



Ovation

Simsbury Music and Performing Arts Newsletter



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DIRECTOR'S NOTES:

Once again, the Simsbury School District has been selected as one of the Best Communities for music education in the country. Simsbury has received this designation numerous times from the NAMM Foundation, but the nomination is reconsidered and resubmitted each year based on the quality of programming, student achievement, and community support. Our teachers, students and community members continue to excel in performance and in adjudications. Student continue to excel in the music classroom and outside of the music classroom. This issue of Ovation contains some of the highlights and accomplishments achieved this year, but there were so many we are not able to include them all. We will list additional accomplishments on our Music and Performing Arts website at a later date. These accomplishments are indicative of a strong team of music educators who desire to create quality musical experiences for their students. Simsbury Music and Performing Arts teachers are tireless in their efforts to support Simsbury students on a daily basis and they promote arts equity and numerous experiences for all students. Our students receive a rich and diverse music education that prepares them for success in life. Thank you for all of your support as a community at large, especially The Friends for Music, and please keep a watchful eye on our Music & Performing Arts webpage where individual and ensemble awards will be listed at a later date. This was an outstanding year for the Simsbury Music & Performing Arts Department and the Simsbury Community. We look forward to seeing you again in the fall!

Angela D. Griffin

Director of Music and Performing Arts K-12



SIMSBURY SINGERS PERFORM AT NAFME EASTERN DIVISION CONFERENCE 2019

Mrs. Colleen Thompson and the Simsbury Singers were invited to perform at the NAFME (National Association for Music Education) Eastern Division Conference as a featured group in the spring of 2019. The group participated in clinics with guest clinicians and in local adjudications and performances leading up to the conference performance which took place in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Invitation to perform at the NAFME Conference is an incredible honor and is a strong indicator of the outstanding level of music instruction occurring in our district. Congratulations to Mrs. Thompson and to the students who participated in this extraordinary musical opportunity. Thank you to the SHS administration, the SHS school community and the parents and community members who supported this experience for students in our district.



SHS Simsbury Singers

FRIENDS FOR MUSIC RAISE \$16,400. 00 FOR SIMSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BY ELISABETH HODSON

Simsbury Friends for Music and Performing Arts wishes to thank the Simsbury Community for supporting their first-ever fundraiser celebration “An Evening with Friends” held on March 8 at the Simsbury Inn. Over 120 guests attended the event, which bespeaks the value our community places on the performing arts.

Profits from the evening will support teacher grant requests for student enrichment in the Simsbury public schools. Ten percent of proceeds have been set aside to establish a needs-based scholarship fund to help Simsbury students to participate in music and arts activities outside the classroom.

Many thanks to our parents, teachers, business sponsors, shop owners, emcees and performers for their generosity and commitment to students in music and the performing arts. It was a positive, spirited event that brought our great community together. View photos and videos on the “Simsbury Friends for Music” Facebook page. Stay tuned for more information about “An Evening with Friends” 2020!

Simsbury Friends for Music and Performing Arts is a non-profit organization that has been serving Simsbury students district wide for over 30 years. We are made up of parent volunteers. Interested in getting involved or donating through

membership? Visit the [Friends for music website](#) and our Facebook page for more information.



SHS Music faculty members performs Claude Bolling's Suite for flute and jazz piano



SHS senior, Emily Steele performs at gala



Violinist Maria Hodson '18 entertains guests



Friends for Music president, Elisabeth Hodson and Secretary, Marianne Longo welcome emcee Bob Maxon



Current SHS Orchestra students perform chamber works at gala.



Ajeeth Vellore SHS '20

My name is Ajeeth Vellore, and I am a junior at Simsbury High School in Connecticut. In addition to my academic endeavors (I aspire to be an engineer) I am into music in a very significant way. I have learned to play and become proficient in many instruments, notably, the piano and harmonium (a reed-organ keyboard instrument). I also used to play the alto-sax, baritone-sax, the bassoon and the viola.

Most importantly, however, I have been an Indian classical vocal music student for 12 years (more specifically, a south Indian, or “Carnatic” music student), it recently came to be time for me to give my first performance. This performance, called an “Arangetram,” is one of the most important performances in the life of a Carnatic musician: it shows his or her caliber for being a seasoned musician. Getting through an Arangetram successfully proves one’s standing in the musical scene.

The word Arangetram, which comes from the ancient south Indian language of Tamil, can be interpreted in English as “climbing to the performing stage.” The word’s meaning itself is symbolic for what it actually signifies: the start of a long musical career that should be filled with prosperity and boundless opportunities. Arangetrams are usually done when music or dance students of south Indian classical styles have reached performance age (which is usually 15-18), or have completed about 12 years of intense training. These performances are usually offered in dedication to teachers, who have given students the knowledge to get to the point at which they are, and to the gods, specifically the Hindu Goddess Saraswathi, who is the patron saint of education and music, and God Shiva, who is said to have created the arts in Hindu mythology.

At performances like this, it is customary for the singer to be showered in gifts in order to congratulate them on reaching the milestone. More often than not, those gifts come in the form of money. Instead of accepting the money for myself, I wanted to do something different. My parents first presented to me the idea of taking the money that I would get and donating it to charity. I was on board with the idea, and spent time researching charities that support causes I believe in.

In my research, I happened to stumble across the webpage of Hungry for Music, and was thrilled to learn about their mission in helping underprivileged children get access to musical instruments and education. This is such a great cause that I made the decision to advocate for HFM at my concert and ask invitees to donate to it instead of giving me money. I was very happy to support HFM at this performance and hopefully at many performances to come.

TOWNWIDE ELEMENTARY CHORUS 2019

This year, the Townwide Elementary Chorus thrived under the guidance and direction of Mrs. Susan Mollica from Latimer Lane School and Mr. Jason Stammen from Henry James Memorial School. Students from all five elementary schools participated in the Townwide Elementary Chorus, singing advanced level choral repertoire. Students began rehearsing earlier in the year after school. They delivered a culminating final performance at Central School in the spring. Mrs. Mollica started the Townwide Elementary Chorus many years ago

and it has become an annual tradition in our town. Thanks to Mrs. Mollica and Mr. Stammen for their commitment in continuing this important musical experience for our students, and thanks to the Friends for Music for funding the chorus each year!



Susan Mollica conducts the 2019 Town-wide Elementary Chorus

CAAA ARTS ADVOCATES 2019 - ELISABETH HODSON AND DAVID KRUM



Angela Griffin (l) and Shannon Gagne (r) congratulate this year's Simsbury Arts Advocates.

On May 12, 2019, Mrs. Elisabeth Hodson and Mr. Dave Krum were selected as recipients of the CT Arts Administrator Association Arts Advocate Award. Mrs. Hodson and Mr. Krum were recognized at the state capitol where they received a certificate in honor of their support for the arts in our community. Mrs. Shannon Gagne, K-12 Visual Art Supervisor and Ms. Angela Griffin, K-12 Director of Music & Performing Arts read the following statements about each of the candidates at the arts award ceremony:

Elisabeth Hodson – The Simsbury Friends for Music and Performing Arts is a parent-led organization that has raised significant funding for arts-enrichment opportunities for 30 years. All music and performing arts adjudications, festival participation and guest artist clinicians are supported by the Friends. Amongst myriad requests to support enrichment opportunities and scholarships for students, Elisabeth Hodson organized and supervised a large scale fundraiser this year with the Friends for Music Executive Committee for the Simsbury Music Department, raising an excess of \$16,000! As president of the Friends she has inspired current members, welcomed new members and generated numerous creative and innovative ideas for fundraising and visibility in our community. At Ms. Griffin's request the Friends supported the development of a new memorial scholarship in recognition of the contributions Eric Dahlin, former Hartford Symphony Orchestra principal cellist who was a member of the Simsbury community. The Friends also supported and promoted the new Henry

James Memorial School Theater that will be built next year. We sincerely appreciate the hard work and efforts of Elisabeth Hodson and the Simsbury Friends for Music and Performing Arts.

Dave Krum has worked for the Simsbury Public School System for 51 years. As a history teacher, he was always very supportive of the arts activities of his students, consistently attending arts programs and shows, and providing great praise and support to his students in pursuing their creativity. As a History Department Supervisor, he encouraged his teachers to infuse multiculturalism into their lessons, and to use the arts to help history come alive to their students. When he retired from teaching, Dave stayed on as Simsbury's Director of Continuing Education. He believed he could continue to use this position to further his impact on both students and adults in the community.

When the Simsbury Arts Academy first formed as a fledgling after-school program, Dave saw its value and potential. He used his position to fight for funding, resources, fully certified arts instructors, and Board of Education support. It may have started small, but the Simsbury Arts Academy quickly blossomed. Thanks to Dave's leadership it is now one of the most respected, well-attended, all-inclusive and professionally staffed enrichment programs for art, music, and theater in Connecticut.

Dave's support for the arts as a vital component of public education has never wavered. The success of the Simsbury Arts Academy is just one powerful example of the impact he has had on generations of students in our community.

Elisabeth and Dave represent the spirit of the community in supporting the arts for all of our students. They have worked tirelessly in order to support arts enrichment opportunities in our community.

HJMS MUSICAL – JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH



Scenes from *James and the Giant Peach*

The Henry James Memorial School musical, *James & the Giant Peach, Jr.* was a beautiful rendition of the popular childhood story by Roald Dahl. Students from HJMS brought the story to life under the direction of Mr. Michael Hunter as Director, Mr. Jason Stammen as Musical Director and Ms. Melissa Jean Gonzalez, Choreographer. HJMS students performed four shows over the course of one weekend. An amazing team of parents designed and made costumes for all of the students. HJMS students portrayed the magical journey of young James with imaginary lifelike garden bugs as friends and his escape from two mean

aunts who gained custody of James in the wake of his parents' death. James perseveres in the wake adversity and the story ends happily. Students auditioned and rehearsed for several months leading up to the performance. Production Manager, Ms. Mary Boucher supported students during the after school rehearsals. The cast, ensemble, and technical crew did an outstanding job, demonstrating their ability to work together and to successfully perform before a large audience. Popular musical numbers from the show such as "Right Before Your Eyes" and "Shake it Up" dazzled the audience. Congratulations to the HJMS student performers, the production team, the SHS and HJMS Student Tech Crews, parents, volunteers and the HJMS Administration for making this experience possible for our students!

SHS SPRING PLAY - THE LARAMIE PROJECT 2019



The SHS Spring Play "*The Laramie Project*" was presented on the SHS main stage April 26 – 28. The story centers on the town of Laramie's response to the brutal beating and murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay college student attending the University of Wyoming. The play, under the direction of Dr. Stuart Younse and visiting guest artist, Dr. Sherry Boyd, involved a vivid portrayal of the responses of the town members to the murder, the responses of Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson who were arrested for the murder, and the community views surrounding LGBTQ+ issues. A talk-back community conversation with students, directors and audience members was held after several performances. The play was performed in the wake of diversity issues and diversity training sessions that are currently being conducted at Simsbury High School. This was the perfect time for the students and the faculty to be involved in the work and the presentation of this riveting story. Simsbury parent, Mrs. Diana Yeisley, had the following to say about the performance. "This is such a powerful and important piece

of art and theatre and these high school students not only paid tribute to Matthew Shepard, but did so in a way that honored and respected this story with emotion and maturity that is beyond their years. I commend Dr. Younse, Dr. Boyd, Simsbury High School, the Theatre Department and all of the students involved in tackling such an undertaking and I am proud that this show was performed at our school." Congratulations and thank you to Dr. Younse and the students for their commitment in bringing this important play and community conversation forward.

TOWNWIDE ORCHESTRA FESTIVAL 2019 FEATURES IRISH FIDDLE MUSIC

Orchestra students enrolled in Simsbury's elementary, middle and high school string programs participated in the 2019 Townwide Orchestra Festival funded by the Simsbury Friends for Music & the Performing Arts. The program and preceding clinics featured Jeanne Freeman, an Irish Fiddle expert, along with traditional artist, Dan Ringrose on guitar and vocals, and Loretta Murphy on concertina. In the days before the concert, students worked with the artists in clinics where they learned to play Irish fiddle music in the traditional style. The culminating concert featured orchestra ensembles playing Irish tunes in what is traditionally called an Irish session.



Students join Jeanne Freeman and Dan Ringrose at the Townwide Orchestra Festival

One of the strengths of the arts and experiences such as this one, is the exposure to music from different cultures and the approach to music-making that connects students and performers all over the world. This was an engaging and exciting experience for students as they learned about the music of Ireland as well as the culture which informs that music. Elementary students met in several after-school sessions where they learned to play by ear, memorizing some of the tunes. They sang a traditional Irish tune "Tell Me Ma" directed by Dan Ringrose who accompanied them on guitar. Jeanne Freeman was the master of ceremonies for the concert, educating students and audience members about Irish fiddle music. The program was a successful learning and performing experience supported by the Friends for Music who regularly support guest artists such as these in Simsbury music classrooms. The Simsbury music teachers Dr. Ryan Ford, JoAnna Ferrari, Audrey Lesieur, Linda Beers, and long term substitutes Gabriel Remillard and Kevin Huhn worked with the students and organized this multi-cultural event. Simsbury students and award winning fiddle solists, Emilie and Nora Carroll were featured on the program, playing along with the professional musicians on the Irish Reels "Sally Gardens/Otter's Holt/Last Night's Fun". The overall program was spectacular, highlighting the richness of the Simsbury orchestra program and the benefit of being exposed to new musical genres. Thank you to the Friends for Music and the Simsbury music teachers for making this rewarding experience possible for our students.

HARTT SCHOOL COMPOSER VISITS HJMS



Dr. Ken Steen visits HJMS composers

Professor Ken Steen from the Hartt School at the University of Hartford worked with Henry James Music Composition students in a clinic session funded by the Friends for Music. HJMS Music Composi-

tion teacher Mrs. Marilyn Cannata requested the visiting artist and session via a funding request from The Friends for Music. Students shared their compositions with Professor Steen in class where they received feedback in a class discussion about composition options and the thought process surrounding composition. Thank you Professor Steen, Mrs. Cannata, the HJMS Administration and the Friends for Music for supporting this project.

TAIKO DRUMMING 2019

Squadron Line third grade students recently participated in Japanese Taiko drumming workshops with Colleen Casey-Nelson. Ms. Casey-Nelson is a professor at CCSU and the Hartt



Taiko Drum workshop at Squadron Line

School of Music. She the recipient of an Arts Fellowship from the Council for Basic Education and has traveled to Japan to study Japanese folk music. Ms. Casey-Nelson draws upon global inspirations for nurturing personal growth and community connections through music. The sessions, organized by Squadron Line teachers Miriam Schreiber and Lisa Grant, were held in conjunction with the third grade curriculum which studies Japanese culture.