

# OCTOBER OPUS

(978) 369-0010



The Concord Conservatory of Music

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**CCM News**



**Practice Month** – October is when things really get rolling around here. We've got a healthy number of new students who might be overwhelmed with starting a new instrument and a new grade at school. And there are returning students who might have spent more time at the beach than sitting on the piano bench the past summer. It's great to get a break from it all. But when we get back into our routines, it's good to take a refresher on the basics. That is why October is Practice for Pizza month. We've got pink calendars floating around, and students who are eager to fill them out. Every student who practices for 30 days in October gets invited to a pizza party. We're looking forward to seeing all those smiling faces at the beginning of November!

We also have a Practice Workshop for Parents on Thursday, October 30th, 7 PM here at CCM. We know that sometimes getting your child to practice can be a struggle. That's why we're here with helpful tips and best practices to help you help your student flourish and enjoy making music.

**All-School Recitals** – The first recitals of the school year are this month, too, Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at 1:00, 2:30, and 4:00 pm. Even if your student isn't performing, this is a great chance for them to be inspired by their peers. We encourage you to attend; and since it's close to Halloween, we encourage you to wear your costume!

**Performance Workshop** – All students who are performing for the first time at CCM need to participate in the Performance Workshop. Lorna Henderson will lead one on Tuesday October 14<sup>th</sup> from 4-5pm, and Chieko Loy will run a Performance Workshop on Saturday, October 18<sup>th</sup> from 1-2pm. Both workshops will take place in the Sanctuary. Students will learn about performance etiquette (what to wear, how to introduce themselves, etc.). They will also get a chance to perform their piece and get some jitters out. This year, the link to sign up for each Performance Workshop will be posted on our [website](#).

**Concert & Lecture Series** – our new series, curated by Ehud Ettun, starts this month! This semester, subscribers will partake in four concerts and accompanying lectures on music by J. S. Bach. Subscriptions of \$80 for the four part series are still available. \$25 tickets will be sold at the door for the performance if the series is not sold-out.

On Thursday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm, join us as we kick off the series with a concert titled “Polyphony within Monophony: Bach’s Solo Works.” Subscribe and read more about the Concert & Lecture Series [here](#).

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### **Faculty Spotlight, New CCM Teachers**

Performing takes a lot of courage. You have to get up in front of an audience and be vulnerable. You have to be able to remain calm and focused when you make a mistake. We know that performing is a challenge for our students, which is why we thought we’d talk to some of our new instructors about their experience as musicians and performers.

### **Do you get nervous? What do you do before a performance to prepare mentally?**

Kathryn Christensen (piano): I definitely get nervous before I perform. Certain pieces and certain audiences make me more nervous than others, but I generally feel a nervous excitement about bringing a great piece of music to life. Before a performance I try to get plenty of sleep, eat well, and commit a large amount of time and thought to the music I’m about to play, so that it really feels like a part of me. I try to remember that the audience is generally there to enjoy the music, not to critique the performer.

Liz Leehey (clarinet): I don’t get nervous - I really never did, even when I was younger. To prepare, I do a lot of visualization - visualizing the venue, the audience, etc., and of course, a lot of practice!

Ruth Hartt (youth chorus): I recommend finding a quiet corner and listening to Stin Hansen's [Find Your Center](#) guided meditation. Also, utilize your power poses! They raise your testosterone (assertive hormone), lower your cortisol (stress hormone) and make you perform better. [Read](#) more about it!

**Explain what it feels like when something goes really well and/or your strategy when something gets off track.**

Kathryn: One of my life's great thrills is giving a performance that (while never perfect) is truly effective. Stimulating a roomful of minds and hearts with music that is full of character and passion is a privilege, and worth all the hours of practicing it takes to pull it off. Sometimes things get off track, and I've learned that forward is always the best direction to go. Instant forgiveness, move forward not backward, and stay engaged in the present musical moment rather than fretting about a slip-up that just happened.

Liz: When the performance goes well, I feel it in my heart and I feel a true connection with the audience. When things get off track, I focus on the moment and communicate (non-verbally) with the other performers.

**How does having an audience change your delivery? How do you feed off a positive audience? How do you maintain energy with a dead one?**

Kathryn: Playing for an audience is so much better than playing for an empty room! In my experiences, most people who make the effort to show up to a live musical performance are eager to listen and absorb the music. Their eagerness is sometimes even palpable, and makes it very exciting to play for them. In the few circumstances that I've performed for a relatively "dead" audience, I have found motivation on the inside instead of the outside, trying to simply give the piece the performance it deserves and honor the composer, whether or not the audience seems to know or care.

Liz: A responsive audience really enhances the performance - for both the performer and other audience members. When an audience is responsive, I feel a real communication between myself, the music and the audience. When an audience is quiet or non-responsive (and even when they are connecting), I make eye contact with individuals, and perhaps talk to the audience in between pieces. I focus on the purpose of the performance - to share the art with the audience.

## **What kinds of performances do you go to? As a performer, what do you learn from seeing others perform?**

Kathryn: I love going to chamber music performances! I enjoy witnessing the energy and communication among a small group of musicians collaborating. I love going to premieres, and concerts with interesting programming. I like small concerts in unusual or intimate venues, where the performers and audience really get to interact. Seeing other people perform gives me even more motivation to practice! It gives me ideas about repertoire I might like to learn. Being an audience member helps me understand my own audiences better, the next time I perform. A wonderful live performance simply brings joy and enrichment to my life.

Liz: I like going to vocal, string chamber music and dance performances. I like to apply what I hear/see to clarinet performance.

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### **Behind the Scenes**



As we said, performing is a multi-faceted skill. Even if you can play your piece perfectly in the practice room, this doesn't guarantee a flawless performance. That's why we have

Performance Workshops for new performers. Get a “behind the scenes” look at what a Performance Workshop entails.

New CCM performers, and those who just want to brush up on their performance skills, gather in the Sanctuary. This is where all CCM recitals happen. A Performance Workshop is usually led by a piano instructor, so that students can be accompanied while they perform. Each student takes her turn, and goes up to the front of the room. She introduces herself, and announces the piece she will play. The instructor has students practice speaking loudly and slowly, a great skill for any sort of presentation. Then the student plays her piece. It’s a chance to feel what it’s like to play in front of an audience. There are distracting sounds; the space is bigger. Your nerves can manifest in all sorts of different ways from sweaty palms to memory slips.

Once the student is done, the instructor offers encouraging words, and some constructive criticism. She might have the student play the piece again. What’s most important is that the student got to get up and give it a go. She can now be more prepared for the curve-balls nerves might throw at her, and she sees that performing isn’t as scary as she thought it would be. Often the group will do an performance exercise together and share their impression of each performance. This helps each student realize that other students are facing similar challenges. She’s not alone. Having a peer support group and instructor networks are some of the great reasons for studying at a school!

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**Why Music Matters**



Recent studies show that tailored live music performed by music therapists can help the development of premature babies. Here is a video journalism piece by the New York Times.

[Watch the video clip.](#)

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### **Performances in the Area**



Brian O'Donovan, host of WGBH's A Celtic Sojourn, talks here on Boston Public Radio about why you should go listen to live music, and where you can do it in the Boston area.

[Listen to the radio clip.](#)

On **Sunday, October 18th at 12:00 and 2:00 pm**, Boston Conservatory presents The Billy Goats Gruff. This is a children's opera about overcoming bullying, with music by famous Classical composers. Admission is free.

[More Info.](#)

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