

# APPASSIONATO



## VAM Completes Spirit of 50 Renovations

VAM'S HARP  
DEPARTMENT  
BRINGS TOGETHER  
COMMUNITY (P. 8)

EMERGING ARTIST  
GRANT WINNERS VISIT  
BANFF COMPETITION  
(P. 12)

VAM'S 'MUSIC WITH  
FRIENDS' BRINGS JOY  
OF MUSIC TO AGES 3-6  
(P. 15)



## From the President & CEO

Welcome to the Winter 2022 edition of the *Appassionato* that recognizes the accomplishments of our students, faculty, and alumni. I am particularly excited that you've picked up a copy of the newsletter as the articles in this issue showcase the results of a community coming together.

First and foremost is the successful completion of VAM's *Spirit of 50* campaign which saw vital spaces revitalized to better serve students, families, and faculty. With focus on the Centre Lounge, Learning Centre, and creating brand new teaching studios, these areas of the school will further support room for study, gathering, and community.

As the Academy grows, so does the number of programs and its diversity. VAM is strengthened by musically enriching the lives of all who walk through our doors – from the youngest learners in the *Music with Friends* program, to harpists in two newly formed ensembles, to the support of dedicated chamber musicians such as the Cedar Quartet members – there is something for everyone at the school.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to every one of you. Your continued support and advocacy of music education is at the core of VAM's success. I look forward to the coming years with great hope.

Musically Yours,  
Joseph Elworthy, VAM President & CEO

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### APPASSIONATO

Brendan MacIntosh, *Writer*

# From the Board Chair

Welcome to another new year at VAM! This edition of the Appassionato serves to highlight areas of growth in our organization and infrastructure. Building on the success of the *Spirit of 50* campaign, we have completed renovation of the upper floor, and refurbished the Faculty Lounge, Centre Lounge, and Learning Center. To accommodate our growing student body, we have also added three new teaching studios.

A prime example of our growth may be seen in the Harp Department, headed by Joy Yeh. There are two new faculty members to address the significant growth in the number of students studying the harp. The harp ensembles director, Rosanna Chiu, guides both the new Children's Harp Ensemble, and the Adult Harp Ensemble, proving that age is no barrier to continued learning.

With regards to age, VAM has a wonderful program, Music with Friends which is geared towards 3- to 6-year-olds with no prior musical experience. Learning opportunities abound as parents attend these classes with their young ones. This program is coordinated by a stellar faculty roster: Trisha Doo (Cello Cubs); Monica Chen and Jonathan Na (Violin Duckies); Isabelle Roland (Viola Bunnies); Thomas Law (Flute Kittens); Teresa Bowes (Piano Pups); and Miya Otake (Harp Hamsters). I am excited to be able to follow these children on their musical journey.

A final feature item of our newsletter focuses on the Cedar Quartet. This group has been part of the VAM Chamber Music Program for several years. The members are quite experienced, with two enrolled in the YACP program and one in the first year of the College program. The Cedar Quartet is comprised of: Norah Mix, Mio Nakajo, Johnny Huang, and Julian Lee De Vita, and they are the winners of an Emerging Artist Grant.

With all that is happening at VAM, I almost want to return to class and study music at our terrific institution. Please enjoy our latest newsletter and we hope to see all of you at our performances held throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Raymond Dong,  
Board Chair, VAM



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# VAM Finishes Milestone Renovations to Celebrate 50 Years

Following a successful \$1-million fundraising campaign, VAM looks ahead to the next 50 years with revitalized learning spaces

The *Spirit of 50* Project has ushered in a triumphant new chapter to VAM's storied history, redesigning and updating the building that the Academy has called home since 1976, when it was moved out of its former location in the Old Model School across from City Hall. "The history of our building is quite interesting," Joseph explains. "It's one of the first reclaimed spaces in the city of Vancouver, having been converted from a Royal Canadian Air Force facility that was once used to service seaplanes during the war. And what a wonderful transformation, going from this military industrial usage to a creative, artistic, and educational application."

"When you look at the life cycle of VAM, fifty years is a very significant milestone. We started off as a community music school, basically the only one serving the Greater Vancouver Area, and then grew and evolved into a place of very high training as a music conservatory, with an accredited collegiate program and strategic partnerships that span an international scale." With the next fifty years in mind, VAM's *Spirit of 50* Campaign celebrated the Academy's bi-centennial anniversary with a renovation project that created new classrooms, teaching studios and washrooms, a new faculty lounge, and gathering spaces like the Centre Lounge and the new Learning Centre. These redesigned spaces were planned with careful consideration of the future of musical instruction at VAM, as well as the many

ways in which the Academy's communal areas are used. "We wanted to create a space that was open and conducive to creativity and interaction, and the real focus was on those shared convening spaces."

"So much of people's experience at the Academy is synonymous with the interaction between families, and that interaction specifically happens in the Centre Lounge, which sometimes feels like a study hall, and sometimes feels like a dim sum restaurant," Joseph laughs. "So, we wanted to create a new space, a revitalized space, that would allow for people to come together. Creating that sort of interactive experience was our ambition at the outset of the project, and coming out of the pandemic, the need for open spaces for people to safely interact is obviously heightened."

"We've had a number of large capital projects in the past ten years, namely Koerner Recital Hall, Mary Olsen Hall, and several other significant upgrades to our facilities. But our window for these construction projects was very small – basically only two months in the summer in order to not impede our regular academic programming. So, COVID-19 and the unfortunate situation of lockdown actually provided a window for us to be more aggressive with the renovation. We took full advantage of that and were able to mobilize and completely transform the entire second floor of the academy during the COVID era."





VAM's Community gathers to celebrate completion of *Spirit of 50* Campaign and milestone renovations



*We wanted to create a space that was open and conducive to creativity and interaction, and the real focus was on those shared convening spaces.*



“This renovation is the tether to our future,” Monique Wilberg, a member of VAM’s Board of Directors, tells me. “The underlying methodology behind it wasn’t just about putting lipstick on things, so to speak. We were thinking, ‘How do we make this healthy?’ So, part of the reason that it seems so much brighter and more sparkly in there is because the air circulation has been optimized to increase the cycles of fresh air coming into the building.” This makes for a fundamentally cleaner learning environment that is not only brighter and fresher, but also as healthy as possible.

How did people respond?

“It was very interesting,” Joseph smiles, “because a lot of people, including faculty, had not set foot on campus for a couple of years while lessons were being delivered remotely. For people that have been on our faculty almost from day one of our fifty-year existence, it was amazing to see them not recognizing the space that they’ve worked in for decades.”

Joseph tells me that the greatest joy he experienced from the project was the feeling of being at VAM on a Saturday, mid-morning, and seeing the buzz of conversations and the interactions between the families. “Traditionally, VAM families are so dedicated to comprehensive musical education, that quite frequently their children will participate not just in private lessons, but orchestra, chamber music, music theory and history, so it’s conceivable that they could spend their entire Saturday at the school. My highlight was to see that energy not only return, but to see how much everyone was enjoying the new spaces, from kids that want to study to the parents having their coffee chats. We factored in the design elements for these types of interactions because we understand the usage of the space very clearly.”

*Continued on next page*

Who were the most important people in the fundraising process?

We had some incredible lead donors that were instrumental in supporting the Spirit of 50 Campaign, which targeted a \$1-million goal. They helped us before we launched with seed money that allowed the campaign to hit the ground running. I also want to acknowledge the fantastic work and strategic thinking of Gloria Wong, our former Director of Development, who did a masterful job of orchestrating that campaign. Also, the support of the faculty, many of whom have a long association with the school – with some having started here as students – have been tremendous advocates for the need to improve the learning spaces to

create an environment that will benefit the entire learning community.”

“Over the course of the past twelve years, we have seen a complete revitalization of basically every corner of the school,” Joseph tells me, beaming with pride. “There are a lot of exciting developments ahead for the school, and one of my priorities in our 50th anniversary year is to create more regional, national and international opportunities for our students and faculty to share their talents and expertise with the world.” The past fifty years have been incredible, and the *Spirit of 50* Project has ensured that we are equipped for the future. ▲

## VAM's Pi Trio performs at RCM Convocation Ceremony

Adam Ngui (violin), Nini Lu (cello), and Allen Ding (piano) of the Pi Trio have been playing together since 2018. This past November, they were invited to be the featured performers in celebrating all ARCT graduates at the RCM Convocation Ceremony held at the Chan Centre for Performing Arts, on the UBC campus. The trio expressed feeling excited when they received the invitation and the prospect of performing in the beautiful hall, but also nervous because they only had three days to prepare. Luckily, Ms. Amanda Chan (VAM Head of Piano Department) supported the group with coachings in preparation for the event so they could perform to their best. It was a spectacular event for everyone and the Pi Trio felt immense honour at being the only performers that day.

After the performance, the Pi Trio was delighted to recount their involvement: “This was our first time performing at the Chan Centre and the experience was exhilarating. As we stepped onto the stage, we could not contain our excitement. The hall itself was wondrous, with incredible, resonant acoustics. The hall felt overwhelmingly grand with seats circling the stage, yet it was so inviting and warm that it was very comfortable to play in. We loved performing and felt privileged for the opportunity to represent VAM and

perform for the graduates, their families, and the senior executives of the RCM. An unexpected bonus that day was being treated like professional musicians, complete with a dressing room, a ‘Great Performers Lounge’, and a limitless catered lunch. In fact, we all bonded over the lovely cheese platter, especially the exceptional Brie! All in all, it was a memorable day to live the life of professional musicians!”



Top: Pi Trio's performance at the Chan Centre  
Bottom, from left: Allen Ding, Nini Lu, and Adam Ngui

# Congratulations to VAM students who participated in Spring 2022 VAM Exams!

## DISTINGUISHED

Guo, Ming Zhe Lucas (Joseph Elworthy) - Intermediate Class 3, Cello  
Hui, Renee (Joy Yeh) - Senior Performer's Certificate, Harp  
Li, Joy (Amanda Chan) - Senior Class 1, Piano  
Liu, Carol (Joseph Elworthy) - Advanced Senior Performer's Certificate, Cello

Ngui, Adam (Amanda Chan) - Intermediate Performer's Certificate, Piano  
Park, Noah (Rebecca Kelly) - Junior Class 3, Piano  
Wang, Cleavon (Rebecca Kelly) - Intermediate Class 3, Piano  
Wang, Joyce (Isabelle Roland) - Junior Performer's Certificate, Viola  
Wang, Tom (Paul Hung) - Intermediate Performer's Certificate, Flute

Wong, Bonnie (Joy Yeh) - Intermediate Class 3, Harp  
Yeung, Charles (Rebecca Kelly) - Senior Class 2, Piano  
Yin, Justin (Er Da) (Rebecca Kelly) - Intermediate Performer's Certificate, Piano  
Zhang, Alice (Rebecca Kelly) - Junior Class 3, Piano

## EXCELLENT

Bao, Justin (Joseph Elworthy) - Baudouin, Myrtille (Thomas Law) - Junior Performer's Certificate, Flute  
Borins, Eva Meru (Joseph Elworthy) - Intermediate Class 3, Cello  
Cai, Jasper (Joseph Elworthy) - Junior Performer's Certificate, Cello  
Dimitrijevic, Sofija (Domagoj Ivanovic) - Intermediate Performer's Certificate, Violin  
Gong, Harry (Lawrie Hill) - Intermediate Class 1, Violin  
Gong, Max (Lawrie Hill) - Intermediate Class 1, Violin

Goulding, Joseph (Joseph Elworthy) - Intermediate Class 3, Cello  
Guo, Chloea (Joseph Elworthy) - Intermediate Class 1, Cello  
Ho, Charisse (Rosanna Chiu) - Intermediate Class 1, Harp  
Jones, Flora (Rebecca Kelly) - Senior Class 3, Piano  
Kim, Angelyn (Miya Otake) - Junior Class 3, Harp  
Lau, Tin Wing Tia (Joy Yeh) - Senior Class 1, Harp  
Li, Quintin (Isabelle Roland) - Intermediate Class 1, Viola  
Li, Race (Joseph Elworthy) - Intermediate Class 1, Cello

Lim, Charles (Joseph Elworthy) - Intermediate Class 3, Cello  
Ma, Tyler (Joseph Elworthy) - Intermediate Class 3, Cello  
Wang, Valarie (Joseph Elworthy) - Junior Class 3, Cello  
Wu, Yuhan (Paul Hung) - Intermediate Performer's Certificate, Flute  
Xia, Shitong Susie (Joseph Elworthy) - Intermediate Performer's Certificate, Cello  
Xing, Olivia (Paul Hung) - Senior Class 1, Flute  
Zhang, Aidan (Carrie To) - Senior Class 2, Bassoon

## SATISFACTORY

Bailleul, Hanae (Rosanna Chiu) - Intermediate Performer's Certificate, Harp  
Goulding, Charlie (Joseph Elworthy) - Senior Class 3, Cello  
Lam, Kaylin (Joseph Elworthy) - Senior Class 1, Cello  
Lan, Alice (Joseph Elworthy) - Senior Performer's Certificate, Cello

Lee, Irene (Rosanna Chiu Bae) - Intermediate Class 2, Harp  
Qu, Serena (Joseph Elworthy) - Intermediate Class 2, Cello  
Robinson, Amely (Rosanna Chiu) - Intermediate Class 3, Harp  
Wen, Carmen (Shangjia) (Chad Heltzel) - Senior Class 3, Piano

Wong, Cameron Cayley (Rebecca Kelly) - Senior Class 1, Piano  
Young, Hallie (Isabelle Roland) - Senior Class 2, Viola



# Meet VAM's Harp Department

Joy Yeh, Harp Department Head, and Rosanna Chiu, Harp Ensemble co-director, give a glimpse into thriving harp activities at VAM

“Harps are magical,” Joy smiles. “Since we use our fingertips to play – rather than a bow or keyboard – harpists experience a very direct contact with the instrument. We place it on our right shoulder, right against the body. You can actually feel the vibration in your chest. I feel like it connects to your heart.”

Joy Yeh is the head of the rapidly growing Harp Department here at VAM and has been a faculty member in the department for eight years. She has also recently been appointed Principal Harp of the Vancouver Opera. Rosanna Chiu is the director of VAM's Adult and Children's Harp Ensembles, which Joy also co-directs. These ensembles provide a fantastic hub for harpists from the community to engage with each other both socially and musically.

“It was always my dream to pull the harp community together,” Joy tells me, sitting amidst a multitude of harps that range from the adorably small to the exceeding large and ornate. During the eight years in which she's taught at VAM, the Harp Department has grown to become one of the largest of its kind in North America, with several different



Joy Yeh (top), Rosanna Chiu (bottom)

programs on offer and a wide arrangement of instruments and instructors.

In the years since Joy first joined the department, the amount of public interest in harp has exploded. “We have really become bigger in size in the past two to three years,” she explains. “It got to a point where I had to tell Joseph, ‘I think we’re at full capacity now. We need to hire more teachers.’” They’ve also been able to create Children’s and Adult Harp Ensembles, which give harpists a unique opportunity to bring out their harps and play together in a group setting.

“Something special about Harp Ensemble is that it isn’t just for VAM students,” Joy explains. “It’s for any harp student who wants to come. So, we have students from other people’s private studios joining as well. I really wanted the ensemble to be a hub for all the local harpists to gather and get to know each other, whether you’re taking private lessons with us or not.”



Today, VAM's Harp Department has five instructors with a thriving community and student base. Joy tells me that her own students now range from ages three and four all the way up to folks in their sixties and seventies. "When I first started teaching," she explains, "I set my limit at six years old. That was the youngest I would accept. But after a few years, as I saw more and more young kids doing amazing things, I thought, 'Ok, I guess it's possible.' When people put something in front of you, then you want to see if you can do it."

"We recently had an online masterclass with a harp professor at Juilliard – not only with my students but with other people's students as well – and many times she said, 'Wow! How old are you? Eleven? I can't believe you're eleven and you're playing this piece! I played this piece when I was 20!' I feel like it's almost like the Olympics, where you look at records from 15 or 20 years ago and compared to now, they're nothing."



*Harpists experience a very direct contact with the instrument. You can actually feel the vibration in your chest. I feel like it connects to your heart.*



What are the youngest children in the Children's Ensemble like? "They are honest," Rosanna laughs. "The small ones will tell the older ones, 'This part you can do better. This part, you're not fast enough.'" This is the second season for the Harp Ensembles, and she's noticed a lot of growth on the part of the students. "In the Children's Ensemble, it's nice to see children begin to take ownership of their playing. Some kids really step up and are able to say, 'Hey, Section G – we've got to do it again.' For a teacher, that is very inspiring to see."

What does she think her students enjoy most about playing in a Harp Ensemble? "Oh, they like playing with people," she smiles. "A lot of us keep our harps at home. But the harp is not a piano. You can bring it out!"

"Before we had the ensemble," she explains, "the opportunity for harp students to play with people was in the orchestra. This is a more formal setting, and I think the ensemble gives them a less formal environment in which they might feel more comfortable to play. It's also a great way for them to make friends." She happily tells me the story of a close friendship that sprouted between one of her students and the student of a teacher outside of VAM, all because they both met in Harp Ensemble. "They've become good friends, and it was just from sitting beside each other," she tells me. "And now they want to play a duet! It's really cool to see them forge relationships like that."

Recently, the Adult Harp Ensemble won second place in the Infinity International Harp Competition, which truly speaks to the caliber of playing that these ensembles have already reached. "The pieces we played were an arrangement of Ed Sheeran's *Perfect*, themes from Studio Ghibli and *Down the River*, a German folk piece." Several of these were Rosanna's own arrangements. "We had played those pieces for our performance at VAM's Adult Learning Program Soirée concert, and I just floated the idea out and said, 'Hey, why don't we make a recording? We can pick the best out of three, and then just send it out! So there were no expectations.' Finding out that they won second place, however, was a lovely way to wrap up their season. "Some of the adults told me they had never won a music competition before," Rosanna smiles.

What else is new for the Harp Department? VAM recently launched the Vancouver Harp Fest this past November, which presented a beautiful display of the Harp Department's many talented students and faculty members, including over forty harps on stage! There are also Miya Otake's Harp Hamsters, a group of 3-6 year-old harpists starting out in the *Music with Friends* program.

As the Head of the Department, Joy's vision for the future is only just beginning, and with the incredible achievements and growth of the harp community at VAM, there will be many exciting things to come. "What we have now," says Joy, "is only the first stage of what I have in mind." ▲

# Congratulations!

## COMPETITION WINNERS

MAY - OCTOBER, 2022

### 2022 PHYLLIS SALTER PIANO COMPETITION

Name	Category	Teacher
Henry From, Piano	\$500 Scholarship, Category B (18 and under)	Amanda Chan
Merett Khamis, Piano	\$500 Scholarship, Category B (18 and under)	Lorraine Ambrose
Victoria Tsang, Piano	\$500 Scholarship, Category B (18 and under)	Amanda Chan
Adam Ngui, Piano	\$500 Scholarship, Category C (12 and under)	Amanda Chan

### 2022 KAY MEEK COMPETITION

Name	Award	Teacher
Aaron Kang, Violin	Kay Meek Scholarship (\$1,500)	Domagoj Ivanovic
Gyubin Lee, Clarinet	Alex Drennan Scholarship (\$1,300)	Chris Lee
Alice Lan, Cello	I.O.D.E. Scholarship (\$1,100)	Joseph Elworthy
Forest Benson, Piano	Willie Shen Scholarship (\$1,000)	Bogdan Dulu
Merett Khamis, Violin	VAM Scholarship (\$1,000)	Domagoj Ivanovic
Joseph Zheng, Violin	VAM Scholarship (\$1,000)	Domagoj Ivanovic

### 2022 ALTO CLEF COMPETITION

Name	Award	Teacher
Lincoln St John, Viola	Distinguished Award (\$200 scholarship)	Isabelle Roland
Irene Lim, Viola	Distinguished Award (\$200 scholarship)	Tawnya Popoff
Joyce Wang, Viola	Excellent Award (\$100 scholarship)	Isabelle Roland
Emilio Mendoza-Yu, Viola	Excellent Award (\$100 scholarship)	Peter Ing
Cedric Phillips, Viola	Excellent Award (\$100 scholarship)	Isabelle Roland
Aubrey Paredes, viola	\$50 Scholarship	Isabelle Roland
Claire Shen, Viola	\$50 Scholarship	Isabelle Roland
Quintin Li, Viola	\$50 Scholarship	Isabelle Roland
Ashleigh St John, Viola	\$50 Scholarship	Isabelle Roland

## 2022 CHAMBER MUSIC COMPETITION

Name	Award	Coach
Smile Chow (flute), Milton Fu (flute), Christy Hung (flute), Sabrina Mo (flute)	Winners, Senior Category Elsje de Ridder Armstrong Scholarship (\$1,000)	Paul Hung
Hannah Elworthy (violin), Phoebe Lan (cello), Ivy Fan (piano)	Winners, Intermediate Category Iby Koerner Scholarship (\$1,000)	Ian Parker
Adam Ngui (violin), Qiuzi Nini Lu (cello), Allen Ding (piano)	Winners, Junior Category Provincial Chapter, IODE Scholarship (\$1,000)	Joseph Elworthy

## 2022 VAMPJ, VAMJS, AND VAMIS SOLO/CONCERTO COMPETITIONS

Name	Award	Teacher
Valery Lou, Violin	VAMIS Competition: Orpheum Prize	Lawrie Hill
Charles (Jiseop) Lim, Cello	VAMIS Competition: VAM Prize	Joseph Elworthy
Frank Zhao, Flute	VAMIS Competition: VAM Prize	Kathy Wang
Adam Ngui, Violin	VAMIS Competition: Alternate	Domagoj Ivanovic
Mingzhe (Lucas) Guo, Cello	VAMIS Competition: Alternate	Joseph Elworthy
Phelicia Wen, Harp	VAMJS Competition: Orpheum Prize	Joy Yeh
Quintin Li, Viola	VAMJS Competition: VAM Prize	Isabelle Roland
Keenan Ashong, Violin	VAMJS Competition: VAM Prize	Domagoj Ivanovic
Elizabeth Louie, Violin	VAMJS Competition: Alternate	Sophia Cho
Yujing Lin, Violin	VAMJS Competition: Alternate	Domagoj Ivanovic
Leah Tan, Harp	VAMPJ Competition: Orpheum Prize	Joy Yeh
Valarie Wang, Cello	VAMPJ Competition: VAM Prize	Joseph Elworthy
Lucas Chan, Violin	VAMPJ Competition: VAM Prize	Irene Senent



**Sea to Sky**  
CHAMBERFEST

## Sea to Sky Chamberfest

**AUGUST 7-13, 2023**

VANCOUVER ACADEMY OF MUSIC | KAY MEEK CENTRE

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- Play side-by-side with members of Chamberfest faculty
- Featuring visiting artists Jonathan Crow & Ariel Barnes

**Audition deadline: May 18**

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# Cedar Quartet visits Banff International Competition

Recipients of VAM's Emerging Artist Grant visit Banff to participate in Youth Quartet Program of the prestigious string quartet competition

"I remember one day in orchestra, Julian just texted me, 'Hey, wanna form a quartet?'" Three years later, The Cedar Quartet has won multiple awards and played at venues across the country.

Their members are Mio Nakajo, a violinist with experience in numerous orchestras; Norah Mix, who also plays the violin and recently won first prize in her age group for the 2021 Best Beethoven Performance; Johnny Huang, who plays viola and has also played in a multitude of orchestras throughout high school; and Julian Lee De Vita, who plays the cello, and is currently attending VAM's college program. I recently sat down with the four of them to speak about the times they've shared together as a quartet, including their recent participation in the Youth Quartet Program at the Banff International String Quartet Competition (BISQC).

As a group, they appear very comfortable together, both as long-time friends and also as high-level musicians. "We're not just a quartet," Norah explains. "We're all just friends playing together. And I think it's important to establish that understanding of each other before you play together. Because being in a quartet is like being married to three people. When you break it all down, if you all get along really well, that's when you can actually start creating."

Their musical backgrounds are already impressive at their modest ages. Most of them have been playing since they were very young, and they have all put in long hours of practice to get to where they are today. It's especially important, they tell me, for each member to practice their individual parts to perfection before the group even meets. "Rehearsal time

is for trying to fit things together," Mio explains, "not for learning our own individual parts."

They're all smiles when I ask about Banff. "It was one of the best times of my life," says Norah. "It's this crazy, intense, global experience with people from all around the world, but then you just sit down and have dinner with the competitors, and it's just a totally casual environment."

They were participating as one of the Youth Quartets invited to partake in various activities, including one-on-one coaching with previous winners of the competition and opportunities to listen to the official performances. "It was interesting asking some of the quartets questions like 'how do you rehearse efficiently?' Most of them have routines that they follow every single time, so we've started doing that, but I think it's something that each quartet has to figure out for themselves, especially since every single quartet we saw in Banff was just completely different."

"Quartets are magical because you're taking four individuals, and you're making one entity," says Norah. "[Banff] was a real bonding experience for us. And it was remarkable to see all of the different styles and the authenticity of each group there." Mio tells me that she had planned to go into science prior to the competition. "But after going [to Banff], I realized that I want to pursue music," she says smilingly. The experience of being at the Banff Arts Centre immersed in classical music with like-minded people from all over the globe seems to have truly renewed and invigorated their shared passion for quartet. "Being in that environment was inspirational for everyone,"



Left to right: Norah Mix, Johnny Huang, Mio Nakajo, Julian Lee de Vita



*I don't think I will ever forget the time I have spent with these three other individuals, for better or for worse.*



Johnny adds, “I really enjoyed meeting more people who are passionate about string quartets.”

One of the pieces they played at the competition was composed by Ukrainian-Dutch composer Maxim Shalygin and commissioned by Festivals for Compassion. “It was composed in response to the war between Russia and Ukraine,” Norah explains. “It’s called *Drop After Drop*. We got to perform it in an outdoor concert with Music on Main, and then we recorded it at The Warehouse Studio in August. We played that at Banff, and we made the Canadian premiere of that piece, which was a big honor for us.”

“Originally, we formed to play Shostakovich quartets, which was kind of a bad idea,” Norah laughs. “We should have definitely started with something easier.” When I ask what else they played at Banff, however, the first thing they say is Shostakovich No. 8. “I think we’ve all learned how to really break things down and build it up from the beginning when

we rehearse together,” she explains. “You start to know each other’s quirks,” Julian adds. “I don’t think I will ever forget the time I have spent with these three other individuals, for better or for worse,” he laughs. “It’s been great to find people to connect with on a musical level, but also just as people, I find that we fit nicely.”

At this stage, Julian adds, they feel “telepathically connected. Every performance, we have to just trust each other, trust that we will be connected. Because when you play together, you’re not just listening to your own part. You’re listening to the entire quartet. Everyone’s individual parts, inside-out and backwards.”

And what’s next for the Cedar Quartet? “Right now we’re playing Haydn quartet,” says Norah. “And we have yet to decide what comes after that. But we’ve done a really wide variety. We’ve played Shostakovich quartets, and Mendelssohn quartets. So maybe something a little bit more contrasting to those are one of the classics – a good classic quartet. This is our final year together,” she explains, “because me and Mio will be going off to university next year. But I think we want to enter a couple competitions this year, and then probably do a big end of year concert just to wrap it all up. Because it’s been so great.”

“If I if I were to have a second life,” says Johnny, “I would definitely play in a string quartet again.” ▲

# RCM Exam Results

## Gold Medal

Dionigi, Chihiro (Hanh Nguyen), Grade 3 Classical Guitar  
Louie, Joshua (Hanh Nguyen), Grade 5 Classical Guitar  
Lu, Eric Siyu (Hanh Nguyen), Grade 2 Classical Guitar

## First Class Honours with Distinction

Borins, Eva Meru (Daniel Marshall), Grade 5 Theory  
Borins, Zoe (Daniel Marshall), Grade 5 Theory  
Choi, Seorin (Daniel Marshall), Grade 8 Theory  
Garcia, Priscila (Teresa Bowes), Grade 2 Piano  
Kwong, Theodore (Teresa Bowes), Grade 1 Piano  
Ma, Tyler (Daniel Marshall), Grade 8 Theory  
Ngan, Aden (Mary Thomson), Grade 2 Cello  
Quiring, Sophia (Robyn Driedger-Klassen), Grade 7 Voice  
Reinhardt, Kallen (Teresa Ho), Grade 5 Piano  
Telharkar, Arvind (Teresa Bowes), Grade 4 Piano  
Tupperainen, Alex (Daniel Marshall), Grade 8 Theory  
Wong, Bonnie (Joy Yeh), Grade 8 Harp  
Zhang, Cynthia Kexin (Alana Chan), Grade 10 Piano  
Zhou, Tony (Joseph Elworthy), Grade 10 Cello

## First Class Honours

Baxter, Tessa (Donna Lee-Leung), Preparatory A Piano  
Fong, Samantha (Martha Brickman), Grade 8 Piano  
Fu, Cyrus (Donna Lee-Leung), Grade 10 Piano  
Jin, Denzel (Alana Chan), Grade 3 Piano  
Keene, Spencer (Teresa Bowes), Grade 6 Piano  
Kwong, Charlotte (Teresa Bowes), Grade 2 Piano  
Lee, Adrian (Joseph Elworthy), Grade 10 Cello  
Li, Joy (Amanda Chan), ARCT Performers Piano  
Mason, Kai (Hanh Nguyen), Grade 6 Classical Guitar  
Ngui, Adam (Amanda Chan), ARCT Performers Piano  
Patterson, Arezoo (Miya Otake), Grade 2 Harp  
Qian, Lawrence (Tina Wang), Grade 8 Saxophone

Rewcastle, Lucas (Teresa Ho), Grade 7 Piano  
Sieko, Abby (Teresa Bowes), Grade 1 Piano  
Tian, May (Joseph Elworthy), Grade 10 Cello  
Ting, Chereen (Donna Lee-Leung), Grade 8 Piano  
Ting, Keiyshia (Robyn Driedger-Klassen), Grade 7 Voice  
Wang, Ann En-Xin (Amanda Chan), ARCT Performers Piano  
Wei, Esabelle (Teresa Bowes), Grade 1 Piano  
Xia, Susie (Joseph Elworthy), Grade 6 Cello  
Yang, Yimin (Alana Chan), Grade 8 Theory

## Honours

Borins, Eva Meru (Teresa Ho), Grade 5 Piano  
Borins, Zoe (Teresa Ho), Grade 5 Piano  
Cau, Arianna (Teresa Ho), Grade 8 Piano  
Chen, Lucas (Teresa Ho), Grade 5 Piano  
Fok, Justin (Kristl Armstrong), Grade 5 Cello  
Hasircioglu, Zeynep (Alana Chan), Grade 8 Theory  
Lau, Tin Wing Tia (Daniel Marshall), Grade 8 Theory  
Wong, Joanna (Teresa Ho), Grade 9 Piano





# Young Children Making Music with Friends

Children ages 3-6 begin their musical journey in VAM's *Music with Friends* program

*Music with Friends* is a unique learning program that introduces young children to music in a collaborative social setting, teaching them proper fundamentals in ways that are fun and rewarding, and placing an instrument in their hands within the first few classes. "I actually get my students to start playing the cello on the very first day!" says Trisha Doo, instructor of *Cello Cubs*. "I don't think there are many programs created for 3- to 6-year-olds where the students get to start playing the instrument within the first few classes."

The six different instrument groups in the *Music with Friends* program are Miya Otake's *Harp Hamsters*, Teresa Bowes' *Piano Pups*, Monica Chen and Jonathan Na's *Violin Duckies*, Isabelle Roland's *Viola Bunnies*, Trisha Doo's *Cello Cubs*, and Thomas Law's *Flute Kittens*. The classes are full-year, running from September-December (14 weeks) and January-May (16 weeks), and the participation of students' parents is an integral component of the learning experience.

"The parents sit in with every class," says Teresa Bowes. "It's just as much for them as it is for the kids, because they're learning with them. In my classes, they play with them at the pianos for the entirety of the class, and I think that sets them up to create a practice routine at home and play songs together. Last year, I did a concert at the end of *Piano Pups*, and I got the parents and students to go up on stage together and bow and play together, and that was really cute. It was fun and very comfortable for the kids to have their parents there."

"The kids and the parents just want to absorb as much as they can and are always so excited to learn," adds Trisha Doo. "Every week, they come in with questions about the cello and also just music in general. I think they all love the program!"

There are many different kinds of young learners, and for some, a group learning experience offers a unique appeal. "I started piano when I was 5," explains Thomas Law. "It was truly a love-hate relationship, culminating in me quitting and starting over at least 4 times. Looking back now, I was (and still am) always more interested in the communal aspect of making music (recorder class, ukulele, choir, band), and that may be why the piano wasn't the best fit for me at the time."

*Continued on next page*



*[The students are] really smart. We have a huge age range, and three to six is really different in development. But they surprise me a lot every day. They really can learn so much and they all think so well.*



“*Music with Friends* is really special,” he adds, “because it’s a chance to learn an instrument in a group setting that in the past would have been left to private lessons. For the students that are like me and thrive in a group setting, this is a great way for them to have that experience. What I love most about this year’s group of *Flute Kittens* is that not only are they learning the flute together, but they’re becoming friends as the weeks go by and seeing them collaborate together to solve problems is wonderful. At the core, young learners want to have fun while they learn so I’m constantly on the prowl for games we can play to help supplement the instrumental learning.”

“I like giving my kids small skills to master,” says Jonathan Na, “then building upon those skills in a fun and rewarding way. I like to use games and prizes as positive reinforcement to celebrate the “wins” in students’ learning. It always amazes me how well the kids respond to these simple games. Games are great icebreakers and a useful means to facilitate interactive learning as a group, but in the long term, students are most rewarded by intrinsic motivation in the form of self-progress and successful accomplishment of clear and achievable goals.”

How do you think children experience group learning in comparison to one-on-one instruction?

“I think they find it more exciting,” says Teresa Bowes. “For a lot of them, when they’re three and four years old, this is their first classroom experience, and this gives more of a social element to their playing and allows them to feel that they’re learning pieces with their friends and doing songs together as a group, rather than feeling shy and nervous playing by themselves. I’ve had a lot of private students come out of the class, and they’re very open about performing. They’re not too shy because they’ve done it so much in the group class.”

Monica Chen adds, “I’ve noticed that for students that don’t play in ensembles or who aren’t in group classes and are just by themselves for most of their learning, their awareness in general is actually a lot lower. Because when you play by yourself, if your rhythm or intonation is slightly off, you don’t notice it as much, but when you’re playing with a group, you’re going to fall behind or you’re not going to be with them. And that can be pretty immediately obvious. So even at the stage when they’re just starting to hold the instrument and make their very first sounds, I’m already introducing the group-playing aspect. Because when you have a group of six kids trying to play together, that’s something you can’t replicate in a private lesson setting. That’s a whole other skill set.”

“Another advantage is that after three or four months, when they start to be able to play pieces, this is a space where they



The Harp Hamsters class

can regularly perform. And a practice-performing space is so important because musicians perform all the time, and that way, it's not such a nerve-wracking thing later on when you're sixteen and you're performing for the first time. It really makes a big difference in the future."

"To me," explains Jonathan Na, "the uniqueness of *Music with Friends* is the VAM community. Aside from being a school with great resources and a stellar faculty, it is a place where students can experience a communal learning experience. At VAM, students can join one of the VAM orchestras, start a chamber group together, or attend one of the many summer camps or concerts at VAM. There are many opportunities for students to perform and collaborate with one another, forming relationships with peers whom they can continue to collaborate with later on."

"Our teachers in MWF are also very collaborative," he adds. "We have been coming together to find new ways to enrich the learning experience for our students with concerts and other inter-instrumental events. On the violin side of things, the teachers work closely with our program's Department Heads to ensure continuity of learning between classes and teachers so students can maintain a consistent learning strategy as they progress past the MWF program."

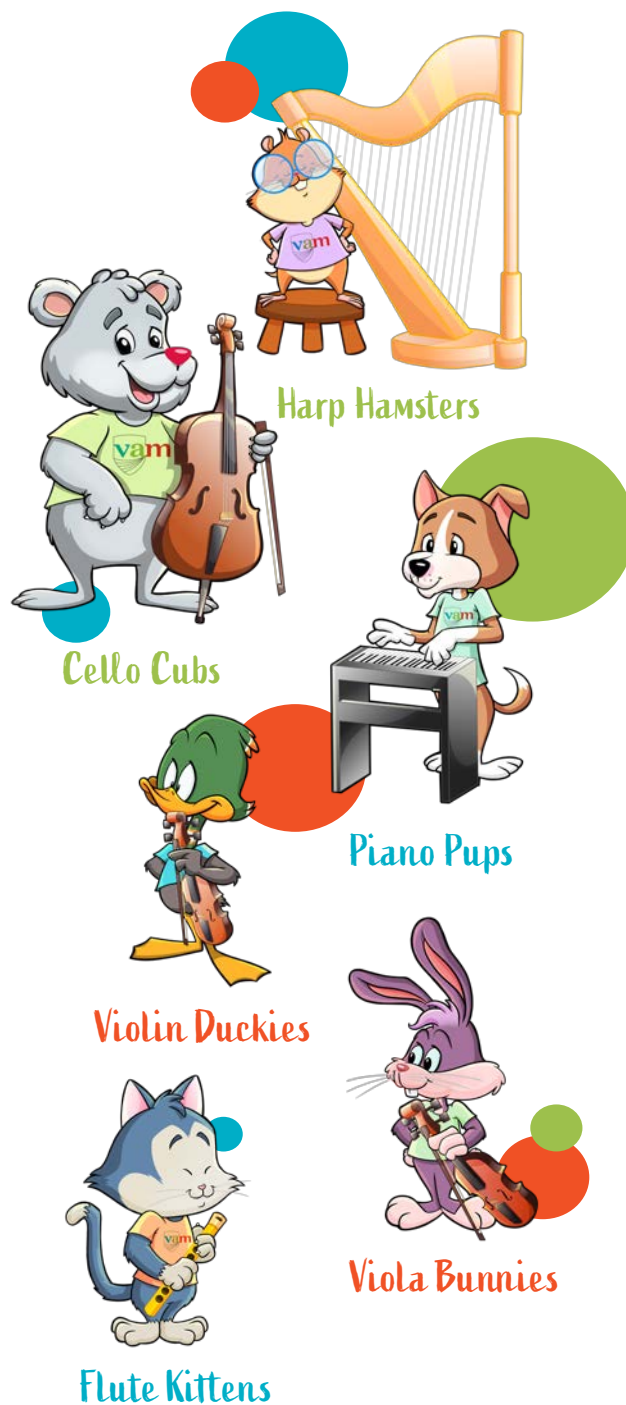
What are the kids like?

"The kids are amazing," says Trisha Doo. "I am so lucky I get to teach such a smart group of kids that come in every week with the best learning attitudes."

"Oh, they're smart," smiles Teresa Bowes. "Really smart. We have a huge age range, and three to six is really different in development. But they surprise me a lot every day. They really can learn so much and they all think so well."

Thomas Law adds, "my students have very distinct and huge personalities and they make me laugh a lot, and what I particularly enjoy about teaching the younger learners is how creative they can be in coming up with their own solutions when a problem is presented to them. Their perspective is so fresh that I try and apply how they see things in my own practice."

For parents that are interested in the *Music with Friends* program but aren't quite sure which instrument would be



the best fit for their child, VAM offers an amazing Summer Sampler course that allows students to find the right instrument for them. It's a stress-free (and very fun) setting with a group of instructors that truly love introducing music to young learners.

"I think it's the perfect beginning for a child who's interested in music," says Teresa Bowes. "This is my favorite age group to teach, and we have a really nice environment here for kids to have fun and play with their friends." ▲



# PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

**LAURA BRAS** (alumna, Alana Chan) gave her debut solo recital at the Saint-Medard Church in France. She performed works by Clementi, Beethoven, and Bartok.

**JONATHON CHAN** (alumnus, Caroline Jang) has been accepted into the Opera Performance program at the University of British Columbia.

**MELODY CHAN** (alumna, Lee Kum Sing) has been awarded a Canada Council of the Arts and FACTOR grant for the creation of her debut album for solo piano, titled *Children's Corner*.

**OLIVIA CHO** (alumna, Joseph Elworthy) has been accepted as a full-scholarship student at the Colburn Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles for her master's degree, following the completion of her undergraduate degree at the University of Michigan.

**SMILE CHOW** (flute, Paul Hung) was awarded First Place in the Provincial Excellence class at the Vancouver Kiwanis Music Festival, Runner-up in the Provincial Excellence Woodwind category at Performance Arts B.C., and First Place in the 17 years & under group at the Canada West Performing Arts Festival.

**ALAN CORBISHLEY** (voice faculty) co-produced and co-directed the Canadian Premiere of the 2017 Pulitzer Prize winning opera, *Angel's Bone*. This production will be the anchor production at this year's Association of Opera In Canada's annual summit and is co-led by Alan's arts organization, *Sound the Alarm: Music/Theatre*.

**HENRY FROM** (alumnus, Amanda Chan, Edward Top, and Donna Lee Leung) won the grand prize and people's choice award at the Orford 2022 Festival (Quebec) and was awarded a Davidson Fellows Scholarship (USA) in recognition of several of his recent compositions. In September, Henry started a Bachelor of Music, Performance (Honours) program on full scholarship at the Glenn Gould School of the RCM in Toronto. His teacher there is the Irish pianist John O'Connor. Henry was a finalist in the Glenn Gould School's concerto competition and has been invited to perform the Brahms *Piano Concerto No. 1* with the Royal Conservatory Orchestra in 2023. Henry will also be on the program at the RCM's 2023 21C New Music Festival and will perform major works by Stravinsky and Hindemith with the Kindred Spirits Orchestra in their 2023/24 concert season.

**RENEE HUI** (harp, Joy Yeh) won Second Place at the Infinity International Harp Competition, and has been invited to perform at the Philippines Consulate in spring.

The Elysian Trio - **PAUL HUNG** (flute faculty), **SARAH KWOK** (viola faculty), and **JOY YEH** (harp faculty) – recently performed at concerts presented by Concert Denman, Hornby Island Winter Concert Series, Old School House Concert Series, Blueridge Summer Chamber Music Festival, and Concerts on Tap. The trio has also received over \$55,000 in grants from Canada Council as part of their “Digital Now” initiative to produce an animated short, featuring a new work composed by **AIDAN MULLDOON WONG** (clarinet faculty), and to do a tour in Alberta.

**MELISSA PURNELL** (alumna, David Meek) sang the role of Donna Anna in Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* in Italy in October.

**SOPHIA QUIRING** (voice, Robyn Driedger-Klassen) has been accepted into the children's fairy chorus, and will be covering the role of the fairy, Mustardseed, for Vancouver Opera's production of Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**GRACE SOHN** (alumna, Joseph Elworthy) recently competed in the prestigious Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels.

**SAVANNAH TAMBELLINI** (harp, Joy Yeh) received the "Artistic Excellence" scholarship at the Vancouver Kiwanis Music Festival.

**TINA WANG** (saxophone faculty) was nominated and selected to participate in the Royal Conservatory of Music's Chinese filming production of the B.C. Teacher & Student Support Campaign in Vancouver.

**PHELICIA WEN** (harp, Joy Yeh) won First Place at the Canadian Music Competition (CMC). She is the youngest harpist, thus far, to receive this honour at the CMC.

**BIENNE WU** (flute, Paul Hung) was awarded First Place in the Concerto category and Romantic & Impressionist category at the Vancouver Kiwanis Music Festival and First Place in the Middle School Group at the Taiwan Music Competition.

**HANNAH XU** (saxophone, Tina Wang) won Second Place in the 14-year-old Winds category at the Canadian Music Competition this past summer.

**JOY YEH** (harp faculty) has been appointed as the Principal Harpist of the Vancouver Opera Orchestra.

**AIDAN ZHANG** (bassoon, Carrie To) was awarded the St. George's School Grade 8 Taylor Self Music Scholarship.



## VAM Remembers Andrew Dawes

Andrew Dawes passed away in October 2022. He was a former VAM faculty member and the founder of the school's Chamber Music Program. Andrew's dedication to music and his students leaves a legacy of numerous accomplished violinists and over sixty recordings of the award winning Orford String Quartet.



## VAM Remembers Alex Drennan

Dr. Alex Drennan was a great champion of VAM, serving as a member of the board and generously supporting the school as a legacy donor. He was a frequent attendee at VAM concerts who greatly appreciated VAM's talented students, dedicated faculty, and the platform of programs that allowed music to thrive and flourish in the school.



# Upcoming Events

## SONGS OF THE WASTELAND: HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE

January 29, 2:00pm | Koerner Recital Hall  
Tickets: [vam.ca/events](http://vam.ca/events)

## STRAWBERRY & TEA STUDENT CONCERTS

February 12, 1pm & 3pm  
Koerner Recital Hall | Free Admission

## COLLEGE WINTER RECITAL

February 17, 7:30pm  
Koerner Recital Hall | Free Admission

## VAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: SCHEHERAZADE

February 26, 2pm | Kay Meek Arts Centre  
March 5, 2pm | Orpheum Theatre  
Tickets: [vamso.ca](http://vamso.ca)

## VANIER PARK STRINGS & ADULT BEGINNER STRINGS

March 6, 8:00pm  
Koerner Recital Hall | Free Admission

## VOCAL THEATRE SONG COMPOSITION PROJECT

March 10, 7:30 pm  
Koerner Recital Hall | Free Admission

## EDITH LANDO GIFTED YOUTH COMPETITION: WINNER'S RECITAL

March 12, 2pm  
Koerner Recital Hall | Free Admission

## STRAWBERRY & TEA STUDENT CONCERTS

April 2, 1pm & 3pm  
Koerner Recital Hall | Free Admission

## YACP SPRING RECITAL

April 14, 7:30pm  
Koerner Recital Hall | Free Admission

## COLLEGE SPRING RECITAL

April 28, 7:30pm  
Koerner Recital Hall | Free Admission

## VAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: CARMEN SUITE & BOLERO

April 30, 2pm | Kay Meek Arts Centre  
May 14, 2pm | Orpheum  
Tickets: [vamso.ca](http://vamso.ca)