

iMA Newsletter

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Winner of the **York Region Character Community Award**.
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International
Music
Academy

Year XXIV, No. 1

January 2021



WELCOMING OUR NEW STUDENTS

Manash Mathan, violin
Harshika Mathan, violin

IMA STUDENTS BIRTHDAYS IN JANUARY

Jayden Yang, Jadyen Yang, James Au, Steven Leung, Deeksha Yelamanchi, Lucy Zhao, Athena Du Gauthier, Abigaëlle Du Gauthier

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

IMPORTANT DAYS IN JANUARY

January 1. *New Year's Day.* IMA is closed.
January 6. Christmas (Orthodox).

NEWS

GET 3 FREE LESSONS WITH THE PURCHASE OF A PIANO

If you are ready to purchase a high quality pre-own piano through one of the IMA partners, 3 of your lessons at the IMA will be free. Call our Office or e-mail Office@InternationalMusicAcademy.ca for more information.

Pre-own piano is a great investment that comes at an attractive price, with a free tuning and delivery.

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL AND COMPETITION



May 10 - May 30, 2021
Markham, Ontario

in-person or via recorded performance

Registrations deadline: April 18, 2021

*piano | voice | strings | woodwinds | brass | harp
guitar | percussion | conducting | composition
chamber music | master classes*

JURORS

Esteemed professors from the University of Toronto, York University, the Royal Conservatory of Music, the Glenn Gould Professional School, musicians from the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company.

AWARDS

Prizes and Scholarships, Recitals, Concerts, Workshops
Career advancement, Marketing and promotions



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GET A \$30 CREDIT ON YOUR NEXT MONTH TUITION

We have been very pleased with the continued success of our students. They have improved a great deal and we share their excitement with their families, friends, neighbors, and schoolmates. We appreciate your interest towards our programs and services. We are always very happy to welcome new students of all ages, levels, and instruments to the iMA. **Please tell your friends about your experience with the International Music Academy.**

Do you know someone who is thinking of taking music lessons or who has **children** who may be interested in getting their hands on a musical instrument or singing? Do you know a **teenager** who needs a high school OAC credit? Do you know an **adult** who has wanted for a long time to learn how to play a musical instrument but has never had the time or inclination? **Please tell them about the IMA.**

As an appreciation for your referral, we will give you a **\$30 credit** for each new student who registers at the International Music Academy as a result of your referral.

PERSONALIZED IMA GIFT CARD



The IMA offers personalized Gift Cards that could be used as thoughtful birthday, holiday, bar/bat Mitzvah, graduation gift or for any other occasions as well as to encourage someone to start learning a musical

instrument or singing. The card can be used for any products or services.

The gift card is available for **any amount**. As cards are personalized with the name of the person who will receive it as well as with the name of the person who purchase it, requests have to be made 1 day in advance. Cards can be ordered in person, by phone at 905.489.4620 or by e-mail at info@InternationalMusicAcademy.ca. At the time the card is ordered, a non-refundable \$5 deposit is required. The full value of the card is paid upon pick-up (and the deposit is credited towards the purchase price). Payments can be made by any major credit card, cheque or cash as well as through the accounts of the IMA Clients.

FOLLOW US ON

Stay in touch and follow the IMA latest news on Facebook. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/International-Music-Academy-1944567629154903> and become a friend of the International Music Academy.

COMPOSERS' ANNIVERSARIES IN JANUARY

4, 1710	PERGOLESI, Giovanni Battista
4, 1874	SUK, Josef
6, 1838	BRUCH, Max
6, 1872	SCRIABIN, Alexander
7, 1899	POULENC, Francis
25, 1913	LUTOSLAVSKI, Witold
27, 1756	MOZART, Wolfgang Amadeus
31, 1797	SCHUBERT, Franz Peter

Where you born or do you know someone who was born on the same day as these famous composers? Drop us e-mail at info@InternationalMusicAcademy.ca to let us know.

FEATURED TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Mariko Der Avanesian, B.F.A., D.Mus
Piano Studies, Music Theory



Born in Japan, Ms. Der Avanesian earned Bachelor of Fine Art from Osaka College of Music. She continued her study in Paris, France at *Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris* for *Diplome Supérieur d'Execution (6eme division professionnelle, piano performance)*. She has performed numerous concerts, recitals and also appeared as a

concerto soloist in Japan, France and Canada. She participated in several music festivals such as the International Keyboard Institute and Festival (New York), the Toronto Summer Music Academy and Festival (Toronto), Scotia Festival of Music, *Academie International d'interpretation de Piano* (France) and *Flaine Musique Festival* (France). Among her teachers were world-renowned pianists Alicia de Larrocha, Menahem Pressler (Beaux ArtsTrio), Peter Frankl and Andre Laplante. As a piano teacher, she has more than 25 years of experience and

successful in teaching any level of students at any age. She has a great ability of communication with students to tailor the lessons to fit each student's needs, goals and skills. Her passion and love of music transforms any music lesson to a joyful musical experience filled with beautiful artistic moments and fun challenge. Any student will find her/himself to be a motivated self-learner. Ms. Der Avanesian is a registered teacher with the Royal Conservatory of Music.

Ms. Der Avanesian was happy to answer a few questions for our students and parents:

1. What do you like most about teaching? Music is a universal language. Teaching music for me is talking about it regardless of any difference as human. That gives me the joy of sharing something very precious we all have in our heart. That's what I love.

2. How do you inspire students to practice more? I set a small goal to reach each student's dream. A little step makes a big difference. I want them to feel it. A little victory leads you a real achievement. Achievement gives you a satisfaction. Happy feeling equals to the motivation.

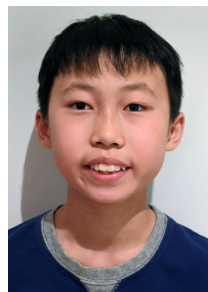
3. What roles does performance play in student's development? When I teach, performance is in my mind always. For me, practicing means preparing for the performance. I assess what needs to be done to make her/his performance better at each student's current developing stage. This is what I teach at each single class. From another angle, I absolutely know what the students will go through to preparing performance and experiencing real performance so it makes me possible to prepare each student in the best possible condition.

4. Who are your favourite composers? There are a lot! Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Albeniz, Mozart, Beethoven, Scriabin, Brahms, Ravel, Debussy, Faure, Falla, Scarlatti, Bartok, Dutilleux, Franck, Berg, Shostakovich and on and on and on..... :)

5. What was the last piece of music (sheet music or a recording) you purchased for yourself? Bach The Cello Suites by Yo-Yo-Ma.



FEATURED STUDENT OF THE MONTH



James Au

• **What instrument do you play?** I play the piano.

• **How long have you taken lessons?** I have been taking piano lessons at the IMA since I was 4 years old.

• **Who are your favourite musical artists?** My favourite musical artist is Jeremy Zucker.

• **What are your other hobbies, besides music?** My other hobbies are playing basketball and video games.

• **Favourite food?** Sushi!

• **What is the coolest thing you've learnt in your lessons in the past three months?** The coolest thing I have learned playing songs with different emotions.

• **Do you have any performance coming up?** Nothing yet but I hope to be able to perform in public over the summer.

E-mail to info@InternationalMusicAcademy.ca a photo of yourself (or your child) together with the answers of the questions above. The deadline for submissions is the 15th of every month. We will feature you in one of the next issues of the newsletter.

FEATURED ARTICLE

Puppy Pads and Slit Masks: How COVID Changed the Look of Music Education

COVID-era problems put pressure on teachers to work creatively, while fearing for the future

[EMILEE LINDNER](#) | GRAMMYS

The Royal Conservatory of Music presents 21C Music Festival

The 21C Music Festival returns to Koerner Hall in January 2021! Today's most fearless musicians bring us fresh new sounds and ideas. The eighth edition of the festival will feature online performances by Eve Egoyan, Morgan-Paige Melbourne, and the Glenn Gould School New Music Ensemble.

Those living in Kingsman, Arizona, shouldn't be surprised if they hear 30 kids yelling simultaneously from Lee Williams High School. That's just Shannon Bascombe's marching band letting out their COVID-19 frustrations.

"The kids were like, 'Hey, Ms. B, can we, like, scream into the void for 10 seconds at the beginning of practice?'" Bascombe recalled. "'Yeah, sure, I'll give you guys 10 seconds to just yell it out.' ... Then they'll start learning drill."

The coronavirus pandemic has made returning to school this fall a touchy debate. With each district whipping up its own tentative plan, students are either attending school armed with masks, learning virtually from home or doing a half-and-half schedule. They've pushed start dates, altered schedules and introduced new technology. Several schools contacted for this story set a date in September or October to reassess and adjust, aiming for in-person instruction by 2021. Needless to say, a little scream therapy is warranted—not just for students, but for teachers, parents and administrators as well. So how does music education fit into the new school plans? Unlike math or history, which can rely on individual study, collaborative ensembles like band, chorus and orchestra cannot. With social distancing measures in place, getting a band of 50 students placed six feet apart in one room is, well, impossible. Not to mention the whole aerosol concern with kids blowing on their horns. Online group rehearsal doesn't work either, due to latency issues.

With those difficulties in mind, districts across the country have **already cut arts** programs. And those teachers who still have their jobs are feeling the pressure to keep them by proving their worth.

"[Parents are] OK with the core teachers being at home and being able to give assignments," says Jake Olimpi, marching band and orchestra director at Marple Newtown High School in Pennsylvania. "But what is the art teacher doing, what is the music teacher doing? They're getting paid and where's the result?"

That pressure, atop the duty to keep students safe, healthy and engaged has become the new challenge for teachers, who are also haunted by the pandemic's long lasting effects on music education.

Masks on Instruments and Puppy Pads

The spread of aerosols, a.k.a. air and saliva, forced the Centers for Disease Control to recommend the six-foot social distancing rule months ago. But when it came to the performing arts, there was little scientific evidence on how singing and instrument playing contributed to aerosol spread. A study from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), published without peer review in July, gave music teachers some answers.

Conducted by the University of Colorado Boulder, **the study** found that instruments released fewer aerosols if they were masked at the bell. They found even fewer aerosols when the player wore a slitted mask. In order to return to in-person ensembles, authors of the study also suggested these points:

- Musicians must stay six feet apart (nine feet for trombonists)
- Bell covers should have a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 13 (although any covering is better than none)
- Spit valves should empty into absorbent sheets like puppy pads
- Rehearsal times should be limited to 30 minutes
- Instructors should wait one HVAC air change between classes
- HEPA filters should be in rehearsal spaces
- Outdoor rehearsals are recommended over indoor ones

With the scientific guidance, teachers got to work crafting what fall 2020 would look like... and now that school's back in session, music classes certainly don't look like they did before. At Bascombe's school in Arizona, they're following the NFHS guidelines nearly to a T.



The students at Tarpon Springs Leadership Conservatory for the Arts stick to their cones and try out their new bell covers.

Credit: Anna Ottens

"When they come into the room, they have to wash their hands, drop their stuff off," Bascombe says. "We go through the symptom checker from the Mayo Clinic every day when they walk into the room... All of the doors are propped open so the kids have minimal touch. There's hand sanitizer everywhere. Mouthpiece cleaner everywhere."

Bascombe's woodwinds, brass, percussion and colorguard all get their own room. Every Friday, she spends an additional hour and a half disinfecting each room, including the bathroom her students use.

At the Southern Nevada Homeschool Performing Arts, program director Bonnie Buhler-Tanouye says brass players wear slitted masks, akin to "boys' underwear," and flute players wear shields. She says parents are willing to do even more in order to get their nearly shutdown Las Vegas music scene rolling again.



The students at Southern Nevada Homeschool Performing Arts wear face shields and slitted masks on the first day of band practice.

Courtesy: Bonnie Buhler-Tanouye

"One of the parents I was talking to the other day, because I was reminding her of masks for her trumpet player, she said, 'You know what, put me in a hazmat suit, if you have to. Whatever we have to do to get back to playing music together,'" Buhler-Tanouye recalled.

The NFHS study deemed outdoor rehearsal better for dispersing aerosols. Summer band camps served as positive test runs for the rest of the school year, with students respectively keeping their distance. Water and sunscreen breaks are frequent and essential. In Pinellas County Schools in Florida, humidity plagues practices, but kids are happy to endure sweating for a chance to play together, says Jeanne Reynolds, performing arts specialist for the district. "If you teach in Florida and you're a band teacher, you become a meteorologist," Jeanne said. "'Cause it's not just hurricanes; we've got pretty good thunderstorms, so you have to know when to get out of harm's way. Which we all do."

What happens when the temperature drops? When playing outside is no longer an option, bands will be forced to limit the size of their ensembles, based on dimensions of their rooms and state guidelines. Some schools have already taken band class off the schedule completely, exchanging it for smaller groups, broken up alphabetically or by instrument. Smaller ensembles introduce two problems, though. First, smaller groups equate to more classes, meaning teachers' course loads have increased. Music programs like

the one at Bergenfield High School in New Jersey rely on a large staff, which allows them to assign one teacher each to virtual and in-person classes for all of their ensembles. Bergenfield's band director, Brian Timmons, considers his program lucky; not all schools have the resources. Second, teachers must find music for a ragtag chamber ensemble. For example, if groups were split numerically by students' names, a director might end up with a flute, three trombones, five bass clarinets and a french horn in a class, and music for a combo like that is rare. Thankfully, publishers like Alfred, Hal Leonard and RWS Music Company have flexible arrangements that can be split into a few basic parts, and have become more available during COVID.



The supply of cleaning materials Shannon Bascombe uses to disinfect the band rooms at Lee Williams High School.

Courtesy: Shannon Bascombe

But will the music ever get performed? State guidelines vary, but indoor maximum capacity has been limited to as few as 25 people per room. Gathering an audience would be infeasible.

Perhaps concerts aren't even necessary. According to Timmons, it's time to shake up the dusty format anyway. "Music education has been so performance-driven all the time," Timmons says. "And we never take time to explore the other things like the chamber playing or the composition or just ear training in and of itself or theory."

Students taking virtual band obviously don't have to deal with these new precautions and guidelines, but they also don't get to play together. As Timmons says, they're working on individual assignments, like learning music production, which allows them to sew together an ensemble, piece by piece. Timmons' students will work on a shared online workspace to record music. It gives students the power to collaborate remotely, he says.

"They can listen to each other's part and say, 'OK, our articulation is not punching there. We're going to have to rerecord this section,'" Timmons says. "I have three teenagers of my own. I watch them killing it on TikTok. If you can do that, there's no reason why I can't teach you how to do this." And then there's the fact that some schools are taking little to no precaution. Music teacher Nathan Smith says he was fired from Oakdale Academy in Michigan after expressing his

concern over the safety of students and staff. The private Christian high school is not requiring masks this fall, per a letter sent home to parents. "I had so many plans for this school year," Smith said. "I certainly wasn't ready to leave without seeing any of my kids again."

The Lost Generation and Long-Term Effects

It's a struggle to keep current music students engaged, but it's a completely new challenge to get more kids involved. Recruitment requires getting instruments into the hands of fourth graders and presenting the allure of a polished, performing ensemble—hurdles made higher by COVID. Lackluster recruitment will have damaging effects on the future of music education, says Robert W. Smith, a composer, arranger and professor at Troy University, who has written hundreds of works for high school-level ensembles. "We cannot have a lost generation of musicians, and we're about to have it," Smith says.

If too few young musicians join band, orchestra and choir programs, the ensembles will see dwindling numbers in each subsequent year, all the way up to college groups. "This is like aftershocks of an earthquake or second and third waves of a tsunami," Smith says. Current music students also face the loss of competition and adjudication—third-party feedback that lends itself toward improvement. Many in-person music competitions have been canceled for the fall. On the upside, some organizations have offered virtual adjudication, where students and ensembles can send in their performances for assessment. But the long-term effects aren't all bad. Timmons insists that it's only shifting focus for COVID-era students to prepare for a more viable music career—one that isn't totally based on performance (though still valuable), but digital skills.

"If you're going to be successful in music, you have to have a basic understanding of how digital audio works, even if you're a classical-style player," Timmons says. "You gotta have an understanding. If we can teach them how to use a digital audio workstation, even if it's some kind of cloud-based thing, recording themselves and then as a chamber ensemble recording their own product, we're kind of unlocking skills." All of this means that music educators are getting even more creative than before, out of necessity. "Music teachers by nature are problems solvers. It's what we do," Timmons says. "Listen, troubleshoot, feedback, adjustment, listen, troubleshoot, does that sound good? This is just another problem to solve. It's just a little more problematic than fixing the intonation of a chord."

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