Fall 2020

Hello from MAG!

Music, whether shared on empty streets and across picturesque balconies, or enjoyed virtually, has been an uplifting constant for many of us this year. Some of us may have enjoyed musical performances or discovered new musical groups, albeit online. Others may have participated in a virtual concert for the first time. In this spirit, MAG is supporting the innovative ways that the school music program can evolve, connect with students, and provide the benefits of music education in the district's current virtual learning environment.

For a start, Mrs. Pamela Wright (Elementary Music and MS/HS String Director) and Mr. Darren Dix (MS/HS Band Director) have both created one-stop, virtual music classrooms where students regularly 'meet' with their teacher and Band or String group, and access all their music assignments. There are 125 Band and String students this year.



With class time all online, teachers have focused on music history, note reading, major scale patterns, and music theory, using tools in music software like Essential Elements and SmartMusic. With your support, over the last two years, MAG helped purchase Chromebooks for the music program, as well as SmartMusic software, for which MAG continues to pay annual subscription fees for students.

Teachers have kept lessons fun through activities such as "Staff Wars," a note reading competition, and a role-playing project where students take on the role of Band Conductor and select pieces to create a concert.

Hands-on playing is still a priority. By late October, our Band and String students in 6th-12th grades will have their chosen instruments to practice with at home. Mrs. Wright and Mr. Dix will be online cheerleaders, encouraging students to practice and record themselves with guidance given virtually. If you know a music student, please send them some encouragement!



Elementary students can join the fun. Because Orcas Island School District was able to provide a Chromebook for every elementary student to use, Mrs. Wright saw the chance to encourage singing at home by assigning songs to learn and record at home to be emailed to her. She hopes that the thrill of being in a virtual concert will encourage students to sing at home.

In the Spring, when school concerts were cancelled, both teachers learned to use a trial version of a powerful editing software, FinalCut ProX, to create composite videos that would showcase our students' musical skills, and begin to encourage students to try out studio recording. Given this opportunity for our teachers and students to enrich and diversify their music skills, MAG has purchased both the software and new desktop Apple computers for the music program. We look forward to sharing the concerts that our teachers and students will create together!



Your support for keeping music education a constant for public school students on Orcas is more important than ever—for the immediate socio-emotional benefits of music that we already know so well, and for sustaining music knowledge, interest and skills through a time when students cannot practice or perform together.

A special thank you goes to the businesses that sponsor 'Music Student of the Month' ads in the Islands' Sounder. At this time, when our students are not practicing together, it is invaluable that they be recognized in the community for their practice and perseverance.

We can sustain and even grow the music program with the opportunities this virtual environment brings, so that students are ready for inspiring new musical experiences when they can return to school physically. It is with the support of our music-loving 'village' that MAG has been able to respond to the challenge of this moment. Thank you for the music!

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Music Advocacy Group

2019-2020 Student Accomplishments

November 2019: SJMEA Honor Orchestra and Honor Band - 2 String and 2 Band students auditioned and were selected for participation.

January 2020: SJMEA High School Solo and Ensemble. Orcas student musicians in both Band and String programs received "Superior" or "Excellent" ratings.

February 2020: SJMEA Junior Solo and Ensemble. Both Band and String students received high ratings.

January 2020: Two String students performed at Carnegie Hall.