



# Senior

## SENIOR CLASS: CCM Benefits Students of All Ages

As a community music school, CCM is committed to serving the whole community. From pre-schoolers to retirees, students can find the right program, the right instructor, and the right approach to suit them.

### Life Lessons

For older students in particular, this is a revelation. So many students over 75 have come that we think of them as a special group: Our "Senior Class." In many cases, they're drawn to CCM by a sense of unfinished business. Seventy-seven-year-old Tracey Zellmann, for example, had always wanted to play the piano. Childhood lessons failed to engage him, however. "The teacher didn't make playing music an enjoyable experience,"

he says. "It was drudgery—just one of those things you had to do."

Kathy Johnston's childhood experience with piano lessons was even worse. "My teacher suggested that I quit," Kathy, now 81, recalls with a laugh.

All these years later, Tracey has resumed his piano lessons, with CCM instructor Masako Yotsugi, while Kathy takes guitar lessons from Lautaro Mantilla after starting with then-department chair Björn Wennås. "It's been absolutely wonderful," Kathy says. "I might have old fingers, but when I play I feel young again."

For Tracey, all it took was one lesson with Masako to realize what he'd been missing for all those years. "I thought, this sounds like ... fun," he says.



## Meeting a Need

While the rewards might be similar, each senior has a highly personal reason for taking lessons at CCM. For Kathy, it was the loss of her husband, George, a year ago. "We did everything together for 53 years and I needed something to get my life back on track," Kathy says.

For her, the choice was clear. In 1970 she'd given George a signed Yairi guitar for his birthday, with the idea they would take lessons together. But the demands of their growing careers, along with raising two daughters, left no time for guitar practice.

They kept the Yairi, however. It's the guitar Kathy uses today for her lessons. "It's very therapeutic," she says. "It gives me something to look forward to every week. I'm enjoying it immensely."

Tracey's backstory also involved a birthday gift: a Steinway piano his wife, Susan, gave him when he turned 40. He had a particular vision of what he wanted to become as a piano player. "Casablanca," he says. "I wanted to be playing 'As Time Goes By' when Ilsa came in."

But his frustrating, intermittent history with piano lessons continued. He reached a point where he considered selling the Steinway after retiring from a long career as a manager in the computer industry. But when he hired a piano tuner to get the Steinway ready to sell, "It sounded so beautiful, I thought 'Maybe I should try this again.'"

The turning point came when Susan started taking singing lessons at CCM. "One day she heard someone playing a piano in a style that suited my tastes," Tracey says. "So I decided to go to an open house."

That's where he met Kate Yoder, CCM's founder and Executive Director. "As soon as she heard what I wanted to do," Tracey says, "she said, 'Masako!'"

## Different (Key) Strokes for Different Folks

For 82-year-old Paul Lovecchio, it was "Kitty!" A retired physicist, Paul began taking piano lessons two years ago after his wife, Mary Lou, gave him a CCM gift certificate. "She said, 'You know Paul, your head is always in science. You need to get involved in something else as well.'"

At first, Paul couldn't get his head completely out of science. "I'd look at the keys and think, 'OK every octave is a doubling of the frequency, so you've got the frequency of each of the twelve



keys in the octave increasing by 6% from one key to the next higher key.' So I started thinking about frequencies and then: 'OK, so how do the frequencies of the major chord differ from that of the minor chord?' Oh, I see!

"At first that helped me bridge the two worlds," he says, "but after a while that started to hold me back."

Like Tracey, he'd been matched with just the right instructor: Kitty Cheung-Evans. "She knew when to say, 'Paul. Stop thinking so much. Just listen to the song!'" Her advice and teaching has made my piano lessons more enjoyable. I feel that I am being slowly but surely led into the new wonderful world of music!"

Joan Hilton has also taken a methodical approach to playing the piano again, starting almost a decade ago when she attended a music appreciation course with Piano Department Chair Keith Kirchoff through CCM's class at the Council on Aging.

Joan had stopped playing years ago, when she and her husband started a family. As she got older, Joan says, "I'd look at the piano and think, 'If I can't play the way I used to I don't want to play at all.'"

Keith helped her overcome her self-consciousness and gain confidence. "When I was younger I felt a lot of pressure from my parents, and then we were encouraged to play in front of people and give recitals," Joan says. "Now I'm discovering how much I enjoy practicing and playing the piano without judgment from anybody."

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Even then, she hedges a little bit. "I tell Keith I'm 90 even though I'm only 80," Joan says with a laugh. "But really, it is so nice to know that I don't have to prove anything to anyone anymore. I just play because I enjoy it. That's one of the nice things about getting older."

## Senior Privileges

**Seniors derive many other benefits from taking lessons at CCM as well. These include:**

- Joan: "It really helps with your concentration and your memory."
- Paul: "I'm getting deeper into music now than at any other time of my life. Even when I'm in church singing, I pay attention to the difference between a quarter note and an eighth note or a half note. And when my wife and I went out to Tanglewood recently, I realized that I was hearing things that I wouldn't otherwise have heard if I hadn't started taking piano lessons. Our son David has been taking jazz guitar lessons. I now enjoy discussions of music theory with him and attending jazz concerts with him. It's a whole new rich world with many different dimensions."
- Tracey: "One of the reasons I'm doing this is to engage a lot of pieces of my brain so they don't deteriorate. The working short-term memory is the big piece. But that's not the part that gives me joy."



So what does give Tracey joy? "Getting my fingers to do the right thing on the keyboard at the right time so that I can flow with the spirit of the music," he says. "I'm not quite there yet."

Still, he's had his moments—like playing "I Wish You Love," for instance. "There's a chord change in it, and the first time I was playing it well enough that it wasn't a struggle, it actually sent shivers down my spine," Tracey says. "It was so stirring. It's the little things like that happening along the way that keep me going."

## An Experience Worth Sharing

Other things that help keep CCM's seniors going include the Adult Soirée, an annual event where older students perform for each other in an informal recital setting at a student's home. It provides an additional incentive for the Senior Class to practice. "My goal for next year is to play the Moonlight Sonata," Paul says.

Executive Director Kate Yoder explains that CCM strives to offer age-appropriate events for different student groups. "Adult students don't want to perform on a recital with kids," she says. "We give them the opportunity to play for other adult students like themselves in a more social environment. They are so supportive of each other, and like the kids they are immensely proud of their accomplishments when they finish their piece."

The social aspect of events like the Soirée is another benefit for seniors. "Making music has become an integral part of their lives," Kate Yoder says, "and they want to share that experience with their friends."

## Singing the Praises of CCM

One last theme that connects CCM's senior class is a sense of gratitude. Both Tracey and Paul have lived in Concord for more than 40 years but have only recently come to appreciate what CCM offers. "I had this very busy career that took me to many different parts of the world," Tracey says, "but I really haven't spent enough time connecting myself with Concord. Now that I'm retired, it's appropriate to reach out to the culture that's here."

"I think it's absolutely wonderful to have this community resource," Paul adds.

Kathy is a relative newcomer. She and George moved to West Concord just five years ago, and she feels fortunate that they did. "Had CCM not been here, I might not have pursued guitar lessons," Kathy says. "That would have been a real loss. I still drive, but not any distance to speak of. I'm so grateful to have a place the caliber of CCM that's so convenient to get to. I hope more people in the Concord area realize what's available to them. CCM is a place for all ages and all abilities."





# KITTY CHEUNG-EVANS:

## Inspiring Students to Learn and Achieve Their Goals

**"I didn't choose this path," says CCM piano instructor Kitty Cheung-Evans. "Music chose me to be on this path."**

Kitty's journey to becoming an inspiring piano teacher wasn't straightforward. Growing up, her parents, Tim and Stella Cheung, encouraged her to pursue higher education after emigrating from Hong Kong to British Columbia. While they wanted her to earn a college degree, Kitty had other ideas: she dreamed of becoming a pastry chef in Paris.

However, her parents persuaded her to pursue education first, which led Kitty to focus on something familiar—playing the piano. She eventually earned a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Piano Performance, studying at like the University of Lethbridge, the Longy School of Music, and at the Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School in Toronto.

Though she achieved academic success, Kitty wasn't sure about a career in performance. Fortunately, teaching became her calling. Today, Kitty shares her passion for music with her students, using her own experiences to inspire and guide them on their learning journeys.

### A Teacher Who Understands Her Students

Because Kitty didn't initially know where her own path would lead, she's particularly empathetic to students who may be struggling to find theirs. She encourages her students to connect with music in their own way, treating each as an individual rather than applying a uniform teaching method. She appreciates the collaborative atmosphere at CCM, often comparing notes with other instructors on ways to better connect students with one another.

"Playing piano can be a very lonely activity," Kitty says. "Some kids love to

play in class but don't want to practice. I was one of those kids. I didn't really enjoy practicing until I was maybe 14 years old."

Kitty focuses on building connections with her students, forgetting about age or authority, and listening to them as equals. This creates a collaborative atmosphere, where the goal is to explore music together. "What are we going to discover today about music?" is a question she often asks her students, emphasizing the shared nature of learning.

This approach helps her students feel comfortable and motivated to learn, as they see music not as a chore, but as a means of personal discovery.

### Making Music Accessible – Connecting the Dots

For many of her youngest students, reading sheet music can feel overwhelming. Kitty recalls how often they tell her, "Miss Kitty, this is impossible." To demystify the notes





on the page, Kitty shares stories about composers' lives, helping students connect emotionally to the music they're playing.

**By presenting music as a narrative, she allows her students to see it as a story rather than just a series of symbols. This approach makes learning more engaging, encouraging students to interpret music creatively rather than just following instructions.**

Kitty also draws connections between music and other art forms, like painting and sculpture, helping students explore how different forms of creativity overlap. By doing so, she teaches them that music is not just about technical skill but about emotional expression and intuition—it's about learning different interpretations.

## **Celebrating Breakthroughs**

One of Kitty's favorite moments as a teacher is witnessing her students' breakthroughs. Recently, one of her youngest students, just five years old, had a "lightbulb moment." The student eagerly shared a new pattern he discovered in a song, illustrating the sense of excitement and achievement Kitty fosters in her studio.

These breakthroughs, both large and small, are what make teaching fulfilling for Kitty. By creating a supportive and explorative learning environment, she empowers her students to take ownership of their learning and reach their full potential.





## CCM Provides a Community Service—and Receives Community Support from Parents like Liz Crowell and Cheryl Flynn

Not all kids have the same interests. CCM recognizes this—and parents like Liz Crowell and Cheryl Flynn, in turn, recognize how valuable that is. Through CCM, their 16-year-old son, Matthew, has found a pathway to self-expression. “Matthew has some niche interests as far as music goes,” Cheryl says. “CCM meets those needs in a way that keeps him engaged.”

### Finding the Right Tempo

CCM has also allowed Matthew to progress at his own pace. “We’re really grateful to the school because they met Matthew where he is,” Liz says. “He took an early childhood class and attended an open house where he could try out the instruments, but he really wasn’t ready at first. So he didn’t actually start piano lessons until he was 13.”

His instructor, Chieko Loy, not only gives Matthew personalized piano lessons but also encouraged him to pursue his interest in singing. He now takes vocal lessons under Holly Jennings as well. “It’s been great,” Liz says. “Matthew has always loved singing, and this has really helped him come out of his shell.”

Along the way, Matthew has also given something back to the community. “He’s had the opportunity to give recitals and perform in nursing homes and do other forms of community outreach,” Cheryl says. “That’s an example of how the whole community benefits through CCM. That’s why we think it’s important to support CCM through our donations—because they support the whole community, not just the students.”

And by welcoming students of all ages and abilities, CCM also represents the whole community. “Their concerts feature a diverse range of musicians,” Liz says. “They really do try to reach all members of the community.”

### A Positive Feedback Loop

CCM builds its broad outreach one student at a time, sometimes in a one-on-one setting. “That works so well for Matthew,” Liz says. “Developing relationships with both his teachers has been huge. He thrives on positive feedback.”

“He and Mrs. Loy have great conversations,” Cheryl adds. “And even though she has high expectations of him, she doesn’t come across as so dogmatic that he doesn’t want to sit down at the piano. On the vocal side, Holly lets him pick the music he wants to sing and perform.”

That includes musicals from the 1920s and ‘30s. “Matthew is very interested in vocal theory,” Cheryl says. “Holly and he really get into the history behind the music instead of just the technique.”

“Some kids walk around listening to Green Day,” Liz adds. “Matthew walks around listening to Broadway.”

Whatever their passion, students can pursue it at CCM. And CCM parent supporters like Liz and Cheryl ensure that CCM’s community support is reciprocated.



# GUIDING THE FUTURE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 - 2029



Music connects us—as individuals, as families, as communities. Making music together creates moments of connection that are all too rare in our technology-intermediated world. Concord Conservatory of Music touches our community of students and families and performers and listeners with experiences that cultivate a love of music for a lifetime. What CCM does day in and day out changes lives.

CCM is at an exciting juncture. CCM will celebrate its 20th year of operation in 2025—in and of itself an extraordinary milestone for a community music school—and does so with the highest student enrollment and largest faculty and staff in its history. The school is held in high regard by students and families for the quality and experience of music education that we offer. CCM weathered the challenges of the COVID pandemic with impressive agility and did not compromise the school's financial base.



These accomplishments are the invaluable foundation for this strategic plan. Because now the question is—where to from here? CCM faces physical and financial constraints today that we must explicitly address in order to continue to grow and bring music to more members of our community. Our challenge is to continue to nurture our unique, holistic approach to music education while growing our financial base to support an expanded facility and the continued evolution of our programming. We are committed to accessible music education for all, which means serving a wide variety of music learners, including more adults, more students with special needs, more members of our community, and those who may not have financial resources.

A committee of dedicated volunteers, led by Ann Budner of ABudner Strategy Consulting, has spent this year considering this question from all angles. The committee has gathered insights from a wide range of stakeholders, including conducting a needs analysis survey and participated in a series of thoughtful discussions to craft a set of goals and



strategies that will guide the work of the organization for the next five years. This plan lays out our goals and strategies to live our mission.

This five-year plan represents CCM's commitment to moving forward strategically to serve even more music students and music lovers in our community.

**The four pillars of our plan are high-priority goals that provide a guiding framework for all our work.**

- Develop and deliver holistic musical experiences to our entire school community
- Increase awareness of CCM in new and creative ways to share the benefits of music with the broader community
- Strengthen operating infrastructure to meet existing and future demands
- Enable growth and ensure longevity through financial health

This plan is a guideline, not an edict. We will continue to change over the next five years in response to our community's dynamic needs.

We are so grateful to the Strategic Planning Committee, to the Board, to the faculty and staff, to our students and families and to our generous supporters for their contributions to this plan and to CCM's future. Thank you all for your wisdom, talent, time, and commitment to CCM.

**We are excited to see the ideas in this plan come to life.**

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kate Yoder".

**Kate Yoder**  
Executive Director  
& Founder

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Amanda Young Hickman".

**Amanda Young Hickman,**  
Board Chair







## CCM Board Welcomes New Member

# ELIZABETH J. COBBS

Growing up in Massachusetts, Elizabeth was raised with music as natural part of everyday life, participating in choir, bell choir, learning piano and playing clarinet in the marching band. Liz has provided the same energy to music education for her children, who started with violin and piano from early ages. "After moving to Concord, I was so grateful to find CCM, recognizing how dedicated the faculty is to inspire each child at their stage of engagement with music." Joining the CCM

Board is a wonderful opportunity to support our community and the many, many students and families that can build that natural identification with music in their lives.

Elizabeth Cobbs graduated with a BA from Bates College and an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Liz taught briefly at Yale University's Department of Sociology and the Center for East Asian Studies before joining Merck & Co., Inc., where her career took her to Asia and Europe. Currently, Liz consults with Tufts' Center for Biomedical System Design & New Drug Development Paradigms Initiative. Liz lives in Concord with her husband, Bart and their two children.



### THANK YOU TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# Concert & Lecture Series

## PIANO INSPIRATIONS

*Friday, October 25 at 7:30 pm*

Award-winning pianist and CCM faculty member Yelena Beriyeva will perform Brahms' introspective and penultimate piano work Klavierstücke, Debussy's Estampes, "prints" inspired by sounds of the Middle and Far East, and Mussorgsky's iconic Pictures at an Exhibition.

## MUSIC & IDENTITY

*Friday, November 22 at 7:30 pm*

Discover your listening identity with Susan Rogers, legendary producer for Prince turned neuroscientist and professor at Berklee College of Music. Join us for an insightful journey into music with performances by CCM faculty.

## PO' RAMBLIN' BOYS

*Saturday, January 25 at 7:00 pm*

Experience The Po' Ramblin' Boys' authentic bluegrass, cutting through the world's noise and speaking to the soul, from Smoky Mountains roots to global stages, now performing at Concord Conservatory!

## MUSIC & REBELS

*Friday, February 7 at 7:30 pm*

Celebrate Concord's 250th with music rebels: Monteverdi, Beethoven, and the premiere of Aaron Jay Myers' "Unrest," commissioned by CCM.

## AROUND HEAR

*Saturday, March 22, 2:00 pm*

Explore music with your senses! Families will enjoy chamber music, see images, and create floor art at this energetic concert adventure. This Somerville based chamber ensemble will dazzle you with pieces by Dvořák and local composers.

## SOUTHERN RAIL

*Saturday, April 26, 7:00 pm*

Award-winning Southern Rail returns to CCM with high-energy fun, stunning harmonies, good humor, and sparkling banjo, guitar, and mandolin. Described as "cutting edge" by Bluegrass Unlimited Magazine.

Lead Concert Series Sponsor







Music is a universal language. It can transport us; help us relive special moments; and make us healthier, happier and more connected as family, friends, and as part of a larger community.

## CONCORD CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

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](http://www.ConcordConservatory.org), or give us a call at 978-369-0010

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

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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