

Community Voices: Linda Daniels

Linda will be joining CMW's Board of Directors this fall. Here, she writes about discovering that CMW was about more than free instrument lessons.



Like many adults who take up an instrument, I'm a bit of a cock-eyed optimist. (Realistic people take up more sensible hobbies, like fire-swallowing.) As hard as it has been, I have kept playing cello these last ten years, through many a monsoon and near-death performance experience, and I love it as much if not more than I love any number of things I can do better. The whys and hows would take a long time to explain. Suffice it to say that I wanted my kids to have a similar life-altering and mind-shaping experience.

To that end, I convinced two of them to join Community MusicWorks, not really understanding what it was all about, beyond free lessons. My youngest, Malachy, now 11, began studying the cello almost three years ago. Liam, 14, started the viola in fall 2008. The CMW experience has so enriched their lives and mine, that I can't imagine how we managed without it. Sure, CMW teaches kids how to play an instrument, which is wonderful in and of itself. But what sets CMW apart from other organizations, including most schools, is its approach. CMW meets people where they are, recognizing kids and their families not as passive recipients of help and instruction, but as peers with their own gifts and life experiences to offer. I almost like what CMW is not as much as I like what it is: It is not competitive. It is not exclusive. It is not judgmental. The 7-year-old who shakes and skitters his way through "Twinkle" gets just as big a hand as the accomplished teenager who nails a Bach sonata or the less accomplished but perhaps braver teen who stutters through a folk tune and achieves much more than she might realize at the moment.

It's hard to find a safe, nurturing place to learn and grow. It's hard to connect with people outside your little sphere. Sometimes it's even hard to get off the couch and put your own energy out into the universe. CMW makes it easy and fun to do so, while never denying that learning requires effort, communities aren't perfect, and life can be tough. I've enjoyed joining my own children in Fiddle Lab, despite nearly always being one of the slowest to pick up the tune, because it's so much darn fun to make music, even ineptly, with other people. I've also enjoyed getting to know a whole lot of great people I never would have met otherwise.

Capacity Building Grant

Community MusicWorks is thrilled to be one of a handful of recipients of a three-year capacity-building grant from The Rhode Island Foundation's Initiative for Nonprofit Excellence. Along with the opportunity for CMW executive and board leadership to participate in educational workshops and peer-learning activities, this grant provides up to \$50,000 each year to help CMW increase its ability to achieve its mission.

One of the best parts about this award is that it affords CMW the opportunity to work closely with David Karoff, an independent consultant with twenty-five years of experience in Rhode Island's nonprofit sector, including nine years at The Rhode Island Foundation, most recently as Vice President for Grantmaking.

David, a South Providence resident, has a long history with CMW. During his tenure at The Rhode Island Foundation, for example, he reviewed a number of CMW's grant applications. As David

explains, his "best opportunity to learn about CMW came when Sebastian was selected for The Rhode Island Foundation Fellows program. This program allowed me to witness firsthand some of the personal and organizational evolution of CMW and its founder. My respect for and admiration of both grew immensely during this year. I've also tried to come to as many CMW events as possible. The highlight for me of these was the Kompa Variations [performed by the Providence String Quartet and Phase III at the RISD Auditorium in October 2008]."

Among the capacity-building projects that are being funded in 2010 are a new data management system, a new online portfolio system for students, updated equipment and furniture for CMW's conference room, a two-day professional development activity for CMW staff, and a feasibility study by 3SIX0, a local architecture and design firm. Exciting changes are now underway!

Media Lab Now Underway!

This spring, Jori and Betsey Biggs (a Fellow at Brown University's Cogut Center for the Humanities) teamed up to teach CMW's first ever Media Lab class, along with Brown student volunteers Micah Salkind and Henry Kerins. Media Lab is a new initiative to teach students audio and visual media skills in order to document the activities of the organization, reflect on their learning, and create new artistic work. This class introduced students to electronic composition methods and culminated in a performance of students' pieces at the March Performance Party. Here are some Media Lab students' responses to questions about their experience in the six-week class:

How has this class affected the way you think about music?

Kirby: I learned how much work it actually takes to make a song. When I made a song, everything had a reason. So now when I listen to music, I wonder why the musician chose to do that. I love music so much but in a sense I feel so much closer to it now.

If you were going to tell a friend about this class, how would you describe it?

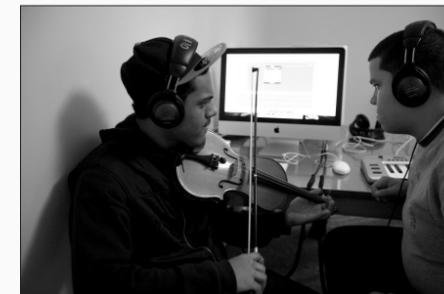
Paul: If I was to describe this class to a friend I would tell them that this class is dead bangin'. We use a program called Logic Pro to make beats and we can record ourselves playing our instrument and sync it with the beat. The class is fun.

Has this class affected the way you play or study your instrument? How?

Karl: Since I joined the Media Lab, I think a lot about being a cellist. Also I get more into playing my cello and practicing.

If your piece were posted on the CMW website, how would you introduce it?

Alana: In the first half of my piece you're at a nightclub. Also in this part I included an improvisation part. Then once this part finishes, you are waiting for the bus. I also used an improvisation part in this. In both sections I included a recording of me and Angie from when we were taking our expedition with Micah and Paloma. When I shared this piece at the Performance Party it was very exciting because I saw many people nodding their heads to my beat.



Community Voices: Ian Rosales

Building on our program evaluation project (featured in the Fall edition of *The Works*), teachers and students have been conducting interviews at the end of each trimester to talk about their work and learning throughout the year. In this interview, Ian talks with Adrienne about developing his musical voice.



Adrienne: How's your practicing going this trimester?

Ian: It's gone pretty well. I have been practicing, and it does take me to another step. I always liked doing music. It was in my soul. I found that my mother's side of my family was musical. So I guess I'm descended from that. And I like knowing where I come from and who I am. I think how my family, my older uncles, and even my grandparents, used to feel about how music. It makes me feel like I am stepping into their shoes and that I can become part of my family.

Do you feel like you've improved this trimester?

Yeah, I think I've improved a lot. I used to be shy. I was one of those people that didn't really express myself through words because I was always too shy, I was always hiding. I think music got me to express myself more, show that I did have a voice, and that I did know who I was. And it made me realize that I am a musical person and I love how I can express myself through that.

Talk a little bit about how you did with your goals this trimester. You were hoping to learn second position?

Second position was hard, because I was always comfortable in one spot, and having my fingers in one place. But I feel that as I started to move my hand in second position, I think I moved with myself. I moved to another level. And now I look at it and it just seems easy. The confidence that came with that feels really good.

Do you think you're a good musician?

I do think I'm a good musician. I feel like I have elevated from a long time, from way back. When I started I was still trying to learn how to hold the bow, and put my fingers in place. It was frustrating, but I loved it. I loved learning how to learn something, and then put it into something else. To evolve. So I think I'm a good musician because of my ability to evolve, and listen. Because listening is the main skill. We have two ears for a reason... to listen.

Deepening Our Roots and Spreading the Word

In February, CMW's Board of Directors approved CMW's second Five Year Strategic Plan. The plan addresses our primary challenges as an organization: to extend the impact of our work (reaching more people in more places) while, at the same time deepening our neighborhood connections (strengthening the work we do with our students and community in the West End).

Over the last five years, CMW has changed dramatically, adding Phase II and Phase III programs, a mentor program, weekly supplemental classes (including Music Lab, Fiddle Lab, Phase I Orchestra, and Media Lab), the Fellowship Program, and our new "learning institutes" for other musicians who want to pursue careers that combine artistry and public service. As we move forward, our vision is that CMW will continue to ① deepen its positive effect on Providence's West Side neighborhoods; ② enhance the musical and civic tools of teachers and students; ③ help shape local and national efforts to increase music opportunities for young people; and ④ develop the infrastructure necessary to support our vision.

- ① We plan to reach out to parents, students, alumni, and community members in order to strengthen our neighborhood impact and increase local leadership opportunities. This will mean implementing a new parent committee structure, exploring more student concerts in local venues, and building relationships with local and national youth development organizations. Soon, we hope to be placing CMW students in summer internships in community organizations.
- ② We plan to experiment with strategies to increase musical ability and deepen civic engagement for our students and our teachers. Initially, teachers will be offered yearly seminars on both instrument pedagogy and civic engagement, and will be encouraged to teach or co-teach supplementary classes. We'll also expand student learning opportunities through the Media Lab and paid student work experiences. Eventually, we'd like to have every student in two supplementary classes each week.
- ③ We will also be sharing what we have learned about musicianship and community change with other musicians interested in combining music and neighborhood transformation. We're planning to assess the impact of our bi-annual Institute for Musicianship and Public Service (IMPS), and eventually we want the Institutes (currently supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) to be self-sustaining. In the longer term, we envision catalyzing many and varied civic-minded music ventures led by a diverse set of musicians.
- ④ We also will develop and implement a space plan appropriate to our neighborhood residency and growing space needs, add additional staff hours to support new and continuing activities, and think through our needs for an endowment and/or capital fund to support staff and space needs. The board will continue to represent the neighborhood (including at least a 50 percent neighborhood residency rate) and its diversity. Currently, we're working with local architectural firm 3SIX0 to develop a plan for our short and long term space needs. Within several years, we hope that this space plan will be in the process of being implemented!

To read CMW's new strategic plan in its entirety, please visit www.communitymusicworks.org.



Want to know more about the events where these photos were taken? Check out CMW's website, blog, and Flickr site!

CMW on the web:
communitymusicworks.org/
communitymusicworks.typepad.com/
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Welcome to The Works Volume 3, Spring 2010

Greetings from Community MusicWorks! We're in the midst of an exciting thirteenth season; highlights this spring have included a terrific concert (and a delicious spaghetti dinner) by our resident musicians and the visiting St. Lawrence String Quartet at the West End Community Concert in March, and the always inspirational Youth Salon in April. This year's Youth Salon focused on raising awareness and funds to help rebuild a music school in Jacmel, Haiti, where Jesse taught last summer.

One new element for CMW this spring was the absence of our fearless leader, Sebastian, from February through April. Sebastian was taking a long overdue sabbatical, playing gypsy music and practicing etudes all over the Northern Hemisphere – from the mountains of Banff, Canada, to the boroughs of Brooklyn, New York. CMW continued to run smoothly during his absence, save for a natural disaster or two (lessons cancelled due to *flood??*), but we missed Sebastian a lot, and welcomed him back with open arms on May 3. Be sure to ask him about his "Sebastical" if you see him around town.

If you haven't made it to a CMW event yet this year, never fear! We have many more great events planned in May and June. We'd especially love to see you at our June 5th Performance Party (we're having TWO this year – at 1:00 and at 3:30), and at our May 14 and May 15 concerts with virtuoso violist Kim Kashkashian. May 14th is at 5:30 at the John Hope Settlement House (and includes a spaghetti dinner), and May 15th is at 7:30 at The RISD Museum.

Hope to see you soon!

Aaron, Adrienne, Carole, Chloe, Heath, Jason, Jesse, Jori, Liz, Minna, Rachel, Sara, & Sebastian



Summer Camp Returns!

CMW's summer camp is back and promises to be even more fun than last year! This year's camp will take place from July 19-23, at the First Baptist Church in Wickford. Let your teacher know if you'd like an application.