

/ SPRING 2022

Upbeat



No Instrument Required – How Our Youngest Students Are Learning Music

CCM's youngest students have once again shown that you can learn music without instruments, and have a ton of fun in the process! This past March, students in CCM's Early Childhood program performed for the community in a concert with the theme of Camille Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals*. For those not familiar with the *Carnival*, it's a humorous musical suite composed of 14 movements, each based on an animal. From the mighty "March of the Lion," to the bouncing "Kangaroo," and the graceful "Swan," each movement dramatically embodies the spirit of its animal namesake.

CCM instructor Weronika Balewski, who led the performance, teaches with the Dalcroze method. The Dalcroze method uses movement and games to explore concepts of rhythm, melody, and harmony. It's an awesome way for students to be creative and explore music, while also getting up and moving around. CCM offers three different Dalcroze classes for our youngest students—Music Makers, Musical Gateway, and Rhythmic Solfege. All three groups performed in the Dalcroze Performance Day: *Carnival of the Animals*.

The performance was an opportunity for Balewski to observe her students responding to the music and demonstrating skills crucial

to musical development. One easy-to-miss but hugely important skill she emphasized was the ability to start and stop with the music. "If musical performance has to do with moving our bodies—our fingers, our lips, our breath, our vocal chords—in order to create a sound, then the first response we must practice is simply 'Go' vs. 'Stop,'" says Balewski. Once students have mastered the fundamentals of start and stop, they can progress through the more complicated musical contrasts like fast/slow, quiet/loud, and strong/gentle. A further step is to learn gradations—rather than simply fast and slow, they'll add a medium speed, or maybe an extra fast or extra slow.

A photograph of two young girls standing indoors, looking at a tablet together. The girl on the left is wearing a dark, patterned long-sleeved shirt, and the girl on the right is wearing a light-colored floral shirt. They are both looking intently at the screen. The background shows wooden paneling and a doorway.

FRONT AND CENTER, WOMEN COMPOSERS IN MUSIC

If someone asked you to name a composer, what would be the first name to come to mind? Bach? Mozart? Stravinsky? You wouldn't be alone.

A quick google search for the greatest classical composers of all time will draw a similar pattern of names. In fact, the first 50 composers listed will all have one thing in common. They are all men. An article by the BBC Music Magazine titled "The Greatest Composers of All Time" lists 50 composers—among them, only two are women. Another article on classicfm.com similarly claims to list thirty of "the greatest classical music composers of all time," and only two are women. On and on, the absence of female representation is stark.

Throughout history, brilliant women have frequently had their art cast in shadow where their male peers have received a spotlight. For hundreds of years, many women were entirely prohibited from writing music, and those that were allowed to compose were rarely published or celebrated. Despite some progress in the modern era to draw attention to the work of historical women, names like Florence Price and Hildegard von Bingen are far from commonly known. The time has long since come for their work to be as well known and

regarded as that of their male peers. After all, how can we teach young girls to see the value in their own art if we cannot even recognize the greatness of those who came before them?

This is why, in an effort to educate our students and community and diversify our own musical repertoires, CCM's April 9th recital featured exclusively women composers. For the recital, each of our students researched and presented a mini-report on the composer whose music they performed. Demonstrating the enthusiasm we have come to know and expect of our students, some even prepared PowerPoint presentations!

In organizing this recital, we at CCM recognize that this is simply a single step towards diversifying the composers represented in our school. "We've had to order music for the cellists and violinists that we didn't have at the school," says CCM Executive Director Kate Yoder. "We're encouraging the faculty to expose each other to different music so that more women and underrepresented composers can become part of the repertoire."

In order for our students to grow both as musicians and young people, they must learn about music created by people from all walks of life. After all, it's impossible to be inspired by music you have never heard. We're so excited to hear more work by women composers, not only at our April recital, but the rest of our recitals too!

LISTENING PROJECT UPDATE



THE CCM
LISTENING
PROJECT

This past January, we started up The CCM Listening Project—a program designed to give students a structured opportunity to practice their active listening skills and be exposed to a wide range of music that they might never have heard before. Each month, CCM faculty member Steve Marotto curates a playlist of music designed to broaden musical interests and writes questions for students to think about as they listen. The playlists have been emailed out to our community subscribers each month and made available on both Spotify and YouTube.

Through the Listening Project, Marotto's goal is for people to train their active listening skills, which he says must be practiced and kept in shape. Active listening is when we listen to music with intention. It's not just putting on music in the background as you work, letting the music in one ear and out the other; it means you are giving the music your undivided attention. Active listening not only helps you appreciate the music more, but is a crucial skill for musicians to better develop the more abstract musical concepts like phrasing, feel, and articulation.

In addition to active listening, Marotto hopes for the project to expose listeners to music they might never have had the chance to hear before and wants folks "to realize that music from different traditions have a lot more in common than you might realize. Music that sounds radically different on the surface may have several structural or underlying things in common."

Marotto has a lot to think about as he puts together each playlist, but he keeps an open mind and is willing to embrace the unexpected. He tries to include pieces that will interest students with various musical backgrounds by mixing up the genres—a sprinkle of folk/Americana here and a dash of classical there—to keep things fresh. He says, "I think a

good playlist is a mix of familiar and strange. The music you might know to make you comfortable mixed with curveballs to keep you off balance." Marotto recommends students set aside a chunk of time to listen where they can be fully present, and to keep in mind that "the expectation is not that you will comprehend everything after listening to it just once."

Adult CCM viola student Lois Hutchings likes to listen through the entire playlist for a month in one sitting. While she listens and watches the performances on YouTube, she notes what the music is like and how it makes her feel. "While listening, I think about what the music evokes for me in terms of emotions, sounds, nature, memories, joy or sadness, connections," says Hutchings. Her favorite piece has been Ravel's "Quartet for Strings in G major," calling it full of "fluid grace."

10-year-old CCM piano student Sam McHale has also been participating in the Listening Project. He enjoys watching the video of the performances on YouTube rather than just listening because of how it adds to the experience. He says, "You are engaged. Instead of 'a person is playing a nice song,' it's 'THIS person is playing THIS nice song.'" McHale's favorite piece so far has been Rahim AlHaj's "Eastern Love" because of its melody and rhythm.

CCM Executive Director Kate Yoder decided early on that the benefits of the Listening Project should be shared with the whole community rather than being kept to just CCM students. "Everyone can learn to be an active listener and expand their daily diet of music," she says, "Music is something that we often take for granted—we use it as background noise. But once you learn to listen actively you realize that music is much more diverse and has a lot more to offer than you could ever expect."

We're looking forward to listening to more playlists from the Listening Project as the year continues! To learn more about the Listening Project, visit <https://concordconservatory.org/student-resources/listening-project/>. And to subscribe to our monthly Listening Project email, visit us at <https://concordconservatory.org/newsletter/>.



No Instrument Required – how our youngest students are learning music

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Older musical students will recognize these concepts as things they practice in their own lessons. For example, a student will interpret and express the common Italian phrases that show up in their sheet music like “forte” (loud), “piano” (quiet), “adagio” (slow), or “allegro” (fast).

Another skill that the young students demonstrated in their performance was the ability to work with others and be creative together. “Some students hopped like

kangaroos and expressed the short jumpy melody as well as their own idea of what a kangaroo might do with a scarf (try to eat it and spit it back out!). Other students created a choreography inspired by the rock-paper-scissors game, showing their ability to express specific rhythmic patterns, memorize the form of a piece of music, and respond to three contrasting interludes with varying melodies, rhythms, and characters,” says Balewski.

One of the most important aspects of a Dalcroze class is to make music accessible and fun for our young students. Balewski uses joy itself as a tool—she teaches through

**“When we feel joy,
we learn more
deeply.”**

WERONIKA BALEWSKI,
CCM Faculty, Flute, Dalcroze &
Integrative Educator

social games and activities because the more students are having fun, the more they’ll learn and remember. Not only do students learn important musical concepts, but they will also develop positive associations with the concepts, so that when they encounter them in instrument lessons or other music classes in the future, it will be something they remember enjoying.

CCM’s Early Childhood program is ever-expanding to give children as many opportunities as possible to experience the joys of music, and get started on learning. In addition to CCM’s existing Early Childhood classes like Music Makers, Musical Gateway, and Rhythmic Solfege, this fall we’ll be adding an exciting new class called Little Notes for our very youngest learners ages 18 months to 2+ years old. Little Notes will also have a section for families with children at multiple ages to participate.

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LOCK IN YOUR SPACE FOR THE FALL!

New classes for adults include The Hootenanny and Shufflin' the Blues. For our younger musicians, there are even more early childhood classes starting with Little Notes and Family Notes. Music for everyone! Go to ConcordConservatory.org/instruction-programs/ to find your class.

THE RETURN OF LIVE MUSIC

Like the rest of the country, last spring, we wondered if we'd be able to present live concerts and student recitals this year at CCM. If we plan the schedule, book the bands, and prepare our students to perform, would Covid, with its various variants, allow the performances to occur as planned? The answer is mostly yes.



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Mile Twelve returned for the third time to CCM bringing their fresh, hard-driving spirited bluegrass music.



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The Bluegrass Band Scramble brought five amateur bands to the CCM stage to perform sets they had worked on that afternoon with their new bandmates. Musicians enter the Scramble individually, and bands are created by picking names out of a hat for each instrument, so bands have a balanced mix. The Scramble is purely for experience and enjoyment. There's no competition, just the chance to meet up and perform with other musicians from the area and try their skills in front of an audience with a full sound system and engineer.





CCM kicked off the concert season in partnership with Emerson Hospital to present Music & Medicine, an evening of conversation and chamber music. Dr. Lisa Wong of Harvard Medical School and Geoff Edgers of The Washington Post discussed the intersection of music and medicine, including what happens in your brain when you play music, which composers were also connected to the medical field, and how music has become more deeply used as a therapy to treat patients. The CCM faculty trio of Yelena Beriyeve, piano, Egle Jarkova, violin, and Stephen Marotto on piano and mandolin performed Sergei Rachmaninoff's Trio elegiaque No. 1 and works by Jean-Marie Leclair, Astor Piazzolla, and contemporary composer Judith Weir.



Where Jazz Meets Classical Concert, an evening of jazz inspired by classical music featured fresh improvisational, jazz interpretations, along with background stories of the music and their composers, presented by guest musicians saxophonist Kenneth Radnofsky and pianist Yoshiko Hiramatsu Kline performed with CCM faculty members Tsuyoshi Honjo on saxophone and Peter Evans on live electronics and bass clarinet.



Blues enthusiasts were treated to a masterclass and concert by one of the world's great blues duos, award-winners Paul Rishell and Annie Raines. Equally passionate about their craft and devoted to the study and performance of a wide range of blues styles, guitarist Paul and harmonica player Annie discussed the unique elements of acoustic and electric blues styles, highlighting the deep connection between the two, followed by a concert featuring true instrumental virtuosity.



We knew we were back when our students performed their first of 25 recitals for the year.



CCM on the Local News!

In March, WCVB Newscenter 5 Eyeopener anchor Doug Meehan came to CCM to discover the mighty and fun ukulele and participate in a Ukulele Crash Course class.

CCM faculty member Aaron Jay Myers taught our adult students—including Doug—the easy way to learn the strings. All you have to remember is GCEA, Goats Can Eat Anything! From there, they quickly learned how to strike chords, and they were on their way to creating music.



**CONCORD
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OF
MUSIC**

Concord Conservatory of Music is a nonprofit music school serving Concord, MA, and 15 surrounding communities. We are a creative and supportive community of musicians of all ages and levels. Our mission 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, CCM's community-based programming invites others to experience and appreciate not just the music but also the joy of creating it.

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

**HEAR.
UNDERSTAND.
PLAY.
PERFORM.
LOVE.
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