



SAINT JAMES  
MUSIC ACADEMY

# 2024-2025 Annual Report



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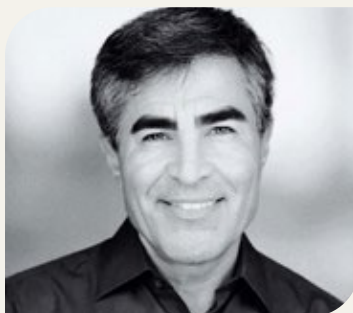
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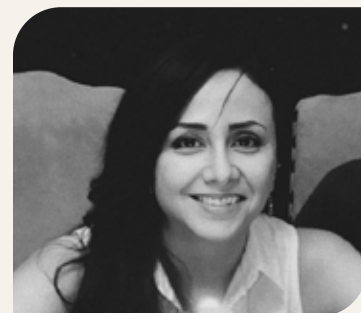
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**“I was looking at Taylor the other day in Orchestra, and she was so little and cute... She reminded me of *me* when I first joined Senior Orchestra. It’s like SJMA comes full circle.”**

*Grade 10 SJMA student*

One of the beautiful things about a long-term endeavour like Saint James Music Academy is that not only do children have the opportunity to grow up with music (which takes a long time to learn), but by the time our students reach graduation, they can see how things tend to come full circle here.

Whether they were once wide-eyed and brimming with excitement to receive their first instrument, or shy and uncertain about what to expect, as they grow, our maturing student-musicians begin to see something of themselves in the younger students coming up behind them.

An older student is asked to share his tips with a novice class on how to handle pre-performance jitters and, in the process, discovers something about his own leadership skills. A recent grad returns to volunteer and support younger ones through challenges that now come naturally to her—she stations herself next to a new student in the orchestra to help him follow his sheet music.

Over time, they are discovering that they are gaining more than they expected. Not only have they been acquiring—little by little—highly valued skills in music that bring joy to others, but they have also developed a unique capacity to encourage younger students to persevere.

In this way, each passing year at SJMA is less like a linear progression and more like a circle that encompasses more with each turn—more confidence, more compassion, more opportunities to serve, and more ways to strengthen a community in practical ways... all made possible through the love of a common cause: music for children, in a way that ‘comes full circle’ through a spirit of abundance, generosity, and joy.

# President of the Board

DAVID GENS

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Members of the SJMA Community:

It is a great honour to write to you in my first year as President of the Board of Saint James Music Academy. At a moment when the world continues to shift in unpredictable ways, SJMA stands as a steadfast beacon of hope, joy, and transformation — and I am deeply grateful to serve alongside you in this work.

## A Community Built on Compassion, Music, and Possibility

SJMA's mission — to create a community of learning where children and youth are inspired by the challenges and joys of making music together — guides every decision we make. We believe that access to high-quality classical music instruction, particularly in a group setting, can be a game-changer in a child's life, as learning music nurtures resilience, collaboration, and self-discovery. In the often-overlooked neighborhoods of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, SJMA's presence is a powerful statement: that beauty, discipline, and dignity matter.

Over the years, SJMA has grown from its roots — opening in 2007 with just 45 enrollments and a modest budget — into a vibrant institution touching the lives of hundreds of families each year.

## Reflections on the Past Year & Board Priorities

In my first year as Chair, I've been humbled by the depth of commitment from our board members, staff, teachers, parents, volunteers, and donors. Some of the key priorities we have set together include:

1. Strengthening fiscal resilience and accountability. We are reviewing and improving financial oversight and transparency to ensure every dollar entrusted to SJMA is put to its greatest effect.
2. Supporting staff and faculty well-being. Our teachers and program leads are the heart of SJMA. We are exploring ways to provide greater professional development, peer support, and resources so they can thrive personally and professionally.
3. Expanding access and inclusivity. We seek to remove barriers for more children in the Downtown Eastside and neighbouring communities — whether through instrument access, transportation, or outreach into schools.

4. Strengthening community partnerships. Across local schools, neighbourhood organizations, health groups, and funders, we aim to deepen alliances so SJMA's impact is felt more broadly.
5. Planning for sustainability and growth. We are reviewing long-term strategies to broaden our reach, diversify our funding base, and ensure that SJMA remains strong for decades to come.

These are ambitious aims. But they are grounded in what I already see in action: a community that steps forward for one another, that cares deeply, and that believes in the power of music to transform lives.

## With Gratitude — And an Invitation

None of SJMA's achievements — past, present, or future — would be possible without you. Donors, funders, volunteers, parents, staff, and students: thank you for your trust, your passion, your patience, and your energy. Every rehearsal, every performance, every late evening of planning, every donation — they all add up to something so much bigger than the sum of its parts.

As we look ahead, I invite each of you to renew your commitment to SJMA. Whether through volunteering your time, offering your expertise, introducing new donors, or simply being present at a concert — there is always a role to play. Let us together keep building a place where music, in all its beauty, possibility, and discipline, continues to change lives.

It is my privilege to serve as your Board Chair.

With gratitude and hope,



David Gens  
*President, Board of Directors  
Saint James Music Academy*



# Executive Director

SARAH GODOY

## **At Saint James Music Academy (SJMA), music is our way of caring for kids in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside community.**

We strive to be a place of belonging for young people and their families, where student musicians learn that through personal effort, dedication, and collaboration with others, they can discover their passion, gain skills to last a lifetime, and experience the thrill of collective victory.

We were delighted to kick off our 2024–25 academic year with an exciting milestone made possible by the Beedie Foundation: the purchase of a second van, allowing us to remove more barriers to participation by doubling our capacity to provide transportation assistance to families in need. For the first time last year, we also introduced a Parent-and-Tot Music Drop-In to give parents in the community the opportunity to spend time bonding together with their small children through music, while getting to know other families.

In addition to these initiatives, SJMA provided high-quality music instruction in 22 different instruments and disciplines, taught by 28 talented and caring music teachers, including 3 music therapists. Our offerings included Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, French Horn, Percussion, Junior Strings, Music Theory, Choir, Jazz, Marimba, Guitar, Piano, Music Therapy, Orff, and Improvisation.

In 2024–25, our Junior Program served children from grades 1–4, and our Senior Program, grades 5–12. Enrolment in our Orchestral Program grew by 8%, with 155 students enrolled, and an additional 500 children were reached through our Choir and Early Music Education Programs at Tier One public schools in East Vancouver. For our new choir at Thunderbird Elementary, long-time SJMA teacher Cynthia Friesen focussed on 'building trust, stretching and strengthening vocal cords, and growing confidence through participation and performance.' Like all SJMA programs, the SJMA-Thunderbird Choir is free, high-quality, and long-term. It will run year after year from September through June, and in accordance with Dr. Gordon Neufeld's and Dr. Gabor Maté's research into children's developmental need for attachment (detailed in their seminal book *Hold On to Your Kids*), consistency in our teaching staff will help to provide children with an invaluable sense of 'being known' by a music teacher they can grow up with.

In support of making SJMA as inclusive as possible, in 2024–25 we piloted a Supportive Learning Program, with Learning

Support Assistants in our classrooms. This program is being continued and improved for the current year, and is modelled after Educational Assistants in the public school system. The program is designed to provide additional attention to individual students in group class settings, as well as between classes, in order to improve retention and to ensure that all students have the necessary supports to thrive at music school.

For the third consecutive year, we held 'SJMA Teacher Recitals' in both the Junior and Senior programs, featuring performances by SJMA faculty members. These events provided the opportunity for our teachers to get to know one another through musical collaboration, and for our students and their families to discover their teachers' incredible musical talents. Each recital was followed by a beautiful long-table community dinner, allowing our students, parents, and teachers the chance to connect over a delicious meal. During the Senior Teacher Recital, our community was inspired by a performance by very special guests, the Viano Quartet, whose participation was facilitated by long-time friends Music in the Morning.

SJMA enjoyed the collaboration and generosity of other guest artists in 2024–25, including saxophonist Adam Kyle, who provided guest accompaniment to our Senior Choir during our Christmas Concert, and the very talented Tresor Otshudi of the Juste Chante Gospel Choir, who taught our Senior Choir workshops during our Summer Camps. Our Junior Program students were also excited for the opportunity to meet rising Canadian country music artist Sasha when she came to visit the music school.

In the spring, SJMA was pleased to enter into a collaboration with Vancouver's premier choir, Chor Leoni — a goal that had been enthusiastically planned, but interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For this partnership, SJMA joined forces in the delivery of a workshop series with Chor Leoni's youth section, specifically their PRELUDE series for youth in grades 5–7. Through this endeavour, SJMA students had the opportunity to work with their youth director, Carrie Taylor, and to rehearse with other young people from their 'My Voice' youth chapters. Finally, our kids joined Chor Leoni on stage for the Big Roar! Choral Festival at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts.

In addition to this exciting opportunity, SJMA students performed in a variety of other events throughout the year, including the Downtown Eastside's Heart of the City Festival, the Britannia Centre's Christmas Craft Market, the YoungLife Banquet in Abbotsford, the Golf for Good Charity Golf



Tournament, VanDusen Gardens, and the Little Folks' Stage at the Vancouver Folk Music Festival.

SJMA is deeply grateful to the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra's School of Music for sponsoring our winds and brass sections, and to Instruments Beyond Borders for putting so many high-quality instruments into the hands of our students. We also profoundly appreciate those who provide our students with the physical space to learn and grow: St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, where our Annex location is based, and St. James Anglican Church for our flagship location at the corner of Gore and Cordova.

SJMA's Christmas and Spring concerts once again took place in the beautiful St. James Church sanctuary, filling the space with music, friendship, and celebration for our students' achievements. During the Christmas concert, our own passionate Maestro José Cerón Ortega led the SJMA Senior Orchestra in a rousing rendition of *Polar Express*, and many attendees said it was the 'best performance ever.' At that concert, the 2024 Paul Myers Christmas Award for Outstanding Community Service was presented to French horn player Saina Sadeghi, in recognition of her exceptional contributions to the SJMA community.

For the Spring Concert, among other gems, SJMA alumna and Senior Choir teacher Mercy Walker led our young singers through an energetic rendition of *Viva La Vida* by Coldplay, and our Senior Orchestra wrapped up the night — and our year — to thundering applause. Four of our wonderful students graduated in 2025 with scholarships to continue their music education: Victoria Bernal (violin), Kyson He (cello), Devan Pawa-Larsen (Choir, Exploring Music), and Amy Batres (cello).

As we approach our 20th anniversary of the founding of Saint James Music Academy, we are in the early stages of planning for a year of celebratory events to commemorate this place of beauty and belonging for our kids and families. On a personal note, it has truly been an honour to be a part of this special musical community for these past 12 years.

To our incredible team of staff, teachers, and volunteers, our amazing network of community partners, and our valued family of supporters near and far: thank you for sharing with us in this vital work, which is also yours.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Godoy  
Executive Director, SJMA

# Treasurer

SARAH LILLEY

**Over the past year, the SJMA team has worked hard to ensure that the school's finances remain strong, sustainable, and focused on supporting our students and programs.**

I'm pleased to share some highlights:

- Overall contributions increased by 16% from the previous year, while total expenses rose by only 6%. This demonstrates the strength of our fundraising efforts and careful management of resources.
- Administrative costs stayed steady at just 9% of total expenses, the same as last year. This means that the vast majority of our resources continue to go directly into music education and programming.
- Fundraising costs were reduced to 10% of total expenses, down from 12% the previous year. This reflects our commitment to running fundraising efforts efficiently while still growing our support base.
- Government funding made up 9% of our total revenue this year.
- Non-government funding (contributions from individual donors, foundations, and private organizations) grew by 13% compared to last year — an encouraging sign that our community continues to believe in and invest in our mission.

Overall, the SJMA ended the year in a strong financial position, and solid community-based support gives us confidence for the future.

Every dollar raised helps us bring the joy of music to more students, and we are thankful for the generosity of our amazing donors.

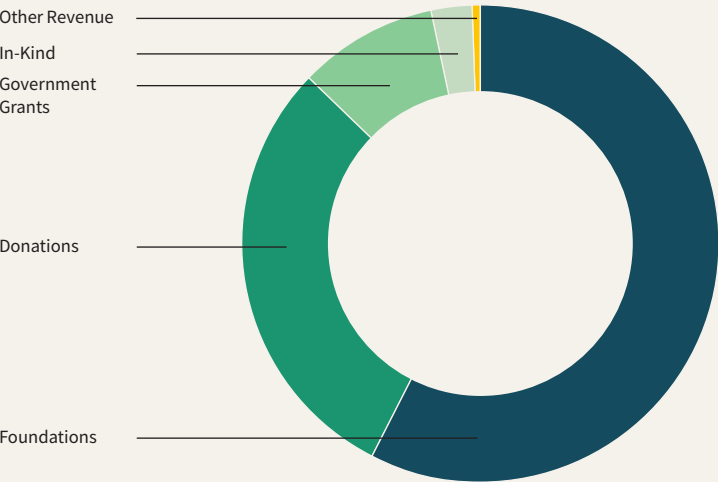
This has also been my first year serving as SJMA's Treasurer, and it has been both rewarding and inspiring. One of the highlights for me was attending the winter and spring concerts, where I saw firsthand how financial support translates into music on stage and opportunities for our students. It's been a privilege to witness the joy and growth of SJMA's young musicians.

I would also like to extend a wholehearted thank you to Liliana, our Financial and Program Administrator, for her hard work and dedication throughout the year, especially during the annual audit. Her attention to detail and steady support have made a big difference.

Finally, thank you to all of our donors, volunteers, staff, and families for contributing to the SJMA's success. Your continued commitment ensures that our music school continues to flourish.

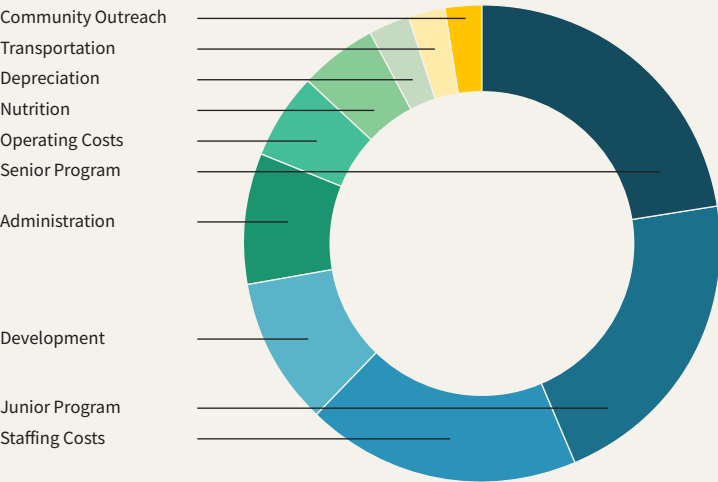


Revenues



Foundations	\$ 765,348
Donations	\$ 393,086
Government Grants	\$ 122,936
In-Kind	\$ 39,666
Other Revenue	\$ 7,178

Expenses



Senior Program	\$ 292,323
Junior Program	\$ 276,489
Staffing Costs	\$ 239,841
Development	\$ 129,895
Administration	\$ 114,100
Operating Costs	\$ 77,259
Nutrition	\$ 66,985
Depreciation	\$ 36,069
Transportation	\$ 31,649
Community Outreach	\$ 31,647

Totals

\$ 1,328,214

\$ 1,296,257



# Director of Development

CHARISSA CABRERA

**Looking back on the 2024-25 year, I am filled with gratitude for the many people I've had the privilege of connecting with through our shared commitment to building a vibrant musical community.**

At SJMA, we hold fast to the belief that music has the power to inspire, to heal, and to transform lives. It is because of this conviction that we are surrounded by such a remarkable circle of supporters who contribute their time, resources, and energy to ensure that children in the Downtown Eastside have access to the life-changing gift of music. The diversity of people who come together in support of this mission continues to be one of the most inspiring aspects of this work.

This past year brought both new challenges and notable growth. Our operating budget has continued to expand, reflecting both the rising costs of programming and the increasing number of children and families turning to SJMA. Demand for our Orchestral Program, Music Therapy, Choir and Early Music Education Programs continue to rise, and we are proud to be meeting this need with creativity, resilience, and joy. More students are stepping through our doors, and with them comes new energy, possibility, and hope.

What stands out most this year is the incredible generosity of our donor community. In 2023-24, nearly 400 donors made 1,503 gifts. This year, over 500 individuals, families, businesses, and foundations came together to provide more than 1,600 gifts. This is a clear sign of growth and proof of what we have always known: when a community unites behind a shared vision, the results are powerful and lasting. To everyone who stood with us this year—thank you. Your generosity has created unparalleled opportunities for children to learn, grow, and thrive through music. With your help, SJMA is growing—in the reach of our programs, in depth, and in impact. Together, we are building a stronger, more musical future for the next generation.





**Saint James Music Academy is deeply grateful for every gift, no matter how large or how small—because each makes a difference! While it is impossible for us to thank every donor here, we wish to acknowledge the following supporters for their significant contributions during our 2024-25 fiscal year.**

- Community Gaming Grant (Prov BC)
- Summer Split Foundation, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Relevant Education Society
- Anonymous Benefactor
- Anonymous Benefactor
- Houssian Foundation
- Seedlings Foundation
- Donald and Jane Shumka
- BC Arts Council
- Music Heals Charitable Foundation
- Telus
- Dr. Ann Worth Charitable Foundation
- Sony Music Entertainment Canada
- The Stollery Charitable Foundation
- JTC Heersink Foundation
- Vancouver Sun Children's Fund
- Weathertop Foundation Donor Advised Fund, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- John C Kerr Family Foundation
- Stonkus Foundation
- RJ Nelson Family Foundation
- Ames Family Foundation
- Joan & Noel Armstrong Legacy Fund
- The Cedarhurst Foundation
- The Christopher Foundation
- Cause We Care
- Grayross Foundation, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Shepansky Family Fund, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Al Roadburg Foundation
- Osbertus Fund, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Bill and Risa Levine
- Face the World Foundation
- Anonymous Benefactor
- R & J Stern Family Foundation
- TNG Television Production LTD.
- Martha Lou Henley Charitable Foundation
- M.A. Faris Foundation
- Sutherland Foundation
- Gens Capital Ltd.
- Dr. Bik May Wai & Dr. Chung Nin Lam Endowment Fund
- Nicola Wealth Gives Back, held at Nicola Wealth Foundation
- Beedie Foundation
- Senft Family Foundation
- Darrell and David Mindell
- Gregory and Elese Sullivan
- Philip & Elinor Vassar Fund
- Vancouver Foundation
- Deux Mille Foundation
- CanadaHelps
- Ecclesiastical Insurance
- The Jack and Doris Brown Foundation
- Trish and Brian Hurl
- Fluevog Fund, held at Nicola Wealth Foundation
- Charles and Lucile Flavelle Family Fund, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Alan and Gwendoline Pyatt Foundation
- Tweedledum Foundation
- The Giustra Foundation
- Crosby Family Fund, held at Nicola Wealth Foundation
- The Mary & Gordon Christopher Foundation
- McGrane-Pearson Endowment Fund, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Jessica Liang
- Samuel Wong
- Instruments Beyond Borders
- Joseph Stauffer Trust
- William Randall
- Archdiocese of Vancouver
- Randall Foundation
- Maria Tognetti
- Lianne Gulka and Carl Hoyt
- Richard and Valerie Bradshaw
- Taylor Legacy Fund, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Lillian and Ross Davidson Fund, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Hamber Foundation
- D'Addario Foundation
- Douglas Gordon
- Brenda Hoy
- Lori Lothian
- Kathryn Neilson
- Anonymous Benefactor
- CLICK
- Beedie Kebet Holdings Ltd.
- David Garner
- Douglas and Colette Massie
- Fairbairn Foundation
- St. Francis in the Wood
- CHIMP: Charitable Impact Foundation
- Pamela Jeacocke
- John Hardie Mitchell Family Foundation
- Lilly Murphy

# Director of Orchestras

MAESTRO JOSE CERÓN ORTEGA

**I have always extended an invitation to SJMA's audiences to come to our visit during our weekly rehearsals, to observe the building of the repertoire of the Junior Ensembles and Senior Symphony Orchestra, as we work towards our traditional concerts in December and June of each year.**



In these rehearsals the beautiful and ongoing process at Saint James Academy can be seen, which through the years has resulted in the possibility of increasing the difficulty and diversity of orchestral repertoire during the academic year 2024-2025, to a notable degree. This past year has also seen improvement of sound and musicianship of our young Downtown Eastside musicians.

Due to time constraints, what our audiences witness unfold during our concerts in the magnificent St. James Church sanctuary is actually just a fraction of what our young musicians work on in their various ensembles each year, and of what they experience sitting with their peers in rehearsal. Likewise, the joyful warmth of our concert receptions in Parish Hall after the show is just a taste of the beauty of this program.

The enthusiasm of our caring teachers, and their inspiring energy for making music, the commitment and generosity of our volunteers, and the passion of our devoted staff all provide an extraordinary atmosphere for our students in the rehearsal room and beyond. The result is a unique and safe space for young people to learn—not only music—but in a pragmatic and fun way they also learn about themselves, and about what community connections are all about. For us teachers, this makes SJMA a very special place to work and to serve.

I am humbly grateful for the opportunity of making a personal dream come true in this blessed country, and for the trust and openness that Saint James Music Academy has had during all these years to build a remarkable music program, inspired by the El Sistema Orchestral Program, and tailored to this very neighbourhood. We have foreseen a bright future for our students, for this community, and for a very special music school that has a place for everyone, for years to come.





# Nutrition Program

During the 2024-2025 program year, Saint James Music Academy's long-standing Director of Nutrition, Olivia Lohan, took a well-deserved six month sabbatical. During this time, the program remained in the steadfast care of Noemi Tordoya and a league of dedicated volunteers who worked to ensure that every child who walked through our doors was warmly welcomed with a fresh, wholesome meal each day.

Mae Rose Franco, serving as Interim Director of Nutrition, brought a unique flair for special events. Drawing upon her experience in catering and community service, Mae Rose treated our kids and families to eye-popping visual presentations "to make them happy!", especially during our community dinners and concert receptions. The children delighted in the magic of her buffet displays, and the taste of her creations was every bit as adventurous.

Our kitchen was additionally infused with the energy of long-time neighbour Josiah Gadsby who prepared a beautiful, traditional long table dinner to honour 50 of our dedicated

volunteers, and his delicious meal served as the perfect backdrop for an evening of music, friendship and connection.

Overall last year, the SJMA nutrition program served upwards of 11,640 meals. Throughout the fall and winter, the team enjoyed placing a particular emphasis on comfort foods, with hot soups to warm bellies. And in the spirit of a culture of abundance, 'bottomless' fruits and vegetables were made available to our students daily.

At time when many families are increasingly struggling to make ends meet, SJMA is grateful to all those who contributed to make our Nutrition Program possible in 2024-2025: From those who generously funded the program financially; to the local business / community partners who gifted us with in-kind donations of fresh, high quality goods; to those who helped to prepare and to serve all of our food with love: Thank you for contributing in these vital ways to nourish our students in body and in spirit, to help them to grow to be happy, healthy, and strong.





# Volunteer Program

NEGIN ATTAR

## Behind Every Note: The Gift of Our Volunteers

This past year, SJMA was blessed with the dedication of 21 weekly volunteers, contributing an average of 45 hours each week. Many offered their time two or three days, supporting for 2 to 5 hours at a time.

Among them, seven were musicians who played a vital role in teaching, assisting in orchestra, and coordinating classes to ensure that every child received the attention they needed. Their support was invaluable—without them, it would have been difficult to provide the guidance our students deserved.

Others gave their time in the kitchen, assisted in classes, and helped behind the scenes, keeping the program running smoothly. With their help, we organized more than five full rehearsals in the church. We also held three dress rehearsals and one tech rehearsal, alongside extra practices, all made possible by our volunteers' energy.

Beyond weekly support, over 30 event volunteers stepped in for concerts and rehearsals. An average of 15 SJMA parents supported weekly or during events, and three SJMA students volunteered during summer camp.

SJMA could not thrive without the generosity and kind hearts of our volunteers. They are truly behind every note of our success.



# Music Therapy Program

CHELSEA ASSAF, MTA

**The 2024-2025 school year saw another year of growth, creativity, expression, and connection for our students within the Music Therapy Program.**

Our three board certified Music Therapists worked with over 35 students throughout the year, providing support in both individual music therapy sessions and small group settings. This year, our music therapists were also able to assist students occasionally in classes throughout the music school, helping with classroom integration and allowing students to learn and create music with their peers.

Our students who receive music therapy come from a variety of diverse backgrounds and needs, including things such as experiences with trauma, behavioural issues, developmental delay, learning differences, and/or mental health challenges, and sometimes can require or benefit from extra support. Music therapy sessions are personalized to the unique strengths, interests, and needs of each student, and include activities such as adapted instrument and singing lessons, emotional exploration and expression through song-writing and lyric analysis, creative music-making and improvisation, and practicing social skills and building connections through collaborative music making. These sessions allow our students opportunities to not only musically grow throughout the year, but also increase their resilience, self-esteem, social connections, self-regulation, and emotional processing and expression. A highlight of our year was the many performance opportunities that our music therapy students participated in, allowing them to showcase their hard work while continuing to build their confidence!

We are tremendously grateful for the continued support from Music Heals and our other donors who allow us to continue to offer and grow our Music Therapy Program, and provide access for extra support for so many of our students.

# Choir Program

DIANA NYVIK

September 2024 was my second year as a Saint James Music Academy choir teacher where I teach music through choir classes at Admiral Seymour Elementary School in East Vancouver. The mission of the SJMA is to give access to music lessons free of charge to Vancouver's inner-city children.

When we started in the fall, I selected repertoire to prepare the students for the upcoming Christmas concert at Seymour. The Kindergarteners were able to prepare three songs which, given the fact that they had just entered the music class, was a great achievement. Grades 1 to 3 were grouped together and had fun learning popular winter songs where music percussion instruments were used along with some body movements. The upper-level grades were able to achieve, for the first time, singing two parts songs (Soprano and Alto), demonstrating their growth from last year. Carols of the Bells quickly became one of their favorite songs. Parents and siblings came to support their children and enjoy the performance.

In the beginning of the second semester, we started to prepare for the Spring Concert and the singers learned music from around the world. As I introduced songs in different languages, I was happy to see how fast the students were able to learn them. Also, I continued to introduce two-part songs with more challenging harmony parts.

The highlight of the year was when we were invited to sing in the St. James Church sanctuary in May. The students were provided transportation to the church, and they were greeted warmly at the door. They sang three songs for the other SJMA students and teachers, as well as their parents. Afterwards, a wonderful community was provided for the students and parents. I was impressed with the dignity, respect and kindness toward the families by the numerous volunteers and staff.

We finished the school year with a concert at Seymour where the students presented 10 songs. As we were saying goodbye to the Grade 7 Seymour graduates, they sang a beautiful farewell song. Our 'Lunch Choir'—an extra class for students who want more singing—was spotlighted in the concert with three songs with more challenging parts. Some of these students have been involved in the SJMA Orchestral Program for years, and so they have great love of music and are musically advanced.

Being part of the staff of Saint James Music Academy has been a wonderful experience. It has provided me and other teachers a place to share our gifts with a community in great need of support. It is a joy to teach where we can offer our love, bring joy through music, provide acceptance, kindness and respect to students who come from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds.



# Performances and Events



**JUL 20**  
Marimba Performance at  
Vancouver Folk Music Festival 2024



**AUG 12-23**  
SJMA Jr & Sr Summer Music Camps 2024



**SEP 9**  
Purchase of 2nd Van, with thanks  
to the Beedie Foundation



**OCT 30**  
Open house - DTES  
Heart of the City Festival



**NOV 5**  
SJMA Volunteer Dinner



**NOV 18**  
Visit by Canadian singer-songwriter  
Sacha, with Sony Music Canada



**NOV 28**  
Junior Program Family  
Christmas Recital



**NOV 30**  
Marimba Performance at  
Britannia Christmas Market



**DEC 6**  
SJMA Christmas Concert 2024



**DEC 11**  
SJMA-Seymour Choir Concert  
at Seymour Elementary



**MAR 7**  
Jazz Performance at YoungLife  
Banquet, Abbotsford



**MARCH 12**  
Music In The Morning / Viano  
Quartet performance at SJMA



**MARCH 12/13**  
Jr & Sr Teacher Recitals  
w/ Community Dinners





**APRIL 9/10**  
Bring-A-Friend to SJMA Days



**APR 22**  
SJMA Open House



**APR 4-MAY 2**  
Chor Leoni collaboration /  
PRELUDE Workshops at SJMA



**MAY 3**  
On stage with PRELUDE & Chor  
Leoni for the Big Roar Festival  
at Chan Centre



**MAY 3**  
Jr Strings and Jazz Ensemble  
yard performance in West Van



**MAY 8**  
SJMA Seymour Choir performance  
at SJMA w/ Community Dinner



**MAY 12**  
Sooke Harmony Project visit  
and rehearsal with SJMA



**MAY 27**  
Junior Program Family Recital



**MAY 29**  
Junior Program Dance Party



**JUN 6**  
Spring Concert 2025



**JUN 9**  
Jazz Performance - Golf for  
Good Charity Golf Tournament



**JUN 22**  
Sr Performance at  
VanDusen Gardens



**JUL 29**  
Marimba Performance at  
Vancouver Folk Music Festival 2025



**AUG 11-22**  
SJMA Jr Summer Music Camps 2025





# Graduates & Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to Saint James Music Academy's 2025 graduates and scholarship recipients!



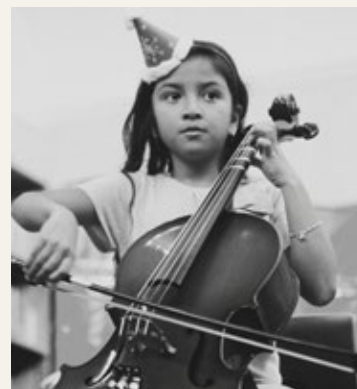
VICTORIA BERNAL  
*Violin*



KYSON HE  
*Cello*



DEVAN PAWA-LARSEN  
*Choir / Exploring Music*



AMY BATRES  
*Cello*



Kudos to Saina Sadeghi who was awarded the *Paul Myers Christmas Award 2024* for her outstanding contributions to the community!

# Letter from a Graduate

AMY BATRES, CELLO

## What SJMA Means to Me

Growing up we moved cities a lot, and moving to different schools came with it. Before the age of 10, I had moved to 5 different schools, usually only completing one school year at each. I started at Saint James Music Academy when I was 6 years old, and at that time, I was attending Strathcona Elementary School.

So when I moved to a different school, I expected to lose many of the friends I had made. However, due to SJMA I managed to have one stable and unchanging environment during my developmental years and make friends that lasted me so much longer than I'd ever been used to.

When I had to move after my kindergarten year, I never thought I'd be able to have what many other kids did; a friend since kindergarten. However, because of SJMA I now have friends who I've known for over 11 years, the majority of our lives.

I am so grateful for Saint James because it has given me so much more than just the ability to read, play, and write music. SJMA gave me the confidence to try new things, to get up on stage, to take a leadership role, and to express myself creatively. Because of SJMA I know that music will always be a part of my life, but more importantly, so will the people I created music with.

A few years ago, the idea of being the singer in a band might have seemed crazy to me, but now that dream has turned into a reality because of all the help and support I found at SJMA, and by my teacher Sangito especially.

Overall, SJMA has become a core memory for me as a whole, and I will be back to help give that to other kids as well because the best thing I got out of SJMA was a second family.

Sincerely,

Amy Batres,  
*Cello*





# Summer Camps

OLIVIA LOHAN

Over two unforgettable weeks, SJMA offered its annual summer camps, fostering musical growth, engaging activities, warm connections, and new discoveries for over 50 young people. By blending structured musical learning with outdoor adventures and creative projects, our students gained fresh perspectives, and fun memories sure to last long after camp ended.

In addition to orchestra and choir workshops, new for this summer our students learned music through movement via Capoeira—a form of martial art that combines music and dance—with Julio Monterio. Our students quickly grasped the rhythms of the moves and the music, and embraced the challenge of these dynamic workshops with enthusiasm.

Camp outings and activities included tie-dying T-shirts, pizza-making and trips to Third Beach, the splash park at the Lonsdale Quay, and Ninja Tag. Throughout our camps, moments of laughter, shared games, and creative projects provided more than just fun—they strengthened our students' confidence and capacity to learn.

Play is a cornerstone of SJMA's educational philosophy as seen through our summer camps: Inspired by Dr. Gordon Neufeld's research into play, we understand that play is essential to both emotional and cognitive development. Play-time and group activities cultivate imagination, resilience, and problem-solving skills, while also laying the groundwork for meaningful friendships.

At the heart of SJMA summer camps program is also a deep commitment to building secure, caring relationships and a vibrant environment for learning. Drawing on Neufeld's influential theory of attachment, our programs recognize that children thrive not just through instruction, but also through the quality of the bonds they form with instructors, peers, and mentors. When children experience a safe, welcoming environment—where they feel known, valued, and connected—they become open to exploration, creativity, and real growth.

SJMA summer camps are much more than a seasonal program—they are a meaningful extension of our mission, offering a nurturing space where attachment, play, and musical excellence come together. Every activity, from group games to choir practice, is shaped by a belief in the transformative power of music and community. Through this unique blend of fun and learning, students not only develop their musical talents but also grow as confident, connected members of our musical family.



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**A Musical Life**

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