Opus Notes is usually filled with photos of excited and grateful students in their classrooms and auditoriums, eagerly ripping open boxes of new instruments or holding shiny new flutes or trumpets that they’ll play for the first time. Sadly, those moments and memories are on an extended hold. But it doesn’t mean that the kids aren’t playing, and that they don’t have new instruments to make music education come alive. We’re seeing to it!

Holland’s Heroes

This growing circle of arts and music leaders and teachers are a force for good, and together, have made their participation in our twice-monthly video calls a huge success. Initially launched in April to provide a place for our partner school districts to share their stories and issues related to Covid-19, it quickly gathered momentum and became a place to truly connect, learn, and create - all for the new future of music education in their students’ lives. We salute you all for bravely forging ahead to keep music alive in our schools - and homes!

Sierra Vista Middle School band students in Covina CA are continuing their music education remotely with instruments donated last school year.

“We absolutely love this thing. It’s so shiny and it plays very nicely. It has a larger bore which is perfect for me because I needed a larger bore so I could play more clearly which is amazing. The tuning slides are so much easier to pull out and push in. Also the slide was very quick and it was perfect.” Noah, 8th grade

“Thank you for improving my musical experience. Providing our school with new percussion instruments has bettered my band experience and makes band a more enjoyable class to take. Our band is now able to cover our percussion parts which improves the overall performance. I get to experience what it feels like to play on a marimba and a vibraphone whereas before I would not get to experience that. Thank you for everything you do for our school.” Mason, 8th grade

Waltrip High School band in Houston welcomed back students on their first day of hybrid learning. They are playing on some of the 29 new instruments awarded to the school in 2017.
Composer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Abby Posner discovered MHOF through an online search, and what she found delighted her. In 2012 she became a committed supporter of our work, and through her family’s generous foundation, has put hundreds of instruments into kids’ hands. We’re honored to know her.

You grew up in Colorado and both your parents were educators. Did they encourage your music education, or were you self taught?
Both my parents fortunately supported my passion for music starting at a young age, and they got into piano lessons when I was about 5 years old. I then went on to take guitar lessons around age 8. After taking piano and guitar lessons I found myself wanting to learn more instruments, and more about songwriting and arrangement. I taught myself how to play bass, and drums, and then I dove deep into music theory and composition at CalArts where I went onto learn latin percussion, banjo, and mandolin, and african drumming.

When did you know that music was going to guide your life?
I remember being at somewhat of a crossroads when I was applying for colleges, because I also loved theater, and acting. I made a decision to focus 100% on music when I was about 18 years old. I chose to study at CalArts because I was able to collaborate with other artists outside the music school. I learned about film scoring, accompanying dancers, and working with animators. It was truly a creative playground, and I am so grateful I decided to study there.

In high school you spent a month in Africa working with children. How did that experience change you?
I went to Africa when I was very young. I must have been about 17 at the time, and I went there to work at an orphanage/school for children with HIV and AIDS. Service work has always been a big part of my life, and learning about other cultures is extremely important to me. It was a life-changing experience, and I feel like everyone should go outside their comfort zones in life...help people in need, learn about something new, and if you are in the position to give back, do it!

The pandemic has affected all children, and their ability to learn and focus is a challenge. Are you having the same challenges and how do you handle it?
I have had to change my entire approach to playing live, and teaching music. Normally I would be planning a tour, playing live at least once a week with my band Abby & The Myth (www.abbyandthemyth.com), but with COVID we have all had to adjust to virtual concerts, and virtual teaching/learning. I teach all my private music lessons on Zoom now, and that has been a challenge. I love connecting with my students in person, so the energy exchange is very different over a computer screen. I also host a monthly show on Zoom called Songwriters In The Round, where I invite my friends to come on and play. This has been so healing for me, because it keeps me connected to my musician friends, and it provides a space where we can still see the audiences faces, as opposed to playing on Facebook/Instagram live.

You’ve been a supporter of the foundation for nearly a decade. What keeps you motivated to help more kids play music?
I want all children to have the opportunity to focus on creativity, whether that is acting, arts, music, or writing. I know that focusing on music can feel a bit more overwhelming than other artistic endeavors, because instruments and lessons can be very expensive. If I had it my way, I would create a government funded program that allowed anyone to rent/buy the instrument of their choice and learn music for free. MHOF works very hard to do something similar to this, it is my favorite non profit that keeps music programs in schools, and it allows kids to play/learn a musical instrument that they might not be able to learn otherwise. Music has always been the most healing thing for me in life. It has kept me grounded, and made me feel like I have a purpose. I want every kid to experience the joy of music, because it saved me in my own life. I want to pay it forward.

Hear Abby’s online shows: www.abbyposner.com/shows
When a loved one dies, honoring their life matters. Music touches every life in some way, and donations in tribute to a life well lived is a way to express our love and respect while supporting something they believed in. We share their stories and thank their families and friends for trusting us with their legacy.

**Eddie Van Halen**

We met Eddie nearly 10 years ago when he donated 75 guitars from his personal collection for local schools. He and his wife Janie became dedicated friends and donors and were always there for the kids. We lost a true friend and champion for music education. Our hearts go out to his family, friends and many fans. The seven schools that received the guitars still cherish them and every year more students will learn to play on these instruments.

**Bobby Horowitz**

Bobby Horowitz and his wife Becky were not only long-time donors, but they took an extraordinary interest in how MHOF vetted schools, the qualities of the teachers and principals, and how new instruments would impact the kids and the school. They supported schools in San Diego and Las Vegas, visiting each school to meet the students and teachers and going to concerts when the instruments were used. Bobby passed away suddenly in April, and Becky continues the work that he so passionately supported at MHOF. A man with considerable friends and business associates, donations in Bobby's name flowed in, directed to places most important to him, including Atlanta where he and his sister Jane grew up.

**Tom Battista**

Made in memory of his father-in-law Tom Battista, who lived a charmed life filled with music and friends, Jay Marciano donated seven beautiful electric guitars from his prized collection. Now in the hands of music students in two Los Angeles schools, these excellent instruments will give immense joy to lucky players for many years to come. The other donations that were made in Tom’s memory will keep music playing in a high school near his home in Rhode Island.

**Simon M. Haddad**

In April, Mindy Feldscher lost her husband Simon Haddad to Covid. He played jazz guitar and was a talented young man with many friends. His wife told us that just before he collapsed, he was setting up his basement studio and pulling out one of his beloved guitars. With donations from Simon’s many friends in his memory, new instruments will be awarded to a middle school jazz band in Bridgeport CT.
Students across the country will soon play new instruments, both at home and on campus. Here’s what’s happening since school started.

**Atlanta**
Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School - 27 instruments and 16 mouthpieces
Grady High School - 2 tubas

**Bridgeport CT**
High Horizons/Multicultural Magnet Schools - 50 instruments

**Houston**
Chavez High School - 42 instruments
Heights High School - 16 instruments
Evan E. Worthing High School - 17 instruments
North Forest Middle School - 76 instruments

**Las Vegas**
Gibson Middle School - 20 instruments

**Los Angeles**
Chester W. Nimitz Middle School - 18 instruments
Maywood Center for Enriched Studies - 38 instruments

**Norfolk**
Blair Middle School - 40 instruments
Northside Middle School - 21 instruments and 5 instrument cases

**Orange County FL**
Piedmont Lakes Middle School - 15 instruments
Union Park Middle School - 27 instruments
Westridge Middle School - 24 instruments

**San Diego**
Oak Park Elementary - 52 instruments and 11 mouthpieces
Lincoln High School - 15 instruments

**San Francisco**
Music education is a core part of StubHub’s social impact mission, and our collaboration with them over the years has benefited thousands of kids in dozens of schools. Most recently, every fourth-grade student in San Francisco Unified School District received a new recorder to start their musical journey at home. The district is committed to connecting to every student, and the 4,300 kids in 72 schools receiving their recorder will have the best online experience possible.

Furr High School band in Houston received 61 new instruments just in time for holiday concerts last school year. The new oboe was assigned to freshman Juana Barrios. Now in 10th grade, Juana shares why she’s eager to return to band: “It’s a place where we feel comfortable being ourselves, where we face hardships together and work on improving ourselves. Like other bands out there, we are here because we enjoy doing what we do, we enjoy the gift music has given us and we want to cherish it together as much as we can.”

Reach out this holiday season with a card that conveys your love of music and gives the gift of music to a child. To order your cards and put instruments into eager hands, call 818-762-4328 or order online at: www.mhopus.org/holiday-cards/

A cash contribution today will change a life forever. Please give the gift of music by donating online or using the enclosed envelope. On behalf of so many, thank you SO much!

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