

The Newsletter of the Campolindo Instrumental Music Program

Brought to you by Campo Instrumental Music Boosters

FROM THE PODIUM

by Johnny Johnson, Music Director

The first quarter of the school year is complete! Only three more to go! No matter what we do, time moves on, the seasons change, and we pursue our regular fare of activities that make up a successful music program. Community support, collaboration among students, and synergy with teachers and administrators all contribute to this ever-repeating, yet joyful, process.

Once again, we gathered in October for our annual Potluck & Pops, enjoying a delightful and varied buffet of dishes and delicacies. Thank you all for your contributions, and a special thank you to Amy Kikugawa and Laura Smyrl for organizing it. It's always a palatable pleasure. This time around, I enjoyed watching our students make their way to the CPAC as the dinner ended. They did so without my prompting. This confirmed for me what I already knew: that our musicians understand the need to be prepared, to suspend the desire for fun and relaxation at the appropriate time, and begin to assume the mindset for performance, preparing their physical bodies and their instruments to deliver a high-quality show. As always, the Pops experience was educational and engaging for players and audience members.

Another fall treat for me is watching the formation and progression of the Pep Band, aptly led this year by Michael Gilmour, Emily Marston, and Paige Love. They eagerly approached me last year so that I would know they were serious about sustaining and improving the Pep Band. For Michael, the process began back in the summer when he carefully selected and quite skillfully arranged pieces for the group to play. I have to admit, he probably spent more of his summer preparing for the fall than I did. And it paid off! The all-volunteer Pep Band delights players and fans alike with their spirited performances at the home games. The Pep Band has become a coveted experi-

ence for many students and has given our program positive exposure to the community, so I appreciate these students for representing us so well.

We were able to capitalize on our football-season popularity with a successful homecoming Snack Shack fundraiser. Thank you to Michelle Clancy, Claudia Miyar, and new recruit Ellen Au-Yeung for organizing this profitable venture. Thank you also to the many volunteers who worked during the evening to support our program.

Also underway and progressing well is our newly branded Jazz Academy. While most elements of our music program remain the same year to year, how we approach jazz changes according to the number, type, and level of players who join us each year. It's a great advantage for us to have this flexibility, and I'm grateful to the Board and other parents who support our ever-evolving vision for the jazz program. This year, Ross Wilson has joined us as my partner teacher. Ross brings years of knowledge and experience to the job and has already added significantly to our understanding of jazz, particularly the important skill of improvisation — something that often eludes many of us — and first-hand insight into the life of a working professional musician.

By the time I write to you again, it will be in anticipation of our Winter Concerts. Meanwhile, several important events and opportunities will have passed, so I will mention them here and hope that interested students will take advantage of the many chances to develop their technique and musicianship.

Phantom of the Opera is coming to Campo! While the choral program owns the musical, they always feature our Campo instrumental students prominently as members of the orchestra . . . and what an experience this will be! Although the commitment for the pit orchestra is significant — 1-2 nights per week

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“From the Podium” (continued from page 1)

in January and February, with more frequent rehearsals leading to opening night in early March — the reward is enormous. It’s a playing experience unlike any other, requiring meticulous coordination between the onstage drama and the orchestra. We can expect to get information about the sign-up process and anticipated schedule from Mr. Roberts in mid-December.

Students are also preparing to participate in various Honor Bands and Honor Orchestras coming up in the next few months. These include the Contra Costa County Honor Band and the All-State Wind Bands, Jazz Band, and Orchestras. The deadline for submission of All-State audition materials is coming up fast on December 1.

Despite the increasing cool weather, my heart remains warm as I am greeted each day by eager students willing to learn, willing to laugh at my jokes, and generally patient with my moods and demands. It continues to be a pleasure to serve this community, so dedicated to the arts, and ready to do whatever it takes to provide our young musicians with an outstanding experience. Thank you all!



Growing “Pains” and Growing Opportunities

by Johnny Johnson

Tonight, we’ve arrived at the centerpiece of our music activities for this semester — the annual Fall Concert. As we’ve prepared for this first milestone of the year, we’ve begun to notice that something has changed about us, something noteworthy. (By “we,” I mean me, students, administrators, and recent visitors to our classroom.) The change is that we are more numerous. Put simply, the number of students participating in band and orchestra at Campolindo High School has increased significantly in recent years. This is a result of having outstanding retention rates of 95-100% year to year in every ensemble. This year it has become clear that we are outgrowing ourselves and outgrowing our classroom.

Increasing numbers can have an immediate positive effect on a musical ensemble. We sound “bigger” and “stronger.” We can play complicated music because we have the players to cover all of the parts competently, and individual errors are less exposed. We have definitely enjoyed these benefits of late. But this also means that music requiring crisp clarity and detail is less accessible to our larger, weightier groups, and therefore leaves a hole in the educational experience. Also unfortunate is that higher numbers means we focus less on individual development while leaving open many ways to become lost in the crowd and overlooked.

Add to that the very tangible fact that we can barely fit in our rehearsal room any longer. Although the fire code allows for up to 100 people in the room, that doesn’t account for the space taken up by chairs, music stands, stand racks, instruments (including very large percussion instruments), and instrument cases, all of which consume a huge segment of the available space creating quite a claustrophobic, if increasingly hazardous, environment in which to rehearse and learn. (I should add that string players need a generous amount of “wing space” to move their bows, so despite the fact that we have overall fewer string players, the overcrowding is still significant.) I invite anyone curious enough to stop by during a rehearsal to witness this scene. It’s quite something. And while it’s doable for now, if we continue to grow — and that is the projection — we need to make some changes. So, let the discussion begin.

For now, I’ll propose possible ways to address this growth—ways we might solve the problem while

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increasing the quality of each student's experience within the program. Our two major groups, Symphonic Band (80 players) and Orchestra (61 players), are different in their basic makeup and that will call for different strategies.

Starting with our wind band program, we currently enjoy having freshman players in a separate ensemble (and class period), that we call Concert Band. This has proven to be very positive for promoting each student's personal and musical growth as they adjust to high school and prepare to play in a larger ensemble. The difficulty with this model is that a freshman-only group leaves all other players — sophomores, juniors, seniors — to play in Symphonic Band. This (and the aforementioned retention rate) has created the large numbers. A great "problem" to have!

One way to solve it is to move to a three-band model, like the one that exists at many schools across the country. We would keep our non-auditioned group of unspecified instrumentation, and we would keep our freshman-only band. We would then create an auditioned ensemble with a controlled 40-piece instrumentation. This allows one band to take the next step up from Concert Band and focus on acquiring and developing skills while the other explores a higher level of musical challenge. This opens up a new world in which more physical space allows for more effective rehearsals in which all students receive greater attention and are appropriately challenged. It also enables us to explore a greater variety and level of repertoire.

In Orchestra, we have a different scenario, but it begs for a similar change. We have only one strings class, and that group includes all players from freshmen to seniors. That means our freshmen have to quickly adapt to playing with students that have significantly more experience than they do. As any teacher or parent knows, the feeling of inadequacy this situation generates is sometimes more discouraging than encouraging.

We do our best and try to compensate for the wide variety of skill levels in Orches-

tra by using student leadership and sectional days (rehearsal periods in which we divide into sections and rehearse separately). We have also used local professional musicians as coaches for individuals and sections. This has worked well in the past, but with our numbers growing, I'm not sure we have the resources to keep everyone progressing and fully engaged. Logic leads us to the most obvious solution: splitting the orchestra into two groups, either by creating an analog to the Concert Band (Concert Strings?) or by dividing the group according to students' skill levels.

Change is often uncomfortable. We haven't had this kind of "leveling" in our ensembles before, and we're not used to it. We might predict at this point that some students will fear being separated from friends. We might also predict there will be disappointments regarding placement, or having to adjust to a new schedule that has band or orchestra at a different time of day.

So, let's begin to address these concerns now as we see the need for change looming. I've laid out a vision here for what these changes may look like, but I'm open to hearing other possibilities and suggestions. Let's deal with any concerns now as we consider what decisions are best, which may also include leaving things the way they are. My personal goal is and always has been to make each student's experience the most joyful it can be, producing satisfied and fulfilled artists with lifelong commitments to music making.

FROM OUR MUSIC BOOSTER PRESIDENTS JENNIFER AND MEL GILMOUR

Our family has been involved in the Campolindo Instrumental Music program for the last twelve years, and it has been our pleasure to watch the program transition and grow over those years. Mel grew up playing trumpet, French horn, and singing in high school and college, and this carried over to our children. The impact of being in this program to our family has been substantial as our oldest son went on to play in college and our youngest plays many instruments and is planning to major in music after he graduates in June. All of our children have come away from their experiences with a deep appreciation of the incredible effort and work that goes into mastering an instrument and a piece of music.

Music has given our family a common thread that we all share as well as many memories that will not be forgotten. From the interesting variety of music performed at the Pops concerts to the many Jazz Dinner Dances that we have attended with our friends and family to performances that our children have participated in outside of Campo, many impactful moments have occurred. During one Campolindo concert our older son left the stage during the performance and we were concerned that he was not feeling well only to be surprised as he soloed from off stage, echoing the symphonic band in a piece written as a tribute to Columbine. It was a very moving performance for many in the audience, and I still run into people that remember that piece.

We've been fortunate to cherish similar moments in our home. On one occasion, our son pulled out a trumpet and started playing Christmas tunes, and within a few minutes we had three trumpets and a flugelhorn playing together as a family band with the others calling out requests. This kind of family involvement has encouraged each member to stretch themselves outside of our home. Our youngest has just had the

learning experience of leading the Pep Band which entailed arranging music over the summer, recruiting volunteers to play, leading rehearsals, and finally conducting the band at the home football games. It was a great experience that he will take with him to his future endeavors.

We sincerely hope that each and every family involved in the music program has their own similar experiences and memories. Our children have learned to appreciate the effort that is required to develop the individual skills necessary, and then unselfishly combine them as a group, to bring a piece of music to life. These skills will certainly be valuable to them over the course of their lives, and we appreciate the Campo Music program for teaching our children these lessons.

The success of our music program is due to our talented and devoted Campolindo staff as well as the participation of so many of our Campolindo families in the form of the Instrumental Music Boosters. The volunteer hours, financial contributions, and other support from our music families result in a program that allows our students to continue to study and perform beautiful music, bring spirit to our home football games, provide entertainment during our Jazz Dinner Dance, and infuse energy and joy into so many community events — a program that ultimately enriches all of our lives.



UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

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

Thursday, November 15, 2018, 7:30-9:30 PM

Fall Concert — ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND

Open to the public; please invite friends and family

Tuesday, January 8, 2019, 7:00-8:00 PM

Moraga Area Orchestra Concert, with 4th-8th graders

Thursday, January 10, 2019, 7:00-8:00 PM

Moraga Area Band Concert, with 4th-8th graders

Thursday, February 7, 2019, 6:00-8:00 PM

Open Orchestra Rehearsal at Campo Open House

Saturday, February 9, 2019, 6:00-10:00 PM

Jazz Dinner Dance at the Moraga Country Club

Tickets will go on sale soon; contact Shelly Muray at smuray@comcast.net for more information

Wednesday, February 13, 2019, 7:30-9:00 PM

Winter Orchestra Concert — ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND

Open to the public; please invite friends and family

Thursday, February 21, 2019, 7:30-9:00 PM

Winter Band Concert — ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND

Open to the public; please invite friends and family

Friday, May 10, 2019, 7:00-9:30 PM

Spring Concert — ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND

Open to the public; please invite friends and family

Friday, May 31, 2019, 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 2018-19 is available on our website:

www.campomusic.org/upcoming-events

Thank you to Erika Pringsheim-Moore for the Pops Concert photos included in this issue.

See more photos in our online gallery: www.campomusic.org/gallery-2

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Campolindo's Instrumental Music program relies on contributions from MEF, Parents Club, and its Booster members to continue to offer the highest quality instruction and varied musical experiences for our students. Thank you to all who have contributed to date.

If you have not yet donated, we would appreciate your support. Please visit www.campomusic.org to download the donation form or visit the Campo Webstore to make your contribution.

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