

/ SPRING 2024

Upbeat

The West Side Strings: Ensemble Learning Teams with Solo Lessons for a Winning Experience

Private, one-on-one instruction is the foundation of music education. It's how students learn fundamentals—the correct posture for holding their instrument, proper left-hand bow techniques, the basics of rhythm and melody, and so on.

But CCM offers so much more than that. We provide a holistic learning experience that supplements private lessons with regular ensemble performances through our West Side Strings program.

Best of all, students don't have to wait to experience the joy of playing with others. "We're differentiating ourselves by offering the opportunity to play in West Side Strings from the first month of learning how to play a string instrument," says CCM violin and viola instructor Long Okada, who oversees the program. "So almost from the very beginning our

students are learning how to play together with other students of similar age."

The benefits can be enormous. Says Shannon Coleman, whose daughter Laurel joined West Side Strings after a year of one-on-one instruction, "Laurel's interest in the violin has grown exponentially. She really enjoys playing with other kids. With West Side Strings combined with private lessons, she has a more well-rounded musical education and exposure.

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CREATIVE CONTROL

HOW COMPOSING ENGAGES, EMPOWERS, AND ENRICHES

At its best, music education is a journey of self-expression that can bring a lifetime of fulfillment. One of the ways that CCM starts young students along this path is by encouraging them to compose their own pieces. "I think composing is an immensely important part of a well-rounded musical education," says CCM Piano Chair Keith Kirchoff, who teaches composition and

musicianship. "For students of any age, composing helps them more deeply understand musical principles and the practical applications of theory. And it provides a greater appreciation for the music they perform."

Photo above: Mariana Cadavid (center) performs with the band Mes Amours, at Concord Carlisle High School.

As Putting Kids in Control

At CCM, our instructors play a crucial role in enabling students of all ages to pursue their creative impulses, regardless of their level of experience or instrument of choice. "I don't actually teach composition because I'm not a composer," says piano instructor Kitty Cheung-Evans. "But when a student wants to compose, it's my privilege to help them organize their ideas and make their compositions fluid."

Kitty contrasts the composing styles of two current students, ages 11 and 13. The 11-year-old composes pieces based on events in her own life, while the 13-year-old draws inspiration from the kinds of music she enjoys listening to. "But they both have wonderful ideas, and it's very rewarding to see them develop an idea and see it through," Kitty says.

The hardest part, Kitty adds, is to keep young students focused beyond the initial flash of inspiration and apply the necessary discipline to finish what they've started. "Their ideas tend to be very rudimentary," Kitty says. "It's often not much more than 'I like the sound of this.' So they improvise and I draw an outline for them that we can then transcribe onto the notation. We talk about structure, we talk about form, and eventually, we work out the melody and the rhythm in a way that makes their ideas fit together."

Encouraging Creativity at Any Age

It's inspiring what kids can come up with when given the opportunity. Take, for example, six-year-old Zara Teman's composition "Zombies Go to the Movies." It sprang from a collaborative exercise with her neighbor, another young piano player named Charlotte, who introduced Zara to a song called "Pumpkin Boogie." That inspired Zara to compose something with a similar feel. "Some of the sounds were spooky, so I used a lot of low notes," Zara said.

Keith Kirchoff helped bring Zara's song to life by properly formatting the music using his composition software. "Before that it was hard because I didn't have any notes to look at and I had to memorize it," Zara said.



Mariana Cadavid with her guitar instructor of 8 years, Björn Wennås.

Seeing her idea evolve into an actual written piece has deepened Zara's love of music. She says she wants to keep playing with others as she grows up and continue composing. "My next song is going to use both low and high notes," she says, "so that I also have happy-sounding notes."



Zara Teman in her lesson with her instructor Keith Kirchoff

Different Paths to the Same Place

Sixteen-year-old Mariana Cadavid took a different path to composing than young Zara. Mariana plays guitar, and her inspiration came during the isolation of Covid, not in a collaborative setting. But in many respects, the process was similar.

"I wrote my first song in eighth grade," says Mariana, who spent time on her own during the pandemic studying singer-songwriters like Dodie. She started with online guitar tabs that helped her learn the songs. From there, she started playing those chords in different patterns. Eventually she hit upon an idea she liked and wrote some lyrics to go with it.

"I thought, 'That felt really good,'" Mariana says. "So I just kept going."

Mariana usually starts with the lyrics and then adds the music. "I always liked English class, so the lyrics came pretty naturally and gave me an outlet for what I was feeling," she says. "So that actually became my motivation — to let stuff out."

Mariana says CCM has enthusiastically supported her efforts. Guitar instructor and Department Chair Björn Wennås and guitar/Rock Lab instructor Phil Sargent have been particularly helpful. "They've made me feel like I'm not alone in this," Mariana says. "And they've given me the confidence to explore."

A Hopeful Outro

Mariana's explorations have led her to bring her music to her band, Mes Amours, to perform. As she prepared for a festival performance, Phil helped her adapt one of her compositions from a solo guitar piece to a complete band arrangement. Mariana found that process so rewarding that she's considering majoring in songwriting and performance.

Now a junior at Concord-Carlisle High School, Mariana has become a role model for budding composers like Zara. Her advice? "Don't expect anything really great off the bat, but just keep practicing. And don't feel the need to stick to a cookie-cutter format. Figure out your own process. There's no limit."

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"And she always says West Side Strings is fun! I only wish I could have started her in it last year."

Creating an Age-Appropriate Ensemble Environment

Long compares West Side Strings to a community youth sports program that places students from grades 1-3 on teams that match their skill level and experience. The goal is to help students develop confidence while learning to play together. "Playing in an orchestra requires so much more than just the ability to play an instrument," Long says. "That's why, in West Side Strings, we develop our students' active listening skills, awareness of what's going on around them, and the ability to work together, including verbal and non-verbal communication. It's very much like how young athletes learn these skills by being on a team."

Says Emily Beekman, whose daughter Mae joined CCM this year as a beginner violin student in kindergarten, "The CCM lessons and West Side Strings have been really positive for Mae. The group studies program has helped her with reading music and is a good complement to private one-on-one lessons. She likes to play with others, which is an important part of her musical education—and the two parts together are important in balancing her musical education!"

Getting Ready for Game Day

Just as sports teams eventually get to apply the skills they've honed in practice to playing actual games, West Side Strings rehearsals culminate in public performances. Preparing young musicians for the concert environment is another key component of the program. "Some students love the spotlight, but others are a little more reluctant," Long says.

To help students overcome performance anxiety, Long says, "We provide as many opportunities as possible. Every week, two students play in front of the other students, choosing solo pieces that they've studied in private lessons.



West Side Strings instructor Long Okada with one of the weekly performers in the Spruce section.

In addition, Long says, "We encourage students to play for family and friends at home to build their confidence when playing before an audience."

A Shared Experience

While private instruction and solitary practice are vital elements in a successful music education, music is ultimately a form of communication. It's meant to be shared. "With most students, once they discover the joy of making music with others, they absolutely love to perform in an ensemble and collaborate through West Side Strings," Long says.

It can be a transformative experience. "We want to be sure that all of our students can perform with confidence, even the ones who were really shy at the start of the school year," Long says. "That's the beauty of being part of the team through West Side Strings."

It's another example of how CCM stays true to its roots as a community music school whose supporters recognize the importance of instilling in the next generation a lifelong love of music, culture, and shared experience.

In addition to West Side Strings, in September, CCM will add the Overture String Orchestra to the curriculum. CCM's Overture String Orchestra provides a challenging and fulfilling chamber orchestra experience while maintaining the West Side Strings philosophy of individualized instruction and a curriculum tailored to the needs of its participants. To learn more go to <https://concordconservatory.org/programs/overture-string-orchestra/>



CCM Board Welcomes New Member

JACK KELLEHER

Jack Kelleher got acquainted with CCM in 2019 when his oldest son started piano lessons with faculty member Chieko Loy. He lives in Concord with his wife Julia and their three sons. Witnessing the extensive opportunities CCM offers for music education and its positive impact on the community, he eagerly became more engaged in enriching music experiences for Concord and beyond.

"I have been absolutely amazed by what our Founder, Kate Yoder, has accomplished in terms of supporting the CCM student body of more than 500 students, the incredibly talented teacher corps, and the myriad creative ways that CCM engages with our wider community. Programs like the Ukulele classes at the Boys & Girls Club of Assabet Valley, The Listening Project, and others that share the gift

of music have deeply resonated with me. I am delighted to join the Board and support Kate's and the Board's efforts to expand CCM's reach. I am thrilled about the CCM mission, and being a Board member presents a fantastic opportunity to contribute."

Jack moved to Concord in 2017 after spending most of his professional life in Europe, where he worked as both an entrepreneur and private equity fund manager. He hopes that his experience in building startups, as well as scaling operations for growing companies, will be useful as CCM implements its long-term vision.

Jack graduated from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and has taught real estate development and risk management courses at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation, and MARKHI's joint graduate school program. Jack is the Co-Founder and President of Sharpen.com, an education technology company dedicated to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to learn to read.

Photo above: Jack Kelleher with CCM piano instructor Chieko Loy and his son Sam.



A highlight of the semester is when the kids get to show their progress and share their music with their families and the kids at the Club.



The Community Unites for Ukulele Drive

The kids at the Boys & Girls Club of Assabet Valley in Maynard embarked on a musical journey in the fall of 2022, thanks to free ukulele and music classes provided by CCM. It was a remarkable year filled with learning the fundamentals of strumming, mastering simple chord progressions, and the joy of playing music together. However, a significant obstacle stood in their way: most of the children at the Club didn't have their own ukuleles, hindering their ability to practice daily at home and impeding their progress in music.

Recognizing the need for change, CCM worked to secure donations of new and gently used ukuleles to ensure each child in the program had an instrument to practice with at home. The response from the community was overwhelming. With a convenient drop-off point at the Concord branch of Cambridge Savings Bank, 16 ukuleles were generously donated, supplemented by the purchase of an additional 9 instruments funded by the Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation.

With this newfound support, the two classes at the Boys & Girls Club made remarkable progress during the program's second year. Free from the limitations of not having their own instruments, the children could fully immerse themselves in their musical education. Thanks to the generosity and support of the community, the ukulele drive not only provided instruments but also unlocked the potential of young musicians, enriching their lives through the power of music.

HARMONY IN DIVERSITY: A VIBRANT CONCERT SEASON



Music & Folklore

During the collaborative event between CCM and the Concord Museum for the Music & Folklore concert, attendees discovered the enchanting power of music to animate narratives, forging connections to our collective heritage. Guest lecturer Frank Korom, Professor of Religion and Anthropology at Boston University, illuminated how musical stories unveil the parallels and distinctions among various societies, inviting us to embrace the diversity and depth of our cultural legacy. The chamber music performance showcased CCM faculty artists soprano Rose Hegele, violinist Angel Valchinov, and pianist Yoko Hagino, enhancing the evening's exploration of these evocative themes.



Concord Conservatory of Music's diverse concert season captivated audiences with over 40 performances. Showcasing talents from students, faculty, and esteemed guest artists, it exemplified the belief that music transcends boundaries. From chamber music to Harmolodic Jazz, and Bluegrass to innovative collaborations, CCM celebrated a rich tapestry of musical expression.



Harmolodic Microjam

The groundbreaking Harmolodic method, pioneered by the legendary horn player Ornette Coleman, merges experimental free jazz with elements of rock music and microtonal nuances drawn from diverse musical traditions spanning the Middle East, Asia, India, and Eastern Europe. This innovative fusion cultivates a fresh harmonic and rhythmic lexicon that resonates with the vibrant tapestry of global musical influences. Guest performers including electric guitarist David Fiuczynski, keyboardist Dave Bryant, percussionist Gyeongseo Mean, bassist Anderson Mirafzali, along with CCM artist faculty Tsuyoshi Honjo on saxophone, contributed to the dynamic exploration of this genre-blurring sonic landscape.

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Mile 12



The Ruta Beggars



The Bluegrass scene

CCM delighted audiences by bringing back fan favorites, the invigorating Mile 12, known for their seamless blend of originality and traditional bluegrass. Additionally, The Ruta Beggars made their eagerly awaited debut at CCM, offering a unique fusion of bluegrass and early swing, igniting the crowd and prompting them to rise to their feet.



MIT graduate student, Nina Masuelli, hardware designer performs Mini's Solo from Valis, ("The Jar" and Living AI with electronics) composed by Tod Machover.



Music & Invention

In what ways does music spark innovation, and conversely, how does invention inspire musical creativity? Renowned composer, inventor, and MIT Media Lab professor Tod Machover delved into the intricate relationship between invention and music. Audiences were treated to insights into how the creation of an original musical motif evolves into a full-length composition, how music mirrors the urban landscape, and how composers have reshaped our listening experiences while reimagining the dynamics of music creation itself. The concert, featuring CCM faculty pianist Yoko Hagino, guest violinist Charlie Lovell-Jones, guest cellist Ariana Falk, and graduate students from the MIT Media Lab, showcased a diverse array of musical explorations blending traditional and futuristic approaches.



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Concord Conservatory of Music is a nonprofit music school serving Concord and 17 surrounding communities. We are a creative and supportive community of musicians of all ages and levels. Our mission is to cultivate the love and lifelong benefits of music through high-quality, accessible instruction, performance, and community engagement.

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

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Friends like you, who value thriving arts programs and music education, keep the music alive at the Concord Conservatory of Music. **Your generosity makes music happen. THANK YOU!**

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