

Mountlake Terrace Bands

Jazz Ensembles

Concert Bands

Pep Band

Percussion Ensemble

NEWSLETTER

Week of November 18th

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**Disney payment for November
is due this Friday! \$150**

Poinsettia Sale is still going on!

What a week!

My weeks are full of extremely interesting things. They are challenging, no question, but also very rewarding. Sometimes I wonder how much to share before people stop reading and miss the stuff they really need to be “informed” about for logistical reasons. I’ve been bouncing around the idea of starting a blog so that our band community has a forum for meaningful interaction and discussion, not just a one sided newsletter once a week. (An aside: are you finding the newsletter to be an appropriate and helpful method of communication? Your feedback would be appreciated.)

So here it are some of the highlights...

Cuong Vu’s trio came and performed for over an hour before taking some questions from our students. Our students had some great questions that sparked some great answers from our guests. The band talked about really deep, meaningful things pertaining to art, the making of art, the pushing of boundaries, their personal journeys and projects, the rewards, the vulnerability of being an artist who exposes one’s soul in front of an audience. It was great. And the music was fantastic. Truly professional at the very highest level: quality, creativity, and intent. They performed in the band room on our stage under the theater lighting we installed last year. It was 9:00 in the morning but it felt like the cultural event of the year for the city of Mountlake Terrace. (not including our own concerts, of course!)

This visit sparked many good conversations in classes. We pondered the question of “what is art” and passions were raised. What role does the artist’s intent have in our perceptions of a piece of modern art (like a painting that one privately thinks “a 5 year old could do that.”) And beyond that, how important are artists and their work in our society. How are artists funded? How does funding for innovations in music compare to those in science? Why is it that science research is funded with the expectation that most, nearly all, of the experiments performed will fail while at the same time we tend to fund only the successful products of artists? Why don’t we fund artists to live and make art, some of which will be good and some which will not, in the same way we fund other fields to experiment, explore, fail, and hopefully succeed? I have a musician friend in town who has lamented in the past that if he could focus just on his own band and his own music he feels like he could really get something special going. However, in an effort to support his family he is spending most of his time playing other people’s music, salsa gigs, wedding gigs, teaching, and anything he can get. He

is not free to be the artist he could be and we'd like, in fact, need him to be. What is the difference between medical research that we hope will keep us stay free of disease or cure a disease and the "research" or lengthy creative process an artist/musician goes through to compose a new piece of music that can help heal our souls?

These types of discussions and wrestling with questions are absolutely fantastic, I think. They really are important, interesting, and cause a deep level of engagement and thought in many students, some of whom choose to share and others who participate quietly and privately. We actually began the week discussing the previous week's concert and assembly as well as the dance. There was some very thoughtful discourse about our level of preparation, procrastination, potential for new and more successful habits, new ways of thinking about concerts and class, and so on. I've already seen a shift in many students and their habits. It is so wonderful to see kids trying to grow and become, as I said in class, the very best version of themselves. The goal is not to be like me, or anyone else, but to become the best version of themselves more consistently. In order to do that of course, one has to reflect and think about what that looks like, what their ideas are about themselves and what behaviors they exhibit when they feel they are at their best. Fascinating stuff and I'm glad we took the time to begin thinking about these things.

Progress Reports

Progress reports came out last week and so I feel a need to explain my philosophy on grading. It can be confusing at first and sometimes meets with some resistance before people really understand where I'm coming from. I have decided in my classes to mitigate the negative effects grades have on learning as much as possible. The best learning, the best engagement, the best risk-taking, the best failures, happen when grades and their importance is diminished as much as possible. This is what I strive to do. So when you look at the progress report and see an "A" it does not mean that your student is doing "A" work. It also does not mean they aren't. The "A" doesn't mean anything. I post grades because I have to but the real feedback about performance and learning happens face to face in class. Students also do written work (theory packets) at their own pace in an effort to clarify misunderstandings and foster more comprehensive musicianship. The best way to learn how your child is doing is to ask them. If they don't know then please contact me. You can also check Skyward to see if there are any missing assignments. If an assignment is missing, there is no negative impact on their grade, just their education. They will not have learned what was intended from that work and I will not have learned about them. In the past, I haven't always gotten back to folks in a timely manner but I'm committed to being better at this. Please don't hesitate to begin a conversation or set up a conference to discuss your child in my class. I have way more information to share than I can communicate in a series of scores entered in an electronic gradebook. Music, learning, and especially people are way more complex than that.

Upcoming Events

- Northshore Jazz Festival - Inglemoor High School on November 23rd - Jazz 1 and 2

Announcements

- Disneyland payment for November is DUE on the 22nd. \$150, check made payable to ESD #15.
- Jazz at Lincoln Center is the organization out of NY through which Essentially Ellington is run. They are involved in some very innovative projects especially surrounding supporting education and creating a wider audience for Jazz. One of these projects involves a company called "Tutti." This is a REALLY cool practice/study/listening tool. All band students are welcome to check it out. Here are the instructions:
 - 1.) Visit: www.tuttiplayer.com

- 2.) Create an account using this code: 480343
- 3.) Download the Player onto your iPad/iPhone (EE content by the end of the month) Mac or PC
 - for Mac/PC: install Flash and AIR (links are provided)
- 4.) Sign into the app

Special Opportunities

- The 37th Annual DownBeat Student Music Awards are open and ready for your entries. Please go to www.downbeat.com/sma for the application and rules.
- "I am contacting you in regards to color guard recruitment for the Seattle Cascades Drum Corps 2014 season. We are excited to be kicking off our season in a week with our Open House camp November 16th and 17th. There are a few old faces, a few new as well, and a continuing passion to bring students a high level of education within this activity. If you could help spread the word to your students about our opportunities available I would be immensely grateful. Any students with questions and/or interested in joining our award-winning organization can contact me directly, Nicole.mh.phillips@gmail.com, or they can visit our website at www.cascadesdrumcorps.org."

MTHS MUSIC BOOSTER NEWS

BAND * CHOIR * ORCHESTRA

Thank you to all who helped in any way with the Veterans Swing Dance last Saturday night. It was a big success and everyone who went has nothing but positive things to say about their experience!

We are still in need of volunteers for the Breakfast with Santa and Nutcracker concert. Please contact Sherrill Leppich.

