
PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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MUSIC FOR LIFE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH OUR CONCERTS

Music has a remarkable way of bringing people together. A concert is more than a performance—it is a moment when students, teachers, families, and communities come together to share something meaningful. From an elementary student playing a first note to a college orchestra performing a challenging symphony, music becomes part of who we are. Looking back, I realize that some of my most lasting memories are connected not to a particular grade or classroom, but to the music I made and the people I made it with.

I still remember the start of my first orchestra piece:



That may not sound like much now, but at the time, those few notes felt important. Mr. Zizzi used the same song each year, and, somehow, we always managed to come up with a new title for it. Those early concerts were simple, but they were exciting. We were learning how to hold an instrument, follow a conductor, listen to one another, and, most important, be part of something bigger than ourselves.

That is what I love about elementary music concerts. The programs may include beginning band pieces, simple orchestra selections, or chorus songs about friendship, family, and growing up. The students may not always play every note perfectly—and that is okay. What I remember most is the pride on their faces. They have worked hard, and when they walk onto the stage, they are musicians. For many children, that first concert is the beginning of a lifelong relationship with music.

As students move into middle school, the music becomes more challenging, and so do the relationships and experiences. Band students perform marches, movie

themes, and concert pieces. Chorus students discover harmony and learn what it means to blend their voices with others. Orchestra students begin playing more complicated rhythms and musical passages. Somewhere along the way, students discover that the person sitting next to them matters. If one section rushes, another has to respond. If someone misses a note, the ensemble keeps going. Those lessons stay with us. Music teaches us to listen—not just to the conductor, but to each other.

By high school, concerts can become powerful experiences. I have watched students transform from shy beginners into confident performers. A high school band might perform a march, a jazz piece, a movie selection, and a challenging concert work all in the same evening. A chorus may sing music from different cultures and languages. An orchestra might perform a movement from a major symphony or a beautiful piece of film music. Behind every selection are hours of rehearsal, frustration, laughter, and determination. And then comes the moment when it all comes together.

There is something special about sitting in an audience and hearing a student ensemble perform a piece that seemed impossible weeks earlier. You can almost hear the hours of practice behind every measure. You see students watching one another, listening, adjusting, and trusting the people around them. That is when music becomes more than notes on a page. It becomes a shared experience.

Music can also reach beyond the concert hall. High school and college ensembles have the opportunity to use their music to serve others through benefit concerts, community performances, holiday programs, and fundraising events. A concert can raise money for a food pantry, support a local organization, or simply bring joy to someone who needs it. I believe those experiences are some of the most important lessons music can provide: our talents are

not only for ourselves. They can be used to help others.

At the college level, students often take that passion even further. University bands, choruses, and orchestras perform major works that require months of preparation. Some students study music professionally; others are future teachers, doctors, engineers, scientists, or business leaders who simply cannot imagine their lives without music. They continue playing because somewhere along the way, music became part of them.

That is the real meaning of “**Music for Life.**”

When I think about my own musical journey, I don't remember every concert program or every piece I played. I remember people. I remember teachers who encouraged me. I remember friends sitting beside me. I remember the nervousness before a performance and the feeling when we finished. I remember laughing about that same beginning orchestra song and giving it a new name year after year. Most of all, I remember belonging.

That is what we give our students through music. We give them a place to belong, a reason to work hard, a way to express themselves, and an opportunity to contribute to something bigger than themselves.

When students step onto a stage, they are not simply playing instruments or singing songs. They are sharing their time, their effort, their creativity, and a little piece of themselves. And perhaps that is why concerts matter so much. Long after the final note fades, the memories remain.

Music really can be for life — and through our concerts, we have the opportunity to make that life a little richer for everyone. ||