

# APPASSIONATO



**An Illustrious  
Past**

**A Resilient  
Present**

**At 50 years, VAM  
unites in a public health crisis**

MEMBERS OF THE VAM  
COMMUNITY ON THE  
COVID-19 FRONT LINES  
(P. 4)

LOOKING BACK ON  
VAM'S FIRST FIFTY  
YEARS (P. 8)

HONOURING  
VAM FOUNDER  
IBY KOERNER (P. 11)



## From the President & CEO

Welcome to the Spring 2020 edition of Appassionato that recognizes the accomplishments of our students, faculty and alumni. As you are reading this, I hope you are well and healthy. In this special edition, we continue to celebrate the achievements and success stories within our VAM community, but we also highlight how the COVID-19 crisis has changed the way we function. While adhering to physical distancing guidelines, the #VAMfromhome photo campaign, Virtual Strawberry & Tea, and online options for learning have kept music-making and engagement strong.

I want to sincerely thank our faculty, students, supporters and the dedicated VAM community for keeping the spirit of togetherness alive in this uncertain time, and I especially want to recognize our front line workers, health care workers and those who keep our society functioning. Let us all remember the power of music as a tool for self-expression, healing and comfort. We will emerge together as a stronger community and I look forward to the day when I can welcome you back to the school in person. In the meantime, stay safe, positive and keep the music going inside your heart and homes.

Musically Yours,  
Joseph Elworthy, VAM President & CEO

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### APPASSIONATO

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# From the Board Chair

Dear Members of the VAM Family:

Let me begin by welcoming you to the Spring 2020 issue of Appassionato. Our world has seen unprecedented upheaval with the arrival of a novel coronavirus. The global pandemic has touched all of us – students, families, teachers, and the VAM administrative team – in many different aspects of our lives.



As the need to apply the measures of social and physical distancing became critically important, the decision to close the Academy was made swiftly and jointly by our CEO Mr. Joseph Elworthy and myself, with the blessing of the VAM Board of Directors. The safety and continued good health of our students and teachers was our priority.

Our Faculty have been nimble in their ability to respond to the crisis by adapting traditional teaching methods in many innovative ways. We are blessed with digital technology and communication platforms that have allowed the creation of virtual classrooms and online musical instruction. In this issue of the newsletter, you will see some examples of how well our students are engaging with their teachers.

On a personal note, I work as a frontline physician at one of the designated COVID-19 hospitals in the Fraser Health Authority. For the past 2 months, I have been involved in many stages of planning, improving readiness, and treating patients. My colleagues and I, along with all the other health care workers, have had to learn new strategies and had to rewrite policy on the fly as this situation was so new. I am grateful for the love and support that we have received from our communities. There has been a tremendous number of people that have stepped up to help. I relish the 7 pm symphony of pots and pans and sirens that serenade my hospital every evening.

Music in all its wonderful forms, has been a vital part of our culture, our evolution as a community, and as a means of celebration. Music inspires us to keep moving forward, and music lifts our spirits at times when we need to be comforted. This pandemic will ease and although our way of life may not be “business as usual” for quite some time, our music will always be there for us.

I miss our concerts and all the terrific performances. I look forward to celebrating with you all when the light at the end of the tunnel shines brightly.

Together, we are stronger.

Kindest regards,

Raymond Dong, MD, FRCP(C)  
Chair, Board of Directors,  
Vancouver Academy of Music

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# View from the COVID-19 Front Lines

## VAM community members working in healthcare share their stories

### Anastasia Elworthy

As a manager of the Surgical Ambulatory Clinics at St. Paul's Hospital, I have had to quickly respond to the COVID-19 crisis and make sure that everyone is on board so that the hospital is well prepared for the worst case scenarios.

In each of my areas, I have put processes in place to ensure that urgent patients can continue to receive the care they need while taking necessary precaution to ensure that patients and staff remain safe.

I had to make sure that all staff keep up to date with what Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needs to be worn and most importantly how to remove it safely by issuing daily communiques and arranging in services.

Through these difficult times, I was not surprised to witness just how resilient, selfless and adaptable everyone at Saint Paul's Hospital has been with constant changes being made to the system.

I was so amazed by how quickly physicians adapted to offering virtual care to patients and how patients also embraced receiving it. Once we get the approval from the Ministry of Health to reopen the clinics, I anticipate we will change the way we deliver health care by offering more virtual care.





## Dr. Julia Reynolds

conferencing and remote care may serve us to save time, decrease traffic and allow patients and physicians to spend more time at home or with their families.

My house has been filled with sounds of (many) musicians practicing with inspiration and without external pressures.

Artists and in particular musicians have had their careers put on hold and the financial future of many arts organizations is uncertain. As a society we must find ways to support and sustain them.

Are we facing a new renaissance? Maybe in our post COVID-19 lives we will place new value on joy in music, kindness, and world health.

All of us have had to adapt to the abrupt changes imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It seems as though we will not go back to life as we knew it. I have wondered over the past weeks with each new baby I have helped into the world, what lies ahead? As a family physician I have had to change the way in which I look after my patients. Many of these changes will most likely change how primary care will be delivered even when COVID-19 is past. Video

I am amazed at the commitment of people in BC who have followed the guidelines for social distancing; I am grateful to people who have embraced this time with kindness and volunteerism. Handmade PPE gowns arrived to my office, created and delivered by volunteers!

With most of the world on hold, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided time for personal growth and reflection.

## Dr. Tina Lai

I work in the Complex Reactivation Unit at St. Paul's Hospital, where together with a multidisciplinary team, I help medically complicated, frail, and vulnerable patients with mobility problems get discharged from the hospital. I also provide primary care to housebound elderly patients through the Home ViVE program. The

VAM community is like my extended family and I hope that everyone stays healthy and safe. Thank you for your support during these overwhelmingly challenging times.



# Congratulations!

## COMPETITION WINNERS & PRE-COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

**OCTOBER 2019 - MARCH 2020**

### 2019/20 VAMJS & VAMIS CONCERTO COMPETITIONS

Name	Category	Teacher
Junwoo (Justin) Ha, violin	VAMIS Concerto Competition Winner	Ji Eun Jenny Lim
Tomo Hiroyasu, violin	VAMIS Concerto Competition Winner	Nataly Pogrebetsky
Aaron Kang, violin	VAMIS Concerto Competition Winner	Domagoj Ivanovic
Eric Zhu, clarinet	VAMIS Concerto Competition Alternate Winner	Christopher Lee
Adrian Lee, cello	VAMJS Concerto Competition Winner	Mary Thomson
Fumiyuki Okochi, cello	VAMJS Concerto Competition Winner	Joseph Elworthy
Michiyo Mizuta Yu, violin	VAMJS Concerto Competition Winner	Ashley Plaut
Jeffrey Kang, violin	VAMJS Concerto Competition Alternate Winner	Domagoj Ivanovic

### 2020 EDITH LANDO GIFTED YOUTH COMPETITION

Name	Award	Teacher
Ryan Wang, piano	Edith Lando Gifted Youth Scholarship (\$1,000)	Lee Kum Sing
Junwoo (Justin) Ha, violin	Eugenie & Edward Yeung Scholarship (\$500)	Ji Eun Jenny Lim
Samuel Hyumin Chu, clarinet	Seymour & Janet Vineberg Memorial Scholarship (\$250)	Christopher Lee
Jocelyn Zhang, cello	Harold & Florence Morris Scholarship (\$250)	Joseph Elworthy
Lincoln St John, viola	Malcolm G. Aikman Scholarship (\$250)	Isabelle Roland
Valerie Tsang, piano	Yashwant & Tarun Damji Sidpra Memorial Scholarship (\$250)	Amanda Chan
Ruby Li, cello	Ann Lesley Bain Memorial Scholarship (\$250)	Audrey Nodwell
Joseph Zheng, violin	Dr. & Mrs. Joseph H. Cohen Scholarship (\$250)	Domagoj Ivanovic

### 2020 YOUNG COMPOSERS COMPETITION

Name	Award
Jonathan Weng	Winner, Junior Category (\$500 scholarship)
Henry From	Winner, Intermediate Category (\$500 scholarship)
Kylie Fonacier	Winner, Collegiate Category (\$500 scholarship)

## 2020 JEROLD GERBRECHT WOODWIND & BRASS COMPETITION

Name	Award	Teacher
Francis Sadlier, clarinet	First Place Winner	A. K. Coope
Samuel Hyunmin Chu, clarinet	Second Place Winner	Christopher Lee
Jackson Harris, trombone	Third Place Winner	Ellen Marple
Hannah Elworthy, trumpet	Scholarship Recipient	Ellen Marple
Eric Jin, clarinet	Scholarship Recipient	A. K. Coope
Victor Gyubin Lee, clarinet	Scholarship Recipient	Christopher Lee
Anya Murray, flute	Scholarship Recipient	Heather Beaty
Rachel Wei, flute	Scholarship Recipient	Brenda Fedoruk
Trevis Wong, saxophone	Scholarship Recipient	Michael Morimoto
Eric Zhu, clarinet	Scholarship Recipient	Christopher Lee

## 2019/20 SUZUKI SCHOLARSHIPS

Name	Award	Teacher
Kyle Chan, piano	Marguerite M. Echaus Memorial Scholarship (\$500)	Djina Stojkov
Hart Zawadiuk, piano	VAM Suzuki Piano Scholarship (\$200)	Donna Lee-Leung
Davis Toth, cello	VAM Suzuki Cello Scholarship (\$150)	Cyrena Huang
Michiyo Mizuta Yu, violin	Marian Schreiber Memorial Scholarship (\$400)	Ashley Plaut
Kristin Lee, violin	Chua Tiampo Memorial Scholarship (\$400)	Nicki Stieda
Zen Liu, violin	Chua Tiampo Memorial Scholarship (\$400)	Robin Wenham

## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

**ASLAN ASLANOV** (AD piano, Amanda Chan) was accepted into the Master of Music degree program, Piano Performance at the University of British Columbia's School of Music, with maximum scholarship.

**ALANA CHAN** (piano faculty) was interviewed by Fairchild TV News about an uplifting music video she created not long ago with her community orchestra, A Little Night Music Orchestra. The video is dedicated to everyone affected by COVID-19 and emphasizes how music, specifically Fauré's *Pavane*, is used as a healing tool for others during this pandemic.

**SU HYUN CHOI** (AD piano, Noel McRobbie) has been accepted to the Master's program at Roosevelt University in Chicago with a full scholarship.

**BRANDON JONG** (piano, Rebecca Kelly), a member of Vancouver College's Robotics Team, was chosen to represent BC in the First Tech World Challenge in Houston, Texas in April, which was unfortunately cancelled due to COVID-19. Disappointed but not dissuaded, the team has partnered with a local company to produce face shields for medical workers using 3-D printing technology.

**TAWNYA POPOFF** (viola faculty), with her Houston-based chamber orchestra, River Oakes Chamber Orchestra, commissioned a piece called Anthem of Hope by Anthony DiLorenzo in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey.

# VAM: The First 50 Years

VAM began with a group of visionaries who saw the need for instruction in music at the highest possible level beginning in a child's early years and continuing into young adulthood. A Board was formed, with backing from the Community Arts Council, headed by Iby Koerner (Chair) and Elsje de Ridder Armstrong (President), with Dr. Campbell Trowsdale of UBC acting as the first volunteer Music Director. Musicians of the Vancouver Symphony held a benefit concert to raise funds, and the Community Music School began lessons in church basements and community centres in the fall of 1969. Its first students were young children, who were introduced to music using the new-to-Vancouver methods developed by Orff, Kodaly, and Suzuki.

In its second year, the Community Music School moved into the old Model School building at 12th and Cambie, allowing the program to expand to include instruction in all orchestral instruments. In 1971, Jerold Gerbrecht, newly-appointed principal trumpet of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, became the first salaried Music Director, and many of his symphony colleagues were recruited as teachers. Various departments were established, led by gifted professionals: Marian Schreiber for the Suzuki program, Steven Staryk for strings, Jacob Hamm for the voice department, and Lee Kum-Sing for the new piano program. The Academy String Orchestra began under the leadership of Norman Nelson, concertmaster of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

The Community Music School was such a success that a new building soon became necessary. In the fall of 1973,

Mayor Art Phillips and Vancouver City Council offered the school the old WWII air-force warehouse across from the Planetarium in Vanier Park. Use of the site was contingent on the school being able to finance the required renovations by the end of 1974: President Elsje de Ridder Armstrong and the Board raised pledges of \$1.9 million, mostly from private donations. Construction began in 1975, and one year later, on May 9, 1976, Chair Iby Koerner opened the Music Centre with the announcement that the Trustees had already completely paid for the building renovations.

By 1977, the Community Music School had over 1400 students enrolled in private lessons, classes, and performing groups. The school adopted the name "Vancouver Academy of Music", and began work on the idea of developing post-secondary diploma and degree programs to meet with the needs of the most advanced students. With contributions from Mr. S. K. Lee and the Vancouver Foundation, an endowment fund was set up to sponsor a college division at the Academy. In 1987, S. K. Lee College accepted its first students into a two-year college program. Soon, arrangements were completed with the BC Open University, which has now transferred to Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning, to offer a collaborative four-year Bachelor of Music program. The Academy also established a two-year post-graduate Artist's Diploma.

After serving nearly four decades as Music Director, Jerold Gerbrecht retired in Fall 2010 and the Board of Trustees announced Joseph Elworthy as his successor. Elworthy was one of the first young students through the doors of the

*Continued, p. 10*



# May 9, 1976: A Day of Celebration



## Scenes from Opening Day

On May 9, 1976, the Community Music School of Greater Vancouver (now Vancouver Academy of Music) unveiled its Vanier Park location after a \$1.9 million fundraising Campaign.

Academy when it opened before launching a professional career as a soloist, recital performer, and chamber musician. He joined the Vancouver Symphony in 2002 and taught on VAM's faculty before his appointment as VAM President & CEO.

In 2013, VAM received an invitation to a strategic partnership with the Haw Par Music Foundation, launching an initiative to revitalize the 1930s-built Haw Par Mansion in Hong Kong and create an integrated music learning education. This partnership engaged VAM's support in curricular planning and development, introducing systematic and innovative musical programs that have been successfully tested and implemented in North America. Moreover, this partnership was the beginning of international opportunities for VAM students to participate in annual string orchestra camps taking place at the Hong Kong school.

VAM also experienced considerable growth within its own programs: in 2012, the opening of music education opportunities for adult learners; in 2013, a Composition program, later followed by the establishment of a composition stream in VAM's post-secondary division; in 2014, the incorporation of jazz into ensemble curriculum; in 2016, the Mary Buckerfield White Choral Program and the Young Artist Collegiate Program, offering VAM's college-level coursework for musically and academically

ambitious high school students. This expansion in curricular development was matched by facility upgrades in equal force, with the 2014 revitalization of the Orchestral Rehearsal Room into Mary Olson Hall, the creation of new large ensemble rehearsal spaces, and \$1.2 million raised in a capital campaign that led to the 2018 transformation of Koerner Recital Hall.

Throughout its 50 years, VAM has produced generations who cherish the arts and use their collaborative performing arts experiences to enhance the well-being of their communities. Its alumni range from winners of prestigious international competitions, such as the Banff International String Quartet Competition, Vienna Classics Strings Competition, and Leeds Piano Competition, to students who have gone on to distinguish themselves in fields outside of music. A community music school at its core, VAM continues to be home for arts lovers of diverse ages and ability levels, with its doors open to those at all stages of their musical journey.

*By Ruth Enns & Daniel Marshall*

# From the Archives Iby Koerner and VAM's Beginnings

*by Rosemary Cunningham*

This article is an excerpt from *A Debt Acknowledged: Iby Koerner's Contribution to Vancouver*, published in Vol. 39 No. 2 (2006) of the publication *British Columbia History*. VAM gratefully acknowledges Janet Cunningham, daughter of the late Rosemary Cunningham, for granting permission to reprint this article.

In 1966 members of the Community Arts Council decided that Vancouver's lack of an institution that provided music training for the young was a situation that should be neglected no longer. The Council's Music Committee, of which Iby was a member, had already been an effective lobby for the establishment in 1956 of a Faculty of Music at the University of British Columbia. However, music instruction for children was still a private affair, dependent upon a family's ability to pay for instruments and lessons. By 1968 the Community Arts Council had formed a Committee on Music Schools, headed up by



musician and music educator Robert Creech, who was the originator of the idea for the project. The Committee's preparatory work had reached the stage where the support of the music community and other interested parties warranted formalizing its goal: establishment of a Community Music School.

The Community Music School of Greater Vancouver was incorporated on 28 February 1969 as a non-profit institution. The founding members recruited the first Board of Trustees, and Iby was elected chairman, a position she held until her death in 1983.

The Trustees and founding members had a great deal of work ahead of them, not only planning the programme for the school's first intake of students that year, but also, and most pressing, raising the money to get things going. As a start, it was decided to hold a benefit symphony concert



under the auspices of the Community Arts Council. To the Council's surprise and delight, and thanks to Iby's close personal friendship with William Steinberg, the eminent conductor of the Boston and Philadelphia symphony orchestras, Steinberg arranged at short notice to come to Vancouver to conduct the orchestra. Internationally known violinist Esther Glazer was obtained to appear as soloist. Both Steinberg and Glazer waived their fees. Members of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and the CBC Chamber Orchestra, and VBC musicians agreed to donate their services for four rehearsals and the concert itself, and a grant of \$600 was obtained from the City of Vancouver to cover the rental of the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. The concert took place at 8 p. m. on 24 June 1969, but was not the sellout hoped for. According to one of the volunteers, the house had to be "papered" by giving away hundreds of tickets.

Next, the Trustees applied to the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation for a grant of \$3000 as seed money; Iby's name



*Iby Koerner at the groundbreaking ceremony for VAM's Vanier Park facility on June 8, 1975.*

was on the application as a contact person. The Foundation gave \$2000, a large grant at the time. 30 Private donations began to come in, including cheques made out to the school in honour of Iby's seventieth birthday, 28 July.

Fifty students were enrolled in the first year of operation, 1969-70, in quarters at several locations: UBC, the Burnaby Art Centre, and the basement of a downtown Vancouver church. All services were donated or paid for from the proceeds of the benefit concert, grants and donations. Cameron Trowsdale, of UBC's Faculty of Music, donated his services as Acting Director. Iby's talent for assembling a group of dedicated volunteers proved essential during this first year in attending to the many tasks associated with the new venture.

In 1970 the Trustees applied to Canada Council for a grant, the receipt of which enabled the school to be moved to more suitable quarters in the Old Model School at Twelfth Avenue and Cambie Street. Jerold Gerbrecht, principal trumpet of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, was hired as the first salaried Music Director, and the services of most of the principal players of the VSO were secured for the instrument music faculty. The school could now offer, in addition to its pilot programmes in Orff, Kodaly, and Suzuki, complete instruction in all instruments of the orchestra, supplemented by classes in theory, history, and chamber music.

The school grew and prospered, but in 1973, when the Old Model School was condemned by the fire department, a move to new premises was necessary. In September 1973, Mayor Art Phillips and Vancouver City Council approved the use of the Royal Canadian Air Force warehouse in Vanier Park as a possible site if the Trustees could prove their ability to finance the renovation of the building, Iby, Board President Elsje deRidder Armstrong, and other Board members moved into high gear, and launched a vigorous fund-raising campaign. They went again to the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation, and received a special grant of \$100,000 designated for the construction and furnishing of

a space within the building to be named the Koerner Recital Hall. The campaign was so successful that by 1976 the new premises were ready for occupancy. At the grand opening ceremonies on 9 May 1976, Iby was able to announce that \$1.9 million had been collected, which covered in full the costs of renovation.

By 1979 the school had “1450 students, and a waiting list of 650 students from the Vancouver area alone, including some children who are registered before they are even born!” Iby attended every Board meeting as a voting member, and was a constant presence at the school. Jerold Gerbrecht remembers that at the end of each school year, Iby would come to his office for a chat. “Well, Jerold, what will we do that is new next year?” she would ask, and when he told her that there were no funds to contemplate a new programme, Iby would say, “Don’t worry, Jerold, we’ll get the money” Iby’s role in the success of the Community Music School was also recognized by its Business Manager, Stanley Sadgrove, quoted in 1979: “She’s been chairman from the start and a guiding light for the entire operation. Her influence and enthusiasm has kept the school together and given it direction.” Iby herself regarded the school as “My main love affair in Vancouver.”

Faculty and students honoured Iby on 22 June 1979, with a concert and reception to celebrate her forthcoming eightieth birthday on 28 July. Ian Docherty of The Vancouver Courier covered the event, and wrote: “It was the happiest, most tuneful of birthday parties, Saturday afternoon in the Koerner Recital Hall .... Congratulations are flooding in from all points of the globe, but I’m certain none will mean more to Iby Koerner than the music she heard last weekend, from the school that stands as a triumphant symbol of her contributions to our cultural life.”

The school continued to develop and expand. A proposal to develop a College Division to meet the needs of outstanding students was approved by the Trustees, and a new name - The Vancouver Academy of Music - was chosen to reflect



*Mrs. Koerner at the 1976 opening of VAM's Vanier Park location*

the expansion. Eventually the curriculum included, in addition to the two year College Programme, a two year Diploma Programme in Performance, and a full four year Bachelor of Music Programme in collaboration with the Open University of the Open Learning Agency.

Iby’s “love affair” had come to full flower, but she did not live to see her small local school grow to an internationally recognized institution. She was happy with what she did live to see, however: “The school has a wonderful spirit .... The board, staff and students click together. Without this dedication, I say no organization can survive.”



# Forging New Connections

## A Digital Community

Facing unprecedented times, the VAM community has been coming together, making new connections from a distance in a time of physical distancing.

### Fireside Performances

VAM supporters have been playing an active role in supporting online musical performances by faculty through Fireside Performances.



### Virtual Strawberry & Tea

Students have submitted online performances in a virtual rendition of a recital tradition.

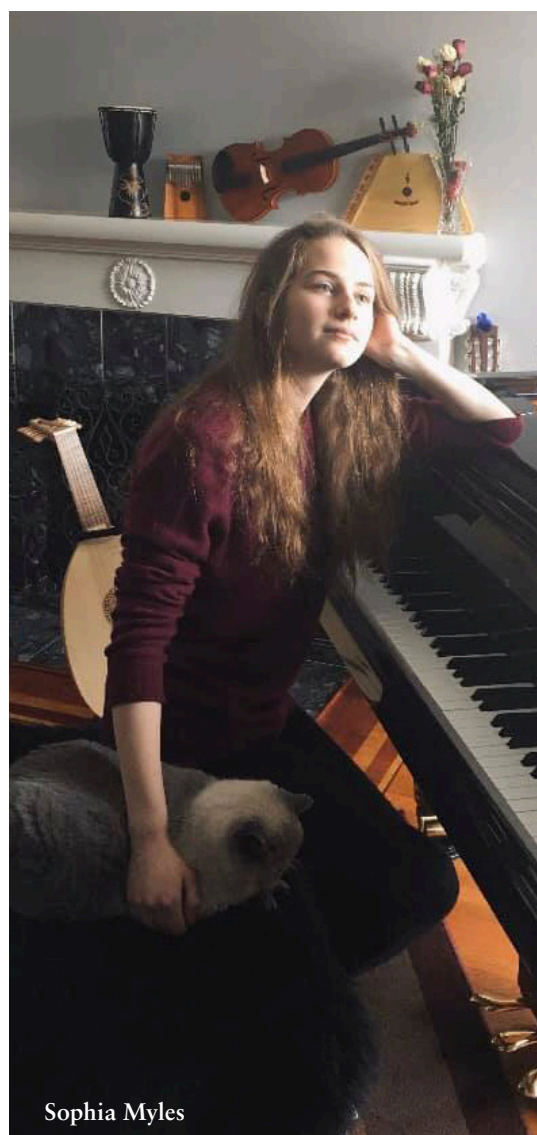
## Orchestra Performances

Students of VAM's Orchestral Program have come together by recording their individual contribution at home, compiled together into a virtual performance.

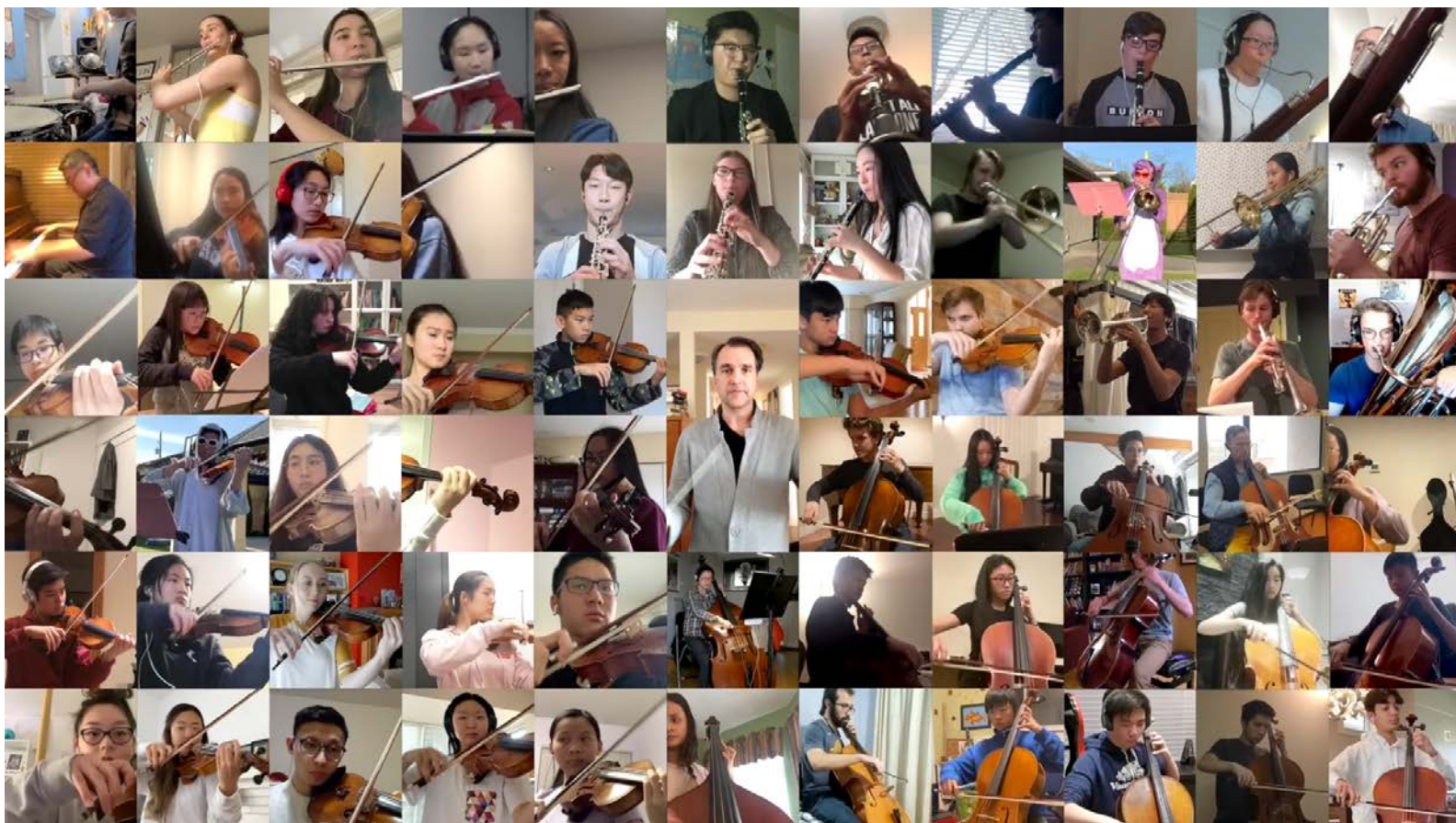


## VAM at Home

Students sharing their at-home music experiences on social media:







# VAM's Future is Bright

Now, more than ever, VAM remains committed to our students, faculty, and families as we face these unique times together.

United as a community, we are all invigorated and strengthened by stretching our boundaries and finding creative solutions to open new channels of learning, interaction, and ways of sharing musical explorations in this time and beyond. In this, our 50th Anniversary year, we look back with great pride on our illustrious history that is the foundation upon which our robust institution has flourished. In spite of the challenges of current events, we look with great optimism to a promising future to come.

We are so uplifted by the deep care and generosity of our VAM community of students, parents, faculty, and donors who have stepped forward in support of our initiatives to keep our students learning, keep our faculty teaching, and to focus on what is ahead. In the form of Bursaries and Scholarships, gifts to the Faculty Emergency Relief Fund, donations to our Annual Fund and Programs, and contributions to the Spirit of 50 Capital Campaign you not only celebrate our resilience, but demonstrate your enduring commitment to the success of our VAM students and their musical journeys.

These are truly the golden threads that run through the rich and vibrant fabric that is VAM.

**Thank you** – Because of you, VAM's future is bright!

If you would like to make a donation or would like information on making a legacy gift to VAM:  
Contact Gloria Wong at [gloria@vam.ca](mailto:gloria@vam.ca) | 604-734-2301 or visit: [www.vam.ca/support-vam](http://www.vam.ca/support-vam)

Pictured: members of VAM Symphony Orchestra in a virtual performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*