

OPUS FEBRUARY 2017



The Concord Conservatory of Music

www.concordconservatory.org

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News at CCM

The CCM February recitals highlight duets! Performing with another musician is an integral component of a student's music training. We encourage all students to come, listen, and learn from these performances. Mark these dates on your calendar, and please join us for the student concerts on:

Saturday, February 4th, at 1:00, 2:30, and 4:00 pm

Thursday, February 9th, 7:00 pm

Ease on down the yellow brick road on March 4th!

Plan an evening out with your friends at the de Cordova Sculpture Park and Museum. Join us for the [**Emerald City Winter Party and reserve your tickets!**](#)

The band Bayside will entertain us during the evening, time to dance!

Party with your friends and plan to reserve a Table of 10—it's easy to do. Visit us online and enter party attendee names, or call CCM at 978-369-0010. [**RSVP now and purchase tickets all through our website**](#)

We are proud to announce that Carlisle Chamber Orchestra recently named Dr. Angel Valchinov, a CCM string faculty member, as their Concertmaster. [To view their upcoming performances>>](#)

Fiddling Workshop on March 25th!

CCM is hosting an Americana Fiddling Workshop led by the renown fiddlers Laura Cortese, violin, and Valarie Thompson, cello. Learn to play songs that you can play with your friends! All instruments are welcome (violin, cello, double bass, guitar, banjo, and mandolin) and students should have at least two years on their instrument. The workshop is for ages 8 - Adults. Look for more information on our website shortly. CCM is offering a series of workshops in a variety of musical genres.

We are pleased to announce that the **Concord Local Cultural Council** provided \$500 in support for this year's CCM Concert & Lecture Season.

March is Practice for Ice Cream Month at CCM!

Imagine rewarding yourself with a bowl of smooth and creamy ice cream smothered in hot fudge, and of course, with a cherry on top! In March, we encourage all students to practice 30 days for ice cream sundaes! Students keep track of their practice days in March by having a parent or teacher initial their [**CCM Ice Cream Practice Challenge Calendar**](#). The ice cream party, held on Wednesday, April 5, from 6 - 7 pm at CCM, welcomes all who successfully completed the challenge. RSVP to Sue Seger at sseger@ConcordConservatory.org by Tuesday, April 4th.

Friendly reminder that CCM is closed during February school vacation week, February 20 through the 26th. Enjoy your time off, and keep encouraging your children to practice!

Snow days in sight? Luckily, snow hasn't slowed us down, at least not yet. A "snow day" message on our website home page and our voice message alerts you to when the weather has interfered with our scheduled classes and programs. Please be sure to check our website or call since we do not always follow school cancellations.

Behind the Scenes

Band on the Run

International Accolades for Björn Wennås and His Band, Newpoli

Björn Wennås, who teaches guitar at CCM, has been gigging and recording with the band Newpoli for about a decade, but there are still plenty of “firsts” for the band to experience. Like the first time, they showed up late for a gig because the road was blocked by sheep, for example. (That happened on their way to a mountaintop village in Italy.) And, even better and much more importantly, in 2016, they won the Independent Music Award for Best World Traditional Album for *Nun te Vutà*. The title means “no looking back”—perhaps a reference the sheep? Newpoli was also a finalist in the world music category for the USA Songwriting Competition last year.



The recognition in both cases is “pretty darn cool,” Wennås says, in part because they are international awards. Of the 11 tracks on their latest album, six are traditional songs from Basilicata, a region in southern Italy, where the music is imbued with Arabic, Spanish, and North African influences, among others. The other five tracks are original songs written by Newpoli in the style from the region.

“Basilicata is a region that hasn’t had a lot of culture recognition, the music from there is relatively unknown,” Wennas says. “So we took a deep launch into that. We wanted to hear what’s hidden in the music and come up with something that is both traditionally correct and put our contemporary spin on it.”

On the album, Wennås plays classical guitar, mandola, and chitarra battente, an instrument in the guitar family that originates in southern Italy. Other instrumentation in the eight-person band includes tamburello, tamburo a cornice, doumbek, riq, oud, recorders, ocarina, ciaramella, zampogna, violin, lira, and bass. They’ll be taking the show and its varied influences on the road to Queens, N.Y., Maine, and back to Italy this summer.

Faculty Profile

Robin Alfieri, on Teaching Suzuki Violin



Robin Alfieri has been teaching Suzuki violin full-time for about six years, but she’s been playing since she was six years old. “I was a Suzuki kid myself,” she says. Even as a child, she says she knew she would always play violin. But her career path started to become more clear sometime around middle school, surprisingly, when the president of the Suzuki Association of the Americas attended a concert in which Alfieri was performing. “I remember speaking to him and saying that I was thinking about becoming a violinist but not sure I wanted to teach,” she says. “And he looked at me and said, ‘If you become a Suzuki teacher, you will always have a job.’”

When she was a sophomore in high school, Alfieri told her violin teacher that she wanted to pursue it more deliberately. “My teacher looked at me with a look of complete terror and said, ‘Well, we have a lot of work to do,’” Alfieri says. “I wasn’t the best student, so I had to focus after that. Getting ready for

auditions takes years of preparation, so I'm glad I told her when I did." She went on to study music at the University of Delaware, then earned a master's of music and Suzuki registration at Ithaca College.

The program at Ithaca afforded Alfieri the chance to undertake long-term training that many Suzuki instructors haven't had. (Many study at summer institutes.) "For me, it was wonderful to have two years devoted to learning, where we could explore each subject deeply," she says. It also helped her secure her footing in the Suzuki community, which she describes as "open and very welcoming."

Although Suzuki students are known for starting young—usually around 4 or 5 years of age—the objective is not necessarily to create a fast-track for concert violinists. "The goal is to support the process of a child becoming a beautiful person. It's a gentle, nurturing method, but that's not to say that it isn't tough," she says, acknowledging the hard work that goes into learning an instrument at any age.

The method is rooted in the principles of language acquisition: About 50 years ago, Japanese violinist Shinichi Suzuki, recognizing the fact that children all over the world pick up their native languages, created a method of music instruction called the mother-tongue approach. The Suzuki method involves parent involvement, positive encouragement, and repetition. "Starting early is crucial because you can capitalize on the elasticity of the brain at that age," Alfieri says. "Students learn to play before they learn to read music. They start out learning about posture, rhythm; they learn how to play some songs by ear. A 4-year-old who can barely read words isn't ready to read music, and that's OK. We're trying to meet them where they are and work forward from that point."

Her students at CCM attend both private lessons and group classes every week, a combination that helps build a sense of community for both students and parents. The group classes also help build ensemble skills that musicians will need later on. Alfieri says she and Jenna Potts, fellow Suzuki instructor at CCM, "love to hear about our students getting together for playdates. We want to see them becoming friends, enjoying each others company, building a community and making it strong." That Suzuki community, deeply rooted as it is, extends across the state, the country, even the world. CCM's program is about 20 students strong and building, a small community nestled inside a much larger one globally.

Musical Instrument Highlight



Getting Started on Guitar

Björn Wennås started playing guitar when he was 11 years old, a child in Sweden. He played classical guitar until he was in his teens when he switched to electric and joined a rock band. “Because it was much cooler,” he says now. Whatever someone’s reason for picking up the guitar—because it’s easy to carry around, because of its adaptability to a variety of musical contexts, or perhaps because of Taylor Swift—Wennås says, “Whatever makes a kid interested in picking up an instrument is a good thing. Then it’s up to the teacher to broaden the student’s musical view and help them discover other things that are interesting about the instrument, its history, style, or techniques.”

Wennås studied musicology and jazz in Sweden, then studied jazz at the Berklee College of Music and received a masters from the Longy School of Music. In his second year of teaching at CCM, he offers this advice to those interested in getting started:

1. ●

Let your teacher help choose an instrument on which to get started. “The guitar is already a difficult instrument to get a good sound on,” he says. Steel strings are more challenging for a new student, “whereas you can find a good quality, playable classical guitar with nylon strings that even a beginner can get a good sound on. Then you can graduate to a finer instrument with time,” he recommends. “It makes it much more enjoyable.”

2. ●

Patience, grasshopper. “A lot of kids are looking for instant gratification, but you have to be patient when you learn an instrument. You have to give it at least a year before you might start to see real results,” he says, “no matter what style you’re trying to learn.”

Why Music Matters

We all know that music creates the tone of a scene and sets the mood in movies and Broadway shows. What song springs to mind that sets the mood? How does music in a television show, video game, or movie influence us?

Guess what **American Film Institute** lists as the #1 top movie song of all time?



Have fun browsing [their list of top 100 songs](#) - *"The songs on this list are from American films and set a tone or mood, define character, advance plot and/or express the film's themes in a manner that elevates the moving image art form. These songs also capture the nation's heart and resonate across the century, enriching America's film heritage and captivating artists and audiences today."*

Additional reading you may be interested in: *"Scientific and medical research helps us understand how music can so profoundly affect us physically, mentally, and spiritually."* (From *Can You Feel the Music* by Amazing Discoveries). [To read more on this topic and for a list of additional sources>>](#)

Did you know? How music affects our brains?



How does music therapy work, and what's the theory of "entrainment"? The beats per minute in a song or the type of instrument played in a song effects how the listener responds. Read more on this topic - here are two articles that may interest you:

[Music Therapy](#)

[How music can help children with special needs](#)

Upcoming Area Performance

Lexington Symphony Czechs & Diamonds, Saturday, February 11th at 8 pm at Cary Hall. A pre-concert talk with Maestro Jonathan McPhee starts at 7 pm. **[For more information](#)** David Diamond / Rounds for Strings, Leoš Janáček / Idylla, Antonin Dvořák / Serenade for Strings. Ticket prices: \$15 through \$50.

Mark Mandeville and Rianne Richards, February 18th from 8 - 10 pm at the Amazing Things Arts Center, 160 Hollis Street, Framingham, info@amazingthings.org, (508) 405-2787

Blending distinctive voices with a folk sound and a wide range of accompaniment (guitar, harmonica, ukulele, clarinet, penny whistle, electric bass), their songs have been well-received by audiences around the eastern United States since 2010. Ticket prices: \$9 - \$18. **[Hear a sample of their music>>](#)**

