

The Newsletter of the Campolindo Instrumental Music Program

Brought to you by Campo Instrumental Music Boosters

FROM THE PODIUM by Johnny Johnson, Music Director



Campolindo Instrumental Music is an active and vibrant program. Even in these cold winter months, students are practicing, collaborating, and anticipating the next event on the music calendar. These moments mean so much and the memories are rich and last forever.

This year, we added an exceptional new event to our jazz calendar. The Campo Big Band was featured prominently in the Theater Department's production of "Campo Night Live," a comedy show modeled on the popular Saturday Night Live show. This required a generous commitment of time and expertise on the part of our players as they had to attend several rehearsals and three shows, providing pre-show music, two full pieces in featured guest spots, and short, incidental snippets throughout the show, all timed perfectly with the action on stage. By all accounts, their contribution was greatly appreciated and enjoyed by all. Look for a possible repeat of this event in future years.

Coming up soon is our beloved Jazz Dinner Dance. It's one of our most well-attended events and one that prominently features every individual in our program. This is a great couple's night out with three hours of fine jazz, dining, and dancing. This always sold-out event is truly one of the most enjoyable nights of the year, loved by students, parents, and guests alike. We hope you will join us.

If you're reading this article, you are likely in attendance at one of our Winter Concerts. As the orchestra continues to prepare to perform at the Chicago International Music Festival in early April, the Winter Concert offers us the perfect opportunity to share our music making with the home audience. And if you don't mind my bragging once more, our orchestra was selected among those attending the festival to perform a work commissioned

especially for the CIMF. What a terrific honor for our players! For this year's Winter Orchestra Concert, we team up with our friends from Dublin High School. One of the best things about being a musician is that you can share your art with other musicians. This concert is the perfect example of that as we listen to and support each other and then combine our talents in playing a piece together.

The Winter Band Concert has several appealing pieces that you don't want to miss. Our treasured Concert Band has prepared the delightful Little French Suite built on folksongs from the French countryside and the more serious but still lighthearted Sonata for Winds. The Symphonic Band will perform works in a wide range of compositional styles, and the program will include the extraordinary Concertino for Percussion and Symphonic Band, featuring Eli Kirmayer on percussion and our Guest Conductor and former Campo maestro, Harvey Benstein.

I'm so proud that once again, a member of our program — Kevin Deng — has been selected as a member of the California All-State Band. I had the privilege of hearing him perform at the California All-State Music Educators Conference in San José on February 13. Earlier this month, the Contra Costa County Honor Band met, and I'm also proud of the several Campo students who participated in the three-day rehearsal process with an amazing concert at the end of it: Isabel Hinchliff, oboe; Daniel Warner, clarinet; Joe Cherayil, clarinet; Andrew Torres, clarinet; Kyle Lindquist, bass clarinet; Kevin Deng, trumpet; Erica Wilson, horn; Adriana Derksen, tuba; Daniel Flaherty, percussion.

Why are our students able to achieve so much? Of course, it's accomplished through practice, commitment, and determination. But it's also due to the abundant parent support that is made obvious through ongoing donations, volunteerism, feedback, and concert attendance. Thank you all for your continuing encouragement and for making Campolindo such a special place to be.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE LIFE WILL TAKE YOU

Johnny Johnson's Story

by Stacy Giglio

We've all seen Johnny Johnson on the podium during concerts, and marveled at the performances he is able to create with our instrumental music ensembles. Our students spend time with him each day, but few of us know Mr. Johnson's story. I had the opportunity to sit with Johnny and hear about his journey from the Louisiana bayou to California, and I'd like to share his inspiring story with you.

Johnny's path to teaching music was winding, and filled with seemingly unrelated adventures along the way. He did not know when he graduated from high school that he wanted to teach music. In fact, his life was void of music for years at a time. But in hindsight, **each experience fit perfectly into the next, and by listening to his mentors and following his interests, Johnny ultimately pursued his passions.**

If Johnny could tell his Campo music seniors one lesson he has learned so far, he says he would tell them, "Life is meandering at best. You never know where it will take you. ... You're going to do what you need to do, and you'll find ways to do it. It's all just a process. Don't be rigid. This isn't the end – it's never the end."

Johnny Johnson grew up "down the bayou" in a little town 90 miles south of New Orleans called Galliano (pronounced "guy ah no" by the locals). The town had two roads, one on each side of the bayou, and Johnny lived there with his parents and younger brother until the last three weeks of first grade when he moved to Westlake, a small town across the bridge from Lake Charles on the I-10 interstate, where he remained until graduation. Johnny remembers being teased about his strong Cajun accent by the Lake Charles kids who had more "twangy" Texan-style accents.

For fun, Johnny and his brother Jeffry like to bowl. The boys' grandmother ("Maw Maw") taught them to bowl back on the bayou, and the boys were partners in a youth bowling league.

Johnny didn't grow up in a particularly musical family. His mother played flute and his uncle played bass drum in the marching band, but it wasn't until 6th grade when he picked his first instrument, the alto sax. It was "okay," but when his teacher asked him to play the baritone sax (because there were too many altos) he knew he had found his instrument. Johnny plays the baritone sax today and still has the first one he bought with his father's help.



Marching bands are popular in Louisiana, and Johnny was the drum major for his high school marching band. (In asking about his high school years, I also found out that Johnny was the Valedictorian of his class!)

While he enjoyed leadership and making music, he couldn't wait to get out of small town Louisiana, and started taking college classes in the summer to broaden his horizons.

It was his summer computer science class at Louisiana Tech that led Johnny to major in Computer Science in college. Johnny "loved gadgets," and he enjoyed "the creative aspect of programming," at least initially. Then came a critical day that would change Johnny's life.

He was working in the computer lab at Louisiana Tech during a bad rain storm when there was a power outage. His monitor went blank, and all of his work was gone. **Johnny remembers "looking in that blank monitor screen and seeing a miserable person staring back at me." He told himself, "I can't do this anymore."**

Feeling lost, Johnny went home after the quarter, on "a quest for what I wanted to do in life." He went to a McNeese State University football game while on break, and he says the band at half time "blew his socks off." He realized that he was missing music in his life.

Looking for guidance, Johnny called his childhood piano teacher, Lisa Bustle, and told her about his quest. She told Johnny, "You need to teach! You loved music as a

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kid. Go study music education.” Johnny described this to me as, “She was saving my life, and I knew it.”

Taking his teacher’s advice, Johnny enrolled in McNeese State University where he majored in Music Education, briefly double majoring also in Theory & Composition. He joined the symphonic band, then the wind ensemble, and auditioned for and made drum major in his second year. Johnny was immersed in music. He practiced at least two hours a day and took every class he could take, with Composition and Theory being his favorites.

During this time, the conductor for the wind ensemble moved to another university, and a new one arrived. His name was Harvey Benstein. Johnny remembers that Harvey was “tough” but that the ensemble “started playing well really quickly” after Mr. Benstein arrived. Johnny had to work really hard “to be good.”

Johnny’s first teaching job was at a high school just outside of New Orleans with a struggling music program. It was there he met his wife Danelle who was teaching choir and speech. Sharing a classroom and an office, Johnny and Danelle worked hard to grow the music program there, but while “firing on all cylinders,” they burned out. They quit and moved to Orlando, Florida.

In Florida, Danelle began working for Disney while the couple started their own business, creating worksheets and lesson plans for speech classes, which they sold to teachers and schools across the country for four years. Johnny also worked for a computer rental company during this time, setting up equipment for conventions and shows.

During his free time, Johnny composed music. He and Danelle began holding chamber concerts once a month where they would invite their friends over, cook them dinner, and then perform Johnny’s music. It became one of their favorite activities.

Then another “moment of clarity” (as he calls them) occurred for Johnny. He and Danelle attended a local high school Christmas concert. “The teacher was so bad,” remembers Johnny. “The stage was full of talent, but they were completely mediocre. It could have been electrifying.” It had been eight years since Johnny conducted. He realized his “soul was drying up a bit.” He needed to go back to teaching music and decided to get his Masters degree.

Johnny tracked down his longtime mentor Harvey Benstein (who was now teaching at Campolindo) who

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suggested Johnny study someplace where he would want to live and work. Harvey gave him the names of several graduate programs in California, and Johnny opted for a Masters in Conducting at Sacramento State. So Johnny and Danelle moved to California.

After graduation, Johnny got a job at College Park High School in Pleasant Hill, through connections he had made at Sacramento State. After a 6-year tenure there, the couple went to Porter High School in Houston, Texas, where Johnny's old high school teacher said they needed new band and choir teachers and wanted to start a new string program. Danelle and Johnny loved the work, but not Texas. Two years later when they learned that Mr. Benstein would be retiring from Campolindo, they saw a path back to California so Johnny applied for the position. He got the job, and the rest is history.

Looking back, it was relationships with mentors, and also the ability to listen to his soul, that helped Johnny pursue his dreams. He thanks his piano teacher, Harvey Benstein, a steadfast and very smart spouse, and several "moments of clarity" along the way for shaping his journey and helping him stay true to his passions.



Thank you to Kevin Goto for providing the concert photos for our newsletters.

You can see all of Kevin's photographs in full color on our website: www.campomusic.org/gallery-2 or for those who use Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/campolindo.musicboosters>



UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

Unless otherwise noted, events will be held at the CPAC (Campolindo Performing Arts Center).

Thursday, February 18, 2016, 7:00-8:30 PM

Winter Orchestra Concert — ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND
Open to the public; please invite friends and family
Free of charge (donations gratefully accepted)

Thursday, February 25, 2016, 7:30-9:00 PM

Winter Band Concert — ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND
Open to the public; please invite friends and family
Free of charge (donations gratefully accepted)

Saturday, February 27, 2016, 6:30-10:00 PM

Jazz Dinner Dance at the Moraga Country Club
To purchase tickets, please email Barbara Williams at
lafnbarb@gmail.com. Adults \$60, Students \$40.

Thursday, March 24, 2016 - Monday, March 28, 2016

Campo Orchestra travels to Chicago to perform in the Chicago International Music Festival

Wednesday, March 30, 2016, 7:00-8:00 PM

Moraga Area Band Concert, with 4th-8th graders (*free*)

Thursday, March 31, 2016, 7:00-8:00 PM

Moraga Area Orchestra Concert, with 4th-8th graders (*free*)

Thursday, May 12, 2016, 7:00-9:30 PM

Spring Concert
Open to the public; please invite friends and family
Free of charge (donations gratefully accepted)

Friday, June 3, 2016, 6:00-10:00 PM

Jazz Café at Stanley Middle School
Ticket info to be announced closer to the event.

The full Event Calendar for 2015-16 is available on our website: www.campomusic.org/upcoming-events



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