

# News and Updates

You see, teaching is not just a dry business of scales and exercises; a great teacher is one who can light a spark in you, the spark that sets you on fire with enthusiasm for music, or for whatever you are studying. – Leonard Bernstein

## Celebrating the next generation of music teachers

Leonard Bernstein was known primarily for conducting the New York Philharmonic and composing the music for Broadway's beloved West Side Story. However, he was also a steadfast advocate for music education, holding Young People's Concerts and giving workshops for schools throughout his career. In 1977, he also spoke to the House Subcommittee on Select Education, saying, in part, "I propose ... that they [children] learn to participate with enthusiasm in the study of music from kindergarten through high school." In a wonderful bit of serendipity, on the eve of our concert featuring Maestro Bernstein, we learned that quite a few members are early-career music educators. We'd like to take the opportunity in this newsletter to feature all ELEVEN of them! As you read through the next few pages, you will notice that these teachers are spread out all over the greater Sacramento region. Isn't it exciting to read about some of the good things happening in our local music programs? We are delighted to introduce you to: Kevin Bowlson (Clarinet), Jordyn Bonilla (Trumpet), Chelsie Chan (Bassoon), Rudy Cisneros (Trumpet), Mitch Evett (Trombone), Noah Flores (Trumpet), Arianna Guntvedt (French Horn), Nico Peruzzi (Trombone), Elijah Maes (Trombone), Hannah Sobelman (Saxophone) and Brad Sparks (Trombone).

22ND CONCERT SEASON

SACRAMENTO SYMPHONIC WINDS

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A LEONARD BERNSTEIN TRIBUTE**

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MUSIC & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Program  
Candide Suite  
Profanation from "Jeremiah, Symphony No. 1"  
Three Dance Episodes from On the Town  
Symphonic Dances from West Side Story  
Slava!

Sunday March 9, 2025  
2:30 pm  
Tickets at the door:  
\$15 General Admission, \$10 Students  
California State University, Sacramento  
Capistrano Concerto Hall  
6000 J Street  
Free parking in Structure 1

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My students are amazing and inspire me to really be prepared for rehearsals and energized for them. – Mitch Evett



**Name:** Arianna Guntvedt

**Years teaching music:** 5 years

**Where do you teach:** Laguna Creek High School, Elk Grove CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** The number of students and families that are involved. I am learning to delegate and to communicate with not just students, but a wide community of people who really want to support music. It is exciting and I am learning to juggle this responsibility along with teaching a regular school day.

**Why did you choose to become a music teacher?** I knew I wanted to be around music all the time and I had great teaching role models growing up: both of my parents are teachers, and they've set a great example for me by having engaging and meaningful lessons in the classroom and always leading with a kind and caring demeanor. I am forever grateful for their example and influence. Teaching at a high school is special because we get to make music at a pretty high level along with students who have reached an age in their development where they experience passion about their interests.

**Name:** Brad Sparks

**Years teaching music:** 7 years

**Where do you teach:** Davis Senior High School, Davis CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** Since I came from out of state before teaching here (I started my teaching career at Perry High School in Perry, Iowa), I can't really say what's unique compared to the surrounding area, but compared to where I came from, Davis is a very supportive community of the arts. We don't have a marching band, but we instead choose to focus our efforts on our concert ensembles. I am loving working here so far. It's a great place to teach.

**What have you learned about yourself from your students?** I came into teaching with much more of an ego than I have now. My students over the years have humbled me significantly by proving day in and day out that honesty and humility are the keys to succeeding as a teacher, and there is no use in approaching teaching like I have something to prove.



**Name:** Chelsie Chan

**Years teaching music:** 21 years

**Where do you teach:** Ronald E. McNair High School, Stockton CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** I am my own feeder program and my orchestra accepts ANYONE. We consistently score well at ratings festivals because my kids work hard. Working in a high school on a block schedule is both a privilege and a challenge for a music program.

**As a teacher what is one thing your students have done that makes you laugh every time you think about it?** I once used the word "schlep" for my percussionists – meaning they needed to get used to moving things around. It was *the word* of the year. They used it *all year*, every chance they got.

**What have you learned about yourself from your students?** I have learned how to give grace – both to myself and my students. The older I get, the more I realize that a teenager's world is such a powerful influence on them and if I give them grace when things are rough, they not only appreciate it but are willing to work harder for me.

**Name:** Elijah Maes

**Years teaching music:** 6+ years

**Where do you teach:** Rosemont High School, Sacramento CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** It has diverse ensemble offerings, commitment to student development in music, and strong community support, providing students with numerous opportunities to engage in and appreciate music. There are few places you can go in Sacramento County where someone doesn't know about the Rosemont Music Program.

**Why did you choose to become a music teacher?** I wanted to give back to the community that raised me and provide my students with the same opportunities that I was given as a student in the hopes that they find exciting ways to express and shape themselves as they grow into young adults.

**What have you learned about yourself from your students?** Taking care of each other is the best way to take care of your program. Ensembles are made of many different people, and my students have taught me that being there for each other is the best way to ensure that everyone contributes to the ensemble. When one person is missing from rehearsal, it impacts everyone. This can either be a negative impact, or an opportunity to reach out a hand and lift each other up.



I want the best for my students, and I am willing to put in the work to ensure that.

-Rudy Cisneros



**Name:** Hannah Sobelman

**Years teaching music:** 1 year

**Where do you teach:** Rescue Union School District (at 4 elementary schools within the district), El Dorado County, CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** This is the first year that it exists! The district has never had a consistent general music teacher (TK-3rd grade), so they just started it with the money from prop 28. It's also the school district where I grew up, so I teach at the elementary school I attended.

**What have you learned about yourself from your students?** What I've learned about myself from my students is that I like to have fun with music. I just forget that a lot as an adult. There are many ways to learn and practice but my students remind me that music should be fun, that's why I got into it in the first place

**Name:** Jordyn Bonilla

**Years teaching music:** 3 years

**Where do you teach:** Natomas Charter School Performing and Fine Arts Academy, Sacramento CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** My school is a public charter school with grades 6-12 who all have the option to join band. Of the 800 students at our school, about 200 are a part of the music department divided amongst 4 music teachers.

**As a teacher what is one thing your students have done that makes you laugh every time you think about it?** What makes me laugh is all the little things that happen on a daily basis. The chewed-up abomination of reeds that the kids love to show me every week, the lyrics kids like to add to the pieces we play in class, the analogies kids make in order to connect to their music, the sticky note reminders they leave in their music binders... all of the small things make my job the best job in the world.



**Name:** Kevin Bowlson

**Years teaching music:** 6 years

**Where do you teach:** Bella Vista High School, Fair Oaks CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** We have the only marching arts program in our district. We offer marching band, winter percussion and winter guard on top of all of the other amazing ensembles and classes we offer at Bella Vista.

**Why did you choose to become a music teacher?** I was inspired by all the music teachers I've had. They all really enjoyed their jobs and helped me find my home in music. I want to be able to help future generations find their home in music.

**What's one moment you'll never forget?** For me the moments I'll never forget are seeing the joy on my students' faces after a great performance or after they finally figured out something tricky or new on their instrument.



**Name:** Mitch Evett

**Years teaching music:** 11 years

**Where do you teach:** Rio Americano High School, Sacramento CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** I'm excited about our new orchestra program that started this year thanks to Prop 28 funds.

**Why did you choose to become a music teacher?** I chose to become a music teacher because I had amazing music teachers growing up. I was good at music and working with students so I chose a career where I could do that!

**As a teacher, is there one moment you can share with us that you will never forget?** A few years ago, we took our students to Czech Republic and Austria. I will always remember our first performance of that trip in a small town outside Vienna. It was a beautiful and magical night with much of the town listening to our music and enjoying food and drink.



When the days are long or difficult, I remind myself that I am fortunate to be helping young people grow in a discipline that will be with them for the rest of their lives. – Arianna Guntvedt



**Name:** Nico Peruzzi

**Years teaching music:** 5 years

**Where do you teach:** McClatchy High School, Sacramento CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** Our program is focused on preparing students for music after high school. We provide instrumental coaches for every section, have students play in solo and small ensemble recitals, and hold juries each year. Our concerts feature soloists and small ensembles as well as full orchestra pieces. Historically, 70%-80% of our students go on to study music in some capacity after high school.

**Why did you become a music teacher?** I really love performing and I love making music, but the life of a professional performer didn't seem like it was what I wanted to be doing. I look at teaching as a way for me to be a professional musician that allows me to have a stable income and explore every facet of music making. I love getting to learn how to play every instrument and teach every type of ensemble.

**What's one moment you'll never forget?** The first time a student told me they wanted to be a professional musician because of me. This was a student who I watched work her way up from the bottom of the second violins to concertmaster through a lot of hard work. It was the first time I taught a student where I felt like I was the one who guided her over the course of an entire high school career.

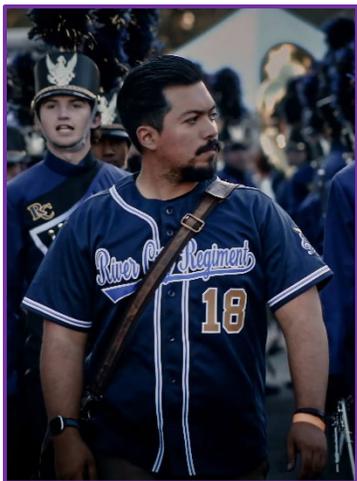
**Name:** Noah Flores

**Years teaching music:** 5 years

**Where do you teach:** George Washington Carver School of Arts and Sciences, Sacramento CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** We combine music performance, theory, production and recording techniques, and music business. I prioritize autonomy, skill building, and advocating their value as individuals to high school students. We go beyond technique and work through networking to educate our students about today's professional skills.

**As a teacher, is there one moment that you can share with us that you will never forget?** Last year, a couple of senior students wrote letters that informed me they had learned more about music and communicating through music in one year with me than the 8 years of prior instruction. They went on to state that the escape they got from listening to music had become more immersive through using the tools learned in class. Needless to say, I cried.



**Name:** Rudy Cisneros

**Years teaching music:** 7 years

**Where do you teach:** River City High School, West Sacramento CA

**What's exciting about your program right now?** When I first started in 2018, we were a competitive parade band with about 50 students and as of the end of the 2024 marching band season, we have finished our 4th season as a competitive field marching band with over 95 members.

**Why did you choose to become a music teacher?** I want to inspire growth for the next generation. I want to provide students an outlet to express themselves and prepare them for a future where they can use the skills learned in my program for any career pathway they choose. I also want to provide my students the education and performance opportunities I didn't receive in high school.

**As a teacher, is there one moment you can share with us that you will never forget?** In May of 2021 we had our first band concert after the COVID shutdown in 2020. At the end of the school year, we decided to have our return concert outside in the heart of our campus. It was one of the most fulfilling things I had ever accomplished with my students. The raw emotion everyone felt that day reminded me that we were all hurting from being separated and this concert served to propel our program toward the next chapter upon our full return during the 2021 marching band season.

The words of Leonard Bernstein from the Young People's Concert broadcast on CBS on November 29, 1963: *My dear young friends: You may think it strange that I have chosen to open this new season with the subject of teachers. After all, aren't these programs always about music? And what have teachers got to do with music? The answer is: everything. We can all think of a self-taught painter or writer, but it is almost impossible to imagine a professional musician who doesn't owe something to one teacher or another. The trouble is that we don't always realize how important teachers are, in music or in anything else. Teaching is probably the noblest profession in the world — the most unselfish, difficult, and honorable profession. It is also the most unappreciated, underrated, underpaid, and underpraised profession in the world.*

I chose to become a music teacher because of how much my own music education shaped my life and saved me in so many ways. – Elijah Maes



Elijah Maes, Nico Peruzzi, Mitch Evett, Noah Flores, Brad Sparks  
Chelsie Chan, Hannah Sobelman, Rudy Cisneros, Jordyn Bonilla, Arianna Guntvedt  
Not pictured: Kevin Bowlson

I have faith for the future because of my students. – Chelsie Chan

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