

COMMUNITY

BY SUSAN B. APEL

Photographs courtesy of Upper Valley Music Center

Upper Valley Music Center

BUILDING COMMUNITY BY MAKING AND SHARING MUSIC



Suzuki students perform their annual Showcase Concert in the Lebanon Opera House. Photo by Rob Strong.

Music challenges
the brain,
feeds the heart,
and nourishes
the soul.





If you were waiting in a line of cars for a take-out lunch at the Upper Valley Senior Center in Lebanon over the past pandemic-influenced years, you might have been anticipating a tasty meal, and maybe even a cheerful word with volunteers passing lunches through car windows. But there might have been an unexpected bonus: a simple outdoor concert. On several occasions, students from the Upper Valley Music Center contributed to the meal delivery project by hauling their instruments across the green to the Senior Center to make music while hungry patrons snaked through the line. It is one example of how the Upper Valley Music Center connects to the community, even if it is outside of its own doors.


Inside its doors, however, is a hive of educational and artistic activity. Approximately 1,200 participants a year take group or one-on-one classes at UVMC, with a faculty of 33. Some gather to form ensembles in which they can play together regularly, perhaps chamber music or contra dance tunes. Music Together brings families with children to the center to learn how to incorporate music into everyday family life. All are part of the fabric and philosophy that at UVMC, “music truly is for everyone, for all ages and experiences levels,” says Erin Jenkins Smith, assistant director (also instructor, former student, parent, and a one-time volunteer). “Sometimes a newcomer hesitates: “But my toddler . . .,” to which Erin responds without hesitation, “yes, yes to your toddler.” Not only is everyone welcome, but chances are there’s a class, a program, a concert, or sheet music in the library with your name on it.




Clockwise from above: UVMC offers Music Together classes for birth to age six, with lots of drumming! Photo by Nancy Nutile-McMenemy. Carolers gather in front of UVMC. Community members join the chorus at the Messiah Sing. Photo by Paul Hurford. Parent and child perform together in a recital. Photo by Rob Strong. DJ Sean Hay and a DJ Academy student lead a dance party. Fiddle tune fans jam together in Colburn Park. Photo by Rob Strong. Mark Nelson conducts the orchestra and soloist at the Messiah Sing.









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COMMUNITY

Spreading the Word—and the Music

UVMC began in a different Lebanon location in 1995 and consisted of a community orchestra, a children’s chorus, and chamber music ensembles. Classes taught according to the Suzuki method were added in 2002. In 2017, UVMC moved into its present location, a stately brick home facing Colburn Park, Lebanon’s town green. Within sight lines of other major arts venues like Lebanon Opera House and AVA Gallery and Art Center, the move has given UVMC added visibility. When events are held on the green, such as a UVMC-sponsored gamelan workshop or the recent local business-oriented LebFest, Erin is able to field questions about the center’s location by pointing to the brick structure right on the edge of the park. Moreover, the flow of students dragging cellos or hoisting guitar cases along the town sidewalks has drawn a good kind of public attention.

Learning in a community is important to the mission and the feel of the place. Under a single roof, a retired person may be coming in for an individual violin lesson, a community chorus is assembling, and five-year-olds are pounding drums. A master class (sometimes led by artists in town appearing at other venues like the Hopkins Center) is in progress. While performing is not required, participants often share their own music with others in casual day-to-day interactions or in more formally staged concerts.

Establishing a Place in the Community

UVMC is conscious of its place in the larger arts community and the Upper Valley. As part of building relationships and community outreach, it recently co-presented a workshop on inclusivity for local arts organizations. In addition to its on-campus class, it has established a growing program of Music Together on-site at the Family Place in Norwich, which supports young parents. And with

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the Special Needs Support Center in White River Junction, it offers a music lab for adults with disabilities.

UVMC will take part in or sponsor traditional winter celebrations. First is Lebanon's Tis the Season, a festival involving downtown arts and business venues that coincides with the annual tree-lighting ceremony in Colburn Park. The Music Center will be hosting an open house featuring student recitals and the ever-popular carol sing. All are invited to join in the singing of holiday songs; songbooks with lyrics are available for those who may need them. And on December 18 is the Messiah Sing. The soloists from the voice program and instrumentalists will perform; community members will sing the choral parts. (Information about masking and seating arrangements will be available on UVMC's website.)

Expanding Their Offerings

Despite its foothold in what may seem traditional forms of music, Erin says the center "maintains an openness to all sorts of music making." Enter DJ Sean Hay, music instructor and recent addition to UVMC. Some young people may not be so quick to pick up the flute and learn to play something classical, but they certainly like their own music, often produced by talented DJs. UVMC now offers DJ classes.



Above: Platinum radiant cut sapphire ring with kite-shaped brilliant cut diamonds.

Left: Locketts by Monica Rich Kosann: 18KY "Brooke" slim locket with mother of pearl; 18KY "Infinity" diamond and gold locket; two-tone four image pinstripe locket.

Below: 14KW graduated diamond tennis bracelet; 14KYW diamond bracelet with five pave cushion links; 14KW diamond link bracelet.

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- DEC 10-11 Dreamz in Motion presents "Clara Dreamz"
- 17 Rock This Town Christmas Spectacular
Brian Setzer Orchestra Tribute
- 30 Mascoma Bank Film Series
- JAN 21 Claremont Elementary Schools present
"A Tribute to Mulan"
- 27 Mascoma Bank Film Series
- FEB 3-5 Amplified Arts presents Stardust by Walter Kerr
- 11 What About Love? Heartless -
Heart/Led Zeppelin Tribute
- 18 Comics from Boston & Beyond!
- 24 Mascoma Bank Film Series
- MAR 18 Jordan Tirrell-Wysocki Trio
Irish Music for St. Patrick's Day





A sit-in orchestra gathers at the first annual Sing & Play Festival. Photo by Nancy Nutile-McMenemy.

“Students learn about different genres of music and how to put them together by mixing, using DJ turntables,” says Sean. “They learn blending techniques, scratching, and looping. They also learn how to interact with their audience by using the microphone to communicate and get the audience excited and moving.”

Not only do students learn DJ skills, Sean believes they begin to build self-awareness and self-esteem. He sees students finishing the course “feeling better about themselves and a little more out of their shell and confident.” **i**

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