



Newsletter

September 2016



Hunterdon
ACADEMY OF THE ARTS

Flemington & Lebanon



Newsletter

The Monthly Newsletter of *Hunterdon Academy of the Arts*

September 2016

How to Develop a Taste for Classical Music

September is not only Back to School month but it also happens to be Classical Music Month! When the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce invited me to write an article on the subject, I was flattered and gladly accepted. I'd like to share this short piece with you here:

Let's face it: unless you are a professional musician, or you grew up listening to classical music with your family, you probably don't care much for it, and attending a concert can be a challenge. Then again, you're probably aware of all the positive benefits this kind of music can provide to your brain, so you may feel you should listen to it more often. Since there is a lot of information online on the benefits of music, there is no need to talk about it here. Rather, I will try to help you get through a music performance, and actually enjoy it! So, here's the big ugly truth: listening to classical/serious music can sometimes feel like eating broccoli. It's good for you, but many of us would rather have pizza, chocolate, french fries, steak...The question then becomes: how can you actually start craving what's good for you? Here's how:

- You have to develop a taste for it--which takes time, so start with a few bites.
- You have to pick something that tastes--or in this case--sounds good to YOU;
- You should learn a bit more about it, and
- It should be prepared by a talented music professional

What do I mean by developing a taste for it? I am pretty sure that when you tried one of the following foods for the first time, they did not taste great--especially if you were a kid. Coffee, alcohol, broccoli, oysters, maybe even a medium rare burger you now love so much--all tasted weird at first, correct? It

took time to develop a taste for all these foods. This equally applies to "serious" music. Even though I am a professional musician myself who LOVES classical music, I will admit there was a time when I would fall asleep during a long concert and could not wait for it to end--which brings me to my second point:

You have to pick something that sounds good to YOU and then learn more about it! My favorite composer is Beethoven. I also love Chopin, Scriabin and Rachmaninoff, but Mahler's music (for example) makes me kind of anxious (so does beer, by the way). I can appreciate it, but it's just not my taste. You can develop your own taste by listening to a classical music station on "Pandora" 5-10 minutes a day and giving the "thumbs up" to pieces that you like. My advice: go for what makes you feel something, not necessarily for the popular pieces you often hear on people's ring tones. Listen with your gut, not with your brain.

Lastly, even the tastiest, fresh, locally grown, juicy organic vegetables can be ruined by an amateur cook. You've seen it happen, you know what I'm talking about. Similarly, a beautiful piece of music can be butchered when played by unskilled musicians. If you want a really meaningful experience, go to a great professional performance by New Jersey Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, or any of the visiting European professional orchestras. They are worth every penny and I promise you will NOT fall asleep. If you follow my recipe above and start training your ears ahead of time, you will be hooked for life. Does this mean you should only attend high-end concerts and not go to local events? Well, do you only eat at 5-star restaurants? Probably not. So, do attend your child's recital, attend a library performance and do support a local amateur orchestra! It will be a fulfilling experience in a very different way and a good education for you. Either way, start listening, my friend, you will be glad you did. Happy September!



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Student of the Month: Leo Allentoff

This month we're congratulating Leo Allentoff on winning August's Student of the Month Award!! Leo is 12 years old and has been attending HAA for the past 7 years.

What instruments do you play? I play the piano and clarinet.

What do you like about each instrument and how do you find time to practice both? What I like about each instrument is that they both have a big range of notes they can play. Also both instruments have a very unique sound and can be used to play many different styles of music. I feel that if you really enjoy playing an instrument, it is very easy to find time to practice. This is because you can't wait to play and so the first opportunity you get to practice, you will want to do it. This is the case for me.

Your sister also takes lessons here and music seems to run in the family. What are your family's favorite music activities? Do you ever play together? My family's favorite musical activities are listening to various types of music and playing instruments together. My dad sometimes plays with me and my sister. He likes to accompany me by playing on the piano while I play on either the piano or clarinet. We also sometimes have little recitals where my sister or I play in front of the whole family.

You've been with us for many years. What do you like about being part of Hunterdon Academy of the Arts? The thing I like about *Hunterdon Academy of the Arts* is that all of the teachers I have had so far are friendly, motivating, and help me really improve in my playing.

What kind of music do you like to listen to in your free time? I listen to classical and pop music in my free time. I especially like listening to Baroque composers like Bach and Handel.

What would you like to do when you grow up? Any plans to study music? I would like to be a chemist or an engineer when I grow up. While I don't have plans to study music professionally in the future, I will still enjoy playing and listening to music.

Other than music, what are your favorite activities? One of my favorite activities besides music is playing soccer and watching sports; I'm a big fan of NASCAR racing and the New York Mets. I also enjoy sitting down and reading a good book.

What else would you like to tell us about yourself? I enjoy going to music concerts and watching live productions of musicals. I am learning Chinese and I have been to China five times. This is because some of my relatives live in China. I play clarinet in my school band and I have performed piano duets with classmates at school which were played over the loud speaker so everyone at my school could hear us. My goals as a musician are to be able to play challenging pieces on the piano and clarinet.



Student Achievements

Acting student **Matthew Sigler**--an actor/singer/dancer triple threat--was invited to perform in the selective final performance at the summer theatre workshop he attended at Centenary College. He also recently wrote, directed and performed in a series of *YouTube* videos he developed portraying an original character he workshops during his lessons.

Brandon Forleo, a voice-over Acting student, recently landed professional (paying) voice-over work in a *YouTube* series!
CONGRATS to Matthew and Brandon, as well as their HAA Acting Instructor--Kristen Blossom!

Thank You for Your Referrals!

A BIG THANK YOU to several individuals, for referring their friends to *Hunterdon Academy of the Arts*! It's wonderful to have such strong supporters who spread the word about HAA in the Hunterdon community! We'd like to give a special shout out to:

Amy Lincoln, Maria Wright, Emily Rush, Andrea Doyle, Madelyn Arcurio, Paola Montes, and Monika Kelly. THANK YOU!!!

Save the Date!

Friday 9/2 Jam Session, 7:15-8:15pm

Monday 9/5, CLOSED for Labor Day

Week of 9/5, MusikGarten Demos

Wednesday 9/7, True Voice Project rehearsals begin, 6:30-8pm

Thursday 9/8, Show Kids Choir starts

Week of 9/11, Acting, ActinGarten, and Keyboard classes begin

Week of 9/19, MusikGarten classes begin

Birthdays in September

Kaitlyn Jones; Kristine Saurborn; Isabel Adams; Emma Sarinick; Enrique Campos; Angelina Dyson; Victoria Coey; Abigail Washuta; Isabella Flood; Tushya Mishra; Sofia Bavosa; Jackson Dannenfelser; Zander Dominczyk; Ethan Weiner; Nicholas LaBelle; Aidan Berson; Alan Calvo; Kristen Deblasi; Annalise Houghton; Shival Panchal; Olivia Viscomi; Kirsten Lelli; Monna Li; Sophia Loewenstein; Sean Souvenir; Michael Giannouris; Spencer Asch; Anna Hansson; Kiernan Kelleher; Swati Mehta.
Yahya Ozair

★ HAPPY ★
BIRTHDAY!

Thank You!

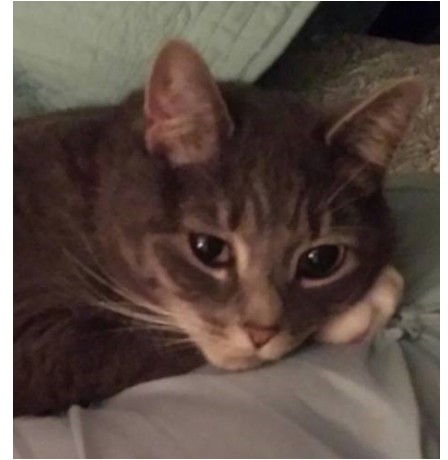
Faculty Achievements

In addition to being a member of the HAA Voice Faculty, **Brett Pardue** has been invited to join the voice faculty at Lehigh University. Congrats, Brett!

Pet of the Month: Sweetie Pie

Congrats to Sweetie Pie for winning the September Pet of the Month Award! Her Mom, Dinah Betsker, tells us, “when Sweetie Pie is not prowling the back yard, she often sleeps at the foot of the bed. Sweetie loves a nice long nap. She is very friendly and keeps her family clean, often by washing our faces with her rough tongue.” AWWWWW

Don't despair if your pet isn't featured in this issue. We will keep all materials on file for future issues! Do you love your pet and can't wait to tell us all about him/her? Just visit www.HunterdonAcademyOfTheArts.com/MyPet and fill out the form on that page! If we choose your pet as the next *Pet of the Month*, we will feature him in the upcoming issue of the *HAA Newsletter* and send you a **\$25 Gift Card!**



www.HunterdonAcademyOfTheArts.com/MyPet

Summer Referral Contest: Win a FREE Fender Acoustic Guitar AND A FREE Month of Lessons on September 30 !

This is **YOUR BIG OPPORTUNITY** to get started on the guitar. We'll give you everything you need—a great **Fender Acoustic Guitar** complete with accessories **AND a FREE MONTH of weekly 30-minute Guitar Lessons with an HAA instructor of your choice!** To enter the Summer Raffle for this amazing prize, just refer your friends to HAA! It's easy

A Value of \$390!

Referrals Are a Win-Win, Each and Every Time

As a sign of our appreciation, we are rewarding **both you and your friend with a \$25 check** when s/he enrolls in our programs! Refer as many friends as you like!



www.HunterdonAcademyOfTheArts.com/Referrals

Faculty Showcase: Kristen Todd, Piano

This month, we are spotlighting Kristen Todd, one of our most successful Piano Teachers. We're fortunate for having Kristen on board, and can't wait to share with you the interview we had with her.

When did you start playing piano and what made you fall in love with it? I started playing piano at the ripe old age of 9 (relative to many children who now start at the age of 4 or 5). Believe it or not, I really disliked practicing and my piano teacher was extremely patient with me for the first few years of lessons. Then, in about 7th and 8th grade, I played a few pieces by Johann Burgmuller, and I absolutely LOVED playing them. I became much more willing to practice after having played “real” literature and learning that I could challenge myself to longer and more difficult repertoire. My wonderful and patient teacher nurtured me and gave me as many opportunities to perform for others as she could (this included playing at nursing homes, church services, as well as local competitions

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Award-winning Hunterdon Academy of the Arts has campus locations in Flemington (NJ) and Lebanon (NJ). Founded in 1981, we are the largest performing arts school in Hunterdon, serving students of all ages and levels of ability. The school is particularly well known for its high-quality Music lessons and classes, but has more recently added Acting instruction to its services.



Faculty Showcase (continued)

and recitals). I am so grateful to her for nurturing me as a piano student, but more importantly, nurturing me as a growing human-being and being aware of all my other interests such as marching band, 4-H, working on the farm, and my school's Academic Challenge team.

You have a Master's Degree in piano pedagogy, so you have many years of studies under your belt. What would be the one (most important) thing you learned from your students, though, and not from your professors? Ah, excellent question, and I'm so glad you asked it, because I think that this is one of the most important ideas in my teaching philosophy. I continue to learn things from my students every single day, whether small or big, music-related or non-music related). And each thing that they teach me is so enriching. They might teach me about a rule in the game of baseball, or who has the best record in the NFL, or about geography, or science, or about some new band/artist that they love. Every single one of these is just as important as the other because they teach me about being a multifaceted human being and the power and potential that we as humans have with our interests and love for other subjects and aspects of life. I learn things about learning on a daily basis (how does each student learn, and how can I foster and challenge them in a way that is well-balanced?) And through the students' learning, I also learn about my own learning!

You are a classically trained pianist, but you also accompanied one of our teacher bands in the past. What was that like? Awesome! Actually, I was in a band in high school, and we played a lot of cover songs of the

Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Oasis, Led Zeppelin, Green Day, My Chemical Romance...and the list goes on. So playing in the band at HAA with other teachers was a great chance for me to play like that again! I love playing rock music and it keeps my ears sharp (listening carefully to the others, and also learning songs by ear versus notation), but most importantly because it is so much FUN!

What do you enjoy about being part of the Hunterdon Academy of the Arts community? Learning and connecting! Just as I learn from my students, I also learn from others at HAA. Speaking with other teachers, parents, students, and staff about their lives and experiences helps me to feel more connected to others instead of being isolated in some piano room for many hours a day. I also love forming relationships with other teachers and staff who are passionate about music and the arts, and serving the students of the community ☺

