and rehearsing a four-song setlist. The groups also had to name their new bands. "I am always amazed at the enthusiasm and how quickly the tight bonds are formed with the bands," says Kate Yoder, CCM Executive Director. "The musicians are of a wide range of abilities, but they make it look effortless coming together, recommending and learning new songs. Some had never played in a band before and performed!" For musicians who dreamed of playing in a band but didn't know how to begin, the Scramble provided the ideal opportunity to stretch their skills and music abilities in front of a live audience with a professional sound system and engineer.

"It was fun and lively and truly in the spirit of what we intended."

Ethnomusicologist and CCM faculty member Ian Goldstein presented a talk that enlightened attendees about the origins and culture of the bluegrass genre. He spoke about the history and sound of bluegrass, how it emerged in the late 1930s as a distinct blend of country, blues, and old-time string band music, and the roles of the mandolin and banjo in particular. Setting the genre in the broader context of American musical history, Ian spoke about the influence of bluegrass on early rock n' roll and discussed some of the contemporary new acoustic music genres that grew out of traditional bluegrass, beginning in the



The bands quickly gelled and arranged a setlist of four songs to perform.

early 1970s and continuing today. Between the Scramble, Ian's lecture, and then the West Concord ArtScramble, guests were prepped and excited to hear an energetic bluegrass concert to end the day's activities.

Delighted with how the community came together, Carlene Hempel, Chair of the West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee, says, "Our event was a smashing success. We had about 75 people show up to the mural reveal and bluegrass concert. It was fun and lively and truly in the spirit of what we intended." A monumental effort by community members and volunteers shaped our town's ArtWeek, which helped provide free access to music and art. CCM partnered with other town businesses and organizations, enabling us to host this fantastic day of bluegrass and more.

Carlene sums it up well when speaking about our community. She says, "For the concert, three bands assembled, and each played four or five songs. When it was over, I saw people walking in all directions back to their homes—a testament to community support for the arts and Kate's amazing program at CCM." 🎵



The inspirational and infectious Okee Dokee Brothers brought the audience closer to nature through their energetic songs.

CCM Brings “The Okee Dokee Brothers” Foot-Stomping Fun to Town

According to Oliver Rodriguez, a 7-year-old Concord Conservatory of Music piano student, he has been a fan of the family-friendly bluegrass duo The Okee Dokee Brothers for “ten hundred years.”

“A super-fan family” is how Oliver’s mom Masami, herself a music teacher, describes the relationship as they prepared to take their seats for the group’s CCM-sponsored concert on March 9 at the 51 Walden Performing Arts Center in Concord.

The Rodriguez family wasn’t alone—as excited as the kids in the audience were, their parents were just as giddy, cheering and singing along like they would at a rock concert.

“Introducing the Okee Dokee Brothers was like introducing Bruce Springsteen to his fans—everyone loves the artists and knows all the words,” said Kate Yoder, CCM’s founder and executive director.

Joe Mailander and Justin Lansing, the “Brothers” themselves, are lifelong friends, Colorado natives, and firm believers that folk music and nature are a winning combination. Their first album, the Mississippi River-themed “Can You Canoe?”,

won a GRAMMY award in 2013 for Best Children’s Album. Their next album, “Through the Woods,” a journey along the Appalachian Trail, was also GRAMMY-nominated. “Saddle Up,” a southwestern horseback romp, followed, completing their “adventure series.”

The Okee Dokee Brothers followed up in late 2018 with a new album, “Winterland,” which applies their trademark sophisticated lyrics and rootsy style to invite listeners to “fall into winter, with sheets of rain and blankets of snow.”

Their message resonates with families in nature-loving Concord, as was evidenced by how quickly the March shows sold out—a second show was added when the first filled up back in November. The concerts attracted CCM families as well as fans from neighboring towns, all five New England states, and as far away as Montreal, Canada.

The Okee Dokee Brothers’ banjo-twangy, acoustic style also connects with the CCM American Roots program, which is now in its second year and expanding to draw adults and youth alike to classes and performances.

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CCM American Roots Benefit:

MUSIC CONNECTED US ALL

We had the perfect combination that guaranteed fun while supporting the Concord Conservatory of Music—Barbecue, the best bluegrass music, an amazing bourbon tasting, and of course our friends of CCM. On Saturday, March 30th, enthusiastic CCM supporters gathered for our annual fundraiser, the CCM American Roots Benefit. Held at the historic Performing Arts Center at 51 Walden in the heart of Concord center, the Benefit raised more than \$82,000 to support CCM and music education in our community.

CCM faculty member Ian Goldstein kicked things off with a short and animated bluegrass piece. Great music continued throughout the evening. The student Rock Lab group, Anarchy in a Jar, rocked 51 Walden with their take on the Foreigner's classic Cold as Ice and Queen's We Will Rock You. You could see on their faces how proud they were of their performance.

"Music is a gift to be cherished and should not be a privilege for the lucky few"

CCM instructor Phil Sargent made sure bandmates Stella Connolly, Jason Gee, Jr., James Goar, Max Johnson, and Anthony Valeri worked together and prepared for their performance. The students realized that all the hard work and group rehearsals it took for them to get ready paid off. Rock Lab is one way CCM provides students a chance to play with other young musicians and gain a priceless and rewarding teamwork experience.

The performances by Rock Lab and two of our young violinists showcased the students' musical talents, as well as the poise and self-confidence they develop from learning an instrument and performing. Guests also thoroughly enjoyed the music of Twisted Pine, an acclaimed bluegrass band from New England. Their energetic and driving rhythms filled the room—a musical treat for all.



Auctioneer Kathy Kingston, with humor and wit, led the exciting live auction and the crucial Fund-A-Future. The focus was on helping CCM continue to provide accessible music education in our community. To set the tone, Kingston started by auctioning off a pair of used CCM drumsticks. It worked! CCM parents battled it out and the winning bidder bought them for \$550 - all in the spirit of supporting CCM. With the party buzzing and energy high, the auction cruised. Attendees bid on everything from a premiere V.I.P. Red Sox experience for enthusiastic sports fans, to an amazing limited-edition bottle of Rip Van Winkle Bourbon, which the bourbon aficionados



A sea of bid numbers waved across the room as auctioneer Kathy Kingston got the crowd excited to support CCM.

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The Quintero-Grotts shared the importance of music education for their family.



CCM American Roots Benefit: continued from previous page:

greatly appreciated. The funds raised help us broaden our programming, strengthen our fiscal position, and grant financial assistance to those who need our help. Every year, the CCM Financial Assistance Fund provides musical opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities throughout Concord and 15 surrounding towns.

CCM Benefit attendees enthusiastically raised their bid numbers when Kingston presented the Fund-A-Future moment—when they can specifically help provide financial assistance to CCM students. Dedicated CCM parents Leny Grott and Gustavo Quintero have two daughters who take lessons at CCM. Grott spoke on what CCM and the Fund-A-Future program mean to their family, saying, “The Concord Conservatory of Music has taught our children to work hard, practice, and have passion for what they learn.” Grott explained how their children and many others enjoy a music education, thanks in large part to the American Roots Benefit and other generous donations that provide financial aid to students at CCM every year. “Music is a gift to be cherished and should not be a privilege for the lucky few” said Grott. She also shared a special moment she had when her daughter, who is learning Spanish, told her, “I can read English, Spanish, and music; now I can communicate with the whole world.” Success! Music is connecting her daughter to others in ways just words cannot do.



The band Twisted Pine, featuring CCM faculty instructor Kathleen Parks on fiddle, filled the room with their spirited arrangements and powerful syncopated rhythms.

Special thanks go to CCM faculty member Ian Goldstein, the evening’s emcee, plus our Rhythm Sponsor Enterprise Bank, as well as our Music Supporter sponsors, Cambridge Savings Bank, The Monument Group Companies, and PEAK Event Services. We are grateful to the many volunteers who made the evening possible, from the Benefit Committee to the student volunteers. 🎵



One of the night’s highlights was the performance by CCM Rock Lab band Anarchy in a Jar.

And then there's the way the duo plays high-quality, family-friendly acoustic music, something that parents and kids can take pleasure in listening to as a family.

"I loved to see parents and kids enjoying the music together at the shows," said Yoder. "The Okee Dokee Brothers represent how wonderful it is when families bond over music everybody loves. I've noticed that when families listen to music together, they stay more involved in learning music together."

strongly in the value of music education, even if the learning takes different forms at different times in a child's life.

"We want to communicate, stick to it, you can't switch all the time," he said. "But to a certain extent, it's okay to ebb and flow. Every artist takes time out to get re-inspired."

Mailander traces his current success back to his childhood lessons, though. "That early training does so much for your understanding

"The Okee Dokee Brothers represent how wonderful it is when families bond over music everybody loves"

Joe Mailander agrees, saying he and Justin Lansing were impressed with CCM's recognition that "family music" is truly for all ages. "I think kids love looking up at their parents and seeing them really enjoying something authentically," Mailander said in an interview, "That makes the kids that much more engaged."

Mailander had eight years of traditional piano lessons as a child, before shifting in middle school to more rhythmic folk music and early rock tunes like "Twist and Shout." He believes

of time and pitch and tempo. That sense of how to construct a melody is deep within me just from sitting in my lessons."

At the concerts, excited energy filled the performance space with boisterous audience participation and enthusiastic hand-clapping and foot-stomping. From the stage, the duo joked multiple times that this conservatory community has learned to hold a rhythm—but it was evident that the audience was getting a lesson in the pure joy of family music. 🎵

The audience danced, cheered, and sang along with the Brothers!





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Making a Difference

The mission of the Concord Conservatory of Music is to foster a sense of community through music by providing accessible, high-quality music education and performance opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels.

Located in the West Concord Union Church, our offerings include group classes, workshops, private lessons, and jam sessions for children and adults, from beginners to advanced. We also host a Faculty Concert Series.

We welcome you to explore our programs online at www.ConcordConservatory.org, or give us a call at (978) 369-0010.

1317 Main Street
P.O. Box 1258
Concord MA, 01742



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