

*June 2024*

## *Upbeats!*



Another school year is ending and with it our celebratory issue of graduating MusicLink seniors! This is always a special issue because it exemplifies MusicLink's mission of "creating musicians, one student at a time." As you read through the description of student accomplishments, also realize that behind each student is a caring teacher who has mentored this student through lessons that would not be possible without MusicLink.



---

### **MusicLink Senior Award Winners**

The MusicLink Foundation established the Senior Award of Excellence of \$1,000 to recognize a graduating senior who has shown an ongoing commitment to lessons and has made significant progress in music studies, performing at an outstanding level. This year the MusicLink Foundation also presented a MusicLink Achievement Honors Award as well as an Honorable Mention Honors Award. All the awards are made possible through the Arline and Russell Bridge Endowment Fund.

---

**Adrian James Valenzuela**  
**MusicLink Senior Award of Excellence**

### **Congratulations fo MusicLink Graduating Seniors**



**Sarah Ahmed - OR**

**Saraf (Sophie) Ahmed** was a student of Paul Saraf of Eugene OR for five years. She graduated from South Eugene High School and performed a solo recital for close friend and family at her teacher's studio. Saraf will be attending the University of Oregon studying biology.



---

**Taylor Delbou - RI**

From Taylor's teacher, Victor Mansella: It's high time that I recognize the many musical achievements of my first ever MusicLink student, **Taylor Delbou**. Since beginning her piano studies with me in 2019, Taylor has made her way through the entire Faber Piano Adventures series, sampled the repertoire of her favorite composers, analyzed and improvised over jazz lead sheets, and has even transcribed arrangements of her favorite music (with handwriting much cleaner than my own!). Our lessons have been productive but lively- we stay on task, but never hesitate to indulge a fascinating tangent into



We are pleased to present the 2024 MusicLink Senior Award of Excellence to **Adrian James Valenzuela**, a piano student of Ruth Sadilek of Tigard, OR. His application with an 11-page resumé, included extended talents in composing, arranging and vocal accomplishments. He has composed for choir, baritone solo and piano including orchestral arrangements for the Metropolitan Youth Symphony Orchestra.

His teacher describes Adrian as “a musician through and through. He lives and breathes music. He applies himself diligently and takes on challenging piano repertoire.”

Adrian explains that “music has the power to create a meaningful impact on those around you.” He was inspired to seek out opportunities after the pandemic through the Piano Santa Foundation that provided him with a piano and the MusicLink Foundation that provided reduced fee lessons, helping him to continue his piano lessons without worrying about finances. In his words, “music has been and will be a part of my everyday life. Music has become part of my identity. It also helps my growth as a person, as it has taught me valuable skills such as memory, practice and repetition. I have made it my goal to whatever college I attend to minor in music and participate in the choir, I also hope I find time to compose and make more music as it helps my creativity flourish.” Adrian plans to attend Gonzaga University, minoring in music.

---

### **Elizabeth Josiah MusicLink Senior Achievement Honors Award**



The MusicLink Foundation awarded the 2024 MusicLink Senior Achievement Honors Award of \$750 to **Elizabeth Josiah**, a violin student of Rose Hashimoto of Seattle WA. Elizabeth began studying with Ms. Hashimoto in the summer of 2020, with minimal formal

acoustical science, physics or philosophy. Taylor’s patience and persistence in overcoming challenges in her playing, even when overwhelmed with the demands of high school AP classes and other extracurricular activities, inspires and motivates me to improve as both musician and educator. I’m proud to have her as a student and hope she’ll continue to succeed and find joy in all her endeavors, musical and otherwise.



### **Ruth Easterling - KS**

**Ruth Easterling** started playing the piano & organ in her sophomore year in high school for their church services and the children's Choir. She also played the piano for the Congregation. For the past two summers she worked as a lifeguard at the Community Pool and was on the swim team of her high school.

She was in the National Honors Society (NSA) and Technology Student Association (TSA). This summer TSA is going to nationals in Florida because they placed at the state level, This fall she will be attending Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, UT studying Electrical Engineering.

Ruth did not have lessons in 2023 but her teacher, Leonetta Bibby wanted to be sure she was included in the Link issue. Ruth ended her email to her teacher: I miss you so much! You were the best piano teacher one could ask for!

Leonetta was one of the first MusicLink teachers and included this note when she submitted Ruth’s senior writeup: “Thanks from the bottom of my heart, for how my journey started with Music Link, quite a few years ago. I’m 88 now and so pleased with the many students who tinkled with the Ivory and what it has meant to them. God Bless you All of you for making a difference in our world of tomorrow. Yes, I’m still teaching!



### **Taj Gabriel**

training or lessons prior to that time. “Through her persistence, integrity, dedication and passion, Elizabeth has come farther than I ever dreamed she would. I saw her perform a Haydn Concerto with her school orchestra and was truly amazed by her progress.

Elizabeth performed with the Edmonds-Woodway Philharmonic Orchestra, the Seattle Collaborative Orchestra and performed the Haydn Violin Concerto in G Major with the EWHS Philharmonic Orchestra in April.

From Elizabeth’s essay: “Musical study is a flexible and creative endeavor, a personal journey in perseverance and collaboration, and a powerful tool for self-expression. I feel that my life has been personally enriched through music. When I am able to perform and share the music that I have been working on with others, when I hear the different parts of the orchestra coming together to create a beautiful sound during a concert; when I perform in chamber groups with my friends; these moments motivate me to continue studying music.”

Elizabeth plans to attend Brandeis University, and was the recipient of the prestigious Leonard Bernstein Fellowship, a special scholarship that Brandeis University awards to one violin student each year. The Fellowship will allow her to continue involvement in music through participation in the Brandeis-Wellesley Orchestra, private lessons, professional chamber coaching and a range of unique performance experiences. Elizabeth hopes to major in neuroscience with a minor in music.

**Vera Miller**  
**MusicLink Foundation Honorable Mention Award**



**Vera Miller** received the MusicLink Foundation Honorable Mention Award of \$500 for achievement in MusicLink lessons with Rebecca Nelson of Cushing, MN. Vera has studied piano since she was 7 years old, attaining many awards through the Minnesota Music Teachers Association including the Challenge Award trophy recognizing 2500 points of participation in MMTA events. In addition to piano, Vera has studied violin, guitar and music theory. She has participated in

Taj Gabriel is a graduating senior from Thomasville City Schools High School. Taj participated in the vocal arts program through the National Federation of Music Clubs for eight years with eight superiors. Taj enjoys singing folk and gospel music and is a voice student studying with Jenniffer Campbell.



**Shelby Cate Hughes - IL**

**Shelby Cate Hughes** has been a homeschooled student and graduated at age 16. She’s passionate about music, (piano, voice, and violin.) and enjoys photography and drawing and is planning on getting her business associates.

Her teacher, Judy Zystra, added that Shelby has participated in NFMF Festivals, played a bit for church & has been in several youth musicals & dramas. She sings with other groups as well. She's hardworking, kind-hearted and a very sweet young lady.



**Opal Pancoast and Webster Pancoast**

Seniors Opal Pancoast and Webster Pancoast have been blessed to be part of the Musiclink program through Pancoast School of Music in Kettle Falls, WA. Musiclink has allowed them opportunities that have been a gift to them both musically and academically.

From the time of their adoptions from China as older adoptees, music studies have been part of their journey. Not only have they learned to play piano, but music has been part of their journeys to learning to hear. Their speech therapists gave their music studies credit for their ability to speak with normal voice cadence patterns despite not hearing until they were older children. These deaf and hearing-impaired seniors prepared a joint Senior Piano Recital to celebrate their years of study and presented it on June 1, 2024.



recitals and competitions, orchestra, singing for nursing home residences and composing songs.

From Vera's essay: "Once music is part of one's life, it will leave an impact that will permeate everything that one does. Music opens up another world, awakening something deep and profound inside of each of us. It has the power to make you laugh, may you cry, make you want to stand up and make a difference."

### **Gerald Christoff MusicLink Award Established**

#### **Anmy Paulino Collado 2024 Winner**



**Anmy Paulino Collado** received the Gerald Christoff MusicLink Award of \$1,000. This newly established award stems from funding provided to the foundation after the death of Rosemary Christoff, who initially established the Gerald Christoff Endowment Fund. The award is given to a student who shows outstanding achievement in MusicLink lessons and resides in New York state or takes lessons from a teacher living in New York state.

Anmy showed determination from the start, personally reaching out to the MusicLink Foundation to request piano lessons with a teacher who could speak Spanish to they could communicate with her mother to make arrangements. Julie Wegener, the MusicLink NYC coordinator was so touched by this letter from an eight - year -old that she instantly accepted Anmy as a student, and continued to teach her for the past 9 years. Anmy attended the prestigious Horace Mann High School on full scholarship which provided overseas opportunities for study. Julie describes Anmy as "gifted, motivated, engaged, intellectually curious, and possesses genuine empathy towards others with a driving commitment to contribute to the culture of her community."

From Anne's essay: "Born in the Dominican Republic, I have always loved my musical heritage. From my semester abroad in South Africa to musically oriented trips in Hawaii and South Korea, my inclination towards musical study allowed me to connect with other musicians from different traditions. I learned many traditional South African spirituals, mostly in Xhosa. In Hawaii, my musical inclination allowed me to connect with native Hawaiians through their indigenous chants."

Webster is graduating from Spokane Community College with his High School Diploma and Associate of Arts Degree. Opal is graduating from her home school program. Both students will continue to participate in music throughout their future years and the gift of music will be part of their lives as a result of these years of study.



#### **Maria Schleusener - MN**

Malia is a home school graduate. She has completed 70 college credits at the University of Northwestern in St. Paul as a PSEO student. She played four years of high school basketball and volleyball with Liberty Classical Academy. Last year she placed 3rd in the North Metro Republican Women's Speech Competition at the Capitol, where her topic was "Free Speech."

This completes her 11th year of piano study with Marilyn Henry. A highlight of her piano career was performing at the Minneapolis Convention Center as winner of the MMTA Piano Contest where she performed in a piano orchestra with 19 other pianos on the stage.

Malia has worked on the grounds crew at University of Northwestern for the past two years and has worked at the KTIS radio call center. She has taught her own piano students for the past five years. In the fall she will be attending Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska where she will tentatively be majoring in Chemistry. She has won a full ride scholarship at the school as a Paul Scholar.



#### **Ting Ting Yang - WI**

**Ting Ting Yang** began lessons with Sandra Statz at the end of her 4th grade year. She was a beginner and took off with her love of piano. She participated in multiple recitals each year as well as the Wisconsin Music

Anmy will be attending Skidmore College on full scholarship pursuing a dual major in music and anthropology with a focus on ethnomusicology.

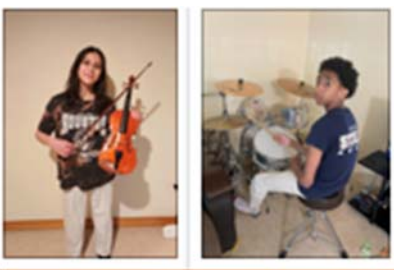
### **Donated Instruments Bring Music into Homes**

The smiles on the faces of MusicLink students say it all – thanks for providing an instrument for lessons and practice at home. An instrument in the home makes all the difference in MusicLink lessons, Hungry for Music ([hungryformusic.org](http://hungryformusic.org)) has been an active partner with MusicLink, providing instruments to students across the country, one student at a time, Our thanks to Jeff Campbell and Cassie Clark for being there when we need them.

### **Bagima & Aafila Khudyevea (WA)**



### **Olga Hemingway (WA) & Jaylen Martinez (NY)**



### **New MusicLink Teachers**

The following 21 teachers were linked with MusicLink students in the past few months. This brings the total of active teachers to 259 and overall teacher total to 4,718.

CA: Ian Hubbell, Dan Roe; CO: Jan Spitzer; GA: Nicole Doran; IN: Valerie Merrell (returning); LA: Samuel Kohler; MA: Rebecca Mann; MN: Sue Wege (returning); MO: Justus Johnstone, Brittany Slaughter; NY: Daniel Fogel (returning), Dale Toliver; OR: Annette Demsey; TN: Bryony Stroud-Watson (returning); TX: Kurt Hollabaugh; UT: Anna Munns, Zackery Prusse, Debora Wrathall; WA: Rafael Howell-Flores, Frances Medina, Tia Nieuwsma.

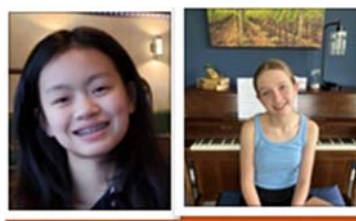
i

Teachers Association District Auditions every Spring. She also auditioned in the Wisconsin Federation of Music Clubs Auditions many Springs as well. She plans to attend UW-Madison and major in Biology to go into Dentistry.

### **Fundraising Spotlights**

MusicLink fundraising events extend from the studio with our Promise to Practice Event ([. LINK here](#)) to playathon events at malls in the community ([LINK here](#)).

Stacy Julson raised \$382 in her studio at the K&S Conservatory of Music in Wooddale MN, with 2 students earning totebags and success pins for their practice efforts. Lydia also received a \$50 gift card for raising over \$250 for the MusicLink Foundation.



### **Kayla Zang & Lydia Darsow**



### **Empire Post Students at Long Island Performance**

**Benjamin Domingue-Volpe**, our first MusicLink Ambassador, organized a playathon at the Walt Whitman Shops in Huntington Station NY. The event took place on May 22nd and featured performances by the Empire Post Youth and Young Adult Student Organization. Benjamin and his teacher, Irma Dominquez, are looking forward to future playathons in the fall.

---

**Did you know?**

- The MusicLink Foundation will debut its new website in a few months. Thanks for your suggestions as we modernize our online image.
- The MusicLink Foundation will be adding a MusicLink Ambassador Program to assist with fund-raising and promoting MusicLink in the community.
- The MusicLink Foundation will be adding a MusicLink Apprentice Program for students to assist with lessons. Look for emails about these programs on the website soon.

[About Us](#) | [How to Participate](#) | [How MusicLink Works](#) | [MusicLink Video](#)

## *Contact Us!*

**1043 N. McKinley Road  
Arlington, VA 22205**

**Phone: (703) 534-9490  
Fax: (703) 534-1740**

[Contact Us](#)



o

#