



VERMONT  
YOUTH ORCHESTRA  
ASSOCIATION

## ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Spring/Summer 2015

### Thank you, Mrs. Long!

After not 10, not 20, but **34 years** of producing the Alumni Newsletter, **Carolyn Long** has asked the VYOA staff to take over. Without her hard work and dedication, we would have lost track of many alumni over the years. She has made it her mission to keep in touch with as many of you as possible, often calling people's parents to get updated address information. Thank you Mrs. Long for keeping us connected over the years!

### The VYO Tours Iceland

**JACOB MORTON-BLACK** (*French horn, Sinfonia '10, VYP '11, VYO '11-'13, Colchester*) is currently studying music composition and French horn performance at Ithaca College and was one of three alumni who came on the Iceland Tour—the other two were **NATHAN WATTS** (*bassoon, Sinfonia '09-'10, VYP '10-'13, VYO '13-'14, Essex*) & **MICHAEL TITCOMB** (*oboe, Sinfonia '09-'10, VYP '10-'12, VYO '12-'13, Rice*). The VYO performed concerts in Dalvik, Reykjavik, and Hljómahöllin, visited many historic sites, & explored numerous natural and geologic wonders of Iceland.

This summer I was lucky enough to be able to go on the VYOA Tour of Iceland. After spending 6 years in VYOA ensembles and programs, this was my first time traveling abroad with the organization. Traveling to Iceland and performing with my peers was a life-changing experience, and I will be forever grateful to the organization for letting me come with them as an alumnus.

As soon as the plane emerged from the cloud cover, we could see that Iceland was nothing like we expected. In my mind, the island of Iceland can be separated into four parts, North, South, East, and West. The West contains the airport and Reykjavik; the North, small fishing villages at the foot of massive fjords; the East, more dramatic fjords and cliffs; and in the South, geysers and volcanoes. Fortunately, on the trip we got to see and experience every part of the country. This was important because we got to see the elements of the island that shaped the people. Iceland is a very small country, consisting of approximately 200,000 people. These people have a very special and palpable connection to the land, something that we do not experience much in the USA. They hold a deep connection and respect for the land - a connection they have fostered for thousands of years. There is a sense of great national pride in the parks and natural areas we visited. This connection was also apparent in the music we experienced.

*Continued on page 5...*



Photo by Jacob Morton-Black

# The VYOA Welcomes New Choral Conductors

The VYOA is proud to announce the appointment of **Caleb Pillsbury** as the new conductor of the VYO Chorus and **Sarah Cullins** as the new conductor of the Vermont Youth Concert Chorale! We are thrilled to have these two outstanding music educators to lead the VYOA's choral ensembles into their second decade. This spring, Jeff Buettner stepped down after seven years to focus on his growing family and his activities at Middlebury College. VYCC conductor Kristin Bamberger Marchilena also had to leave this spring, moving back to New York City for her husband's work. They will be missed!



**Caleb Pillsbury** has accepted the position as conductor of the VYO Chorus, the VYOA's chorus for students in grades 8-12. He is the Choral Director of the Mount Mansfield Union High School in Jericho, VT and holds a Bachelor's of Music in Choral Music Education with Teacher's Certification from University of Michigan's School of

Music, Theater, and Dance, and a Master's of Arts in Choral Conducting from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, where he studied with Simon Halsey, Neil Ferris and Sarah Tennant Flowers. In 2010, he was selected by the Chittenden East Supervisory Union as the University of Vermont College of Education Outstanding Teacher of the Year. In addition to a commitment to excellence, Mr. Pillsbury's continued demonstration of success can be seen in the performance growth and respected standing of MMU choral ensembles at both regional and national music festivals.

Caleb Pillsbury is excited to take on the new role of Conductor of the VYO Chorus because of its great musical potential. "The choir is very well established and with the energy and dedication of the current members, we are ready to continue building a culture which empowers students to develop their musicianship and vocal technique while preparing outstanding performances of the finest choral music." Pillsbury looks forward to bringing to the chorus members musical experiences that engage students' imaginations through a wide variety of repertoire and performance opportunities. "The VYOC is in a unique position to represent Vermont through well-crafted choral performances at regional, national, and international venues. My energy will focus on creating a choir that represents all of Vermont and makes it proud."



**Sarah Cullins** joins the VYOA as conductor of the Vermont Youth Concert Chorale, the VYOA's chorus for students in grades 4 – 7. Sarah writes "I am thrilled to become a member of the VYOA team and bring my

knowledge of classical vocal training to the Concert Chorale. I hope to help expand the choral program so that it reflects the amazing talent and diverse population that we are so fortunate to have in our small state, and to continue to inspire both the young singers and their audiences with the magical world of classical music."

A graduate of the New England Conservatory and Mannes School of Music, Ms. Cullins is Affiliate Artist/Director of the University of Vermont's Opera Workshop and returned to Vermont in 2013 after living in Bogota, Colombia for seven years. While there, she founded and directed the Universidad Central's voice program and Gimnasio Vermont, a children's chorus for grades 3-5.

Join us for our 2015-16 VYOA choral concerts at the Elley-Long Music Center:

**Winter Choral Concert**

Tuesday, December 8th, 2015, 7:00 pm

**Spring Choral Concert**

Tuesday, April 12th, 2016, 7:00 pm

*Tickets available at the door and through the Flynn Box Office: \$12/adults; \$7/students*

*Tickets on sale starting September 14th*

# ALUMNI NEWS

## **LESLIE SPROUT (cello, STO '79-'81, VYO '81-'86, BHS)**

I joined the String Training Orchestra and then the VYO as a cellist in the fall of 1979 and played for 6 years until I graduated from Burlington High School. At the time, I was also studying piano, but playing the cello enabled me to play chamber and orchestral repertoire with many extraordinary young musicians from all over northern Vermont. In college, I considered majoring in piano performance, but a music history class in my sophomore year changed my plans.

After graduating from the Eastman School of Music, I earned my MA and PhD in musicology at the University of California, Berkeley. The results of several years of research were published in 2013 in my book, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France*, with University of California Press. As a musicologist, I am interested in how people talk about the music they perform and what it means to them; I became especially interested in how our views of the role of music in German-occupied France during the Second World War have shifted since the war's end.

For the past 8 years, I've been a professor in the Music Department at Drew University, a small liberal-arts college in Madison, NJ, and last fall I became department chair. As chair, I manage the instructors who teach private lessons and direct ensembles; it's been very rewarding to oversee programs that have a similar aim to the VYO, but for liberal arts undergraduate students. By this I mean that we believe that making music is rewarding emotionally, socially, and intellectually, and benefits young people who do so as amateurs as well as pre-professionals.

Now that my book has been published, I've been taking more time to make music again, currently with the Drew orchestra and chorus as well as recently joining a church choir with my children. My daughters, ages 11 and 9, are aspiring singers and instrumentalists; my older daughter hopes to audition for the New Jersey Youth Symphony on flute. I have been so impressed and gratified with how the VYO organization has grown in the past 35 years. The young people and families in northern Vermont are so fortunate to have the opportunities the VYO provides to them.

## **2015 VYOA AWARD WINNERS**

Hermance Prize — Jillian Reed, Flute

Weathers Scholarship — Jillian Reed, Flute

Aaron Xue Friendship Award — Daniel Wagner, Percussion

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

## **ANNE COHEN GELLER (flute, VYO '63-'65)**

I certainly have fond memories of VYO. Here goes my attempt to summarize 50 years!

I have a B.A. and M.A. in Spanish and M.Ed. in Creative Arts in Learning. I continued to study the flute while getting my degrees. I taught Spanish part-time but gave flute lessons at home for 48 years. Also, during 25 of those years, I taught flute in the public schools. In an effort to demystify the arts, I wrote a weekly arts column for the local paper for 9 years while playing in the community orchestra and occasional ensembles. I regularly travel to Spain and Ecuador.

Rabble-rouser and community activist for school reform, I have served on school committees, state arts boards, helped start our school district's string program, school volunteer program, enrichment program, and helped found Mid-Maine Youth Orchestra.

From 1989 – 2009, I was co-founder and executive director of the Foothills Arts Center (Western Maine region) where people were encouraged to find the artist within them. Most of our participants (ages 2-92) were from low income families. We wrote and performed musicals based on local history, had school residencies that integrated arts into the curriculum, and a multidisciplinary summer arts program.

On a personal note, I have been married to Bill Geller for 45 years and live in Farmington, Maine. We have two creative daughters, who are happily married; two granddaughters, ages 5 and 7, who are carrying on the family tradition of thinking outside the box. Their mom, Jennifer, plays violin in a community orchestra in Providence, RI, where she teaches high school history. Our younger daughter, Sarah, plays violin professionally in New York

## ***In the News....***

**SOOVIN KIM (violin, VYO '86-'91, Plattsburgh)** received an honorary doctorate from the University of Vermont in May.

Congratulations, Soovin!



# ALUMNI NEWS

## MATT RINALDI (trumpet, VYO '88-'91, Winooski)

Well, I can't believe that this next season will be 25 years since I was in the Vermont Youth Orchestra! So many of those great experiences and music that I learned carried me through those years. I've been living in Arizona, down here in Tucson ever since. Graduated from the University of AZ with my Bachelor's and Master's in trumpet performance. After which, I started my own studio with upwards of 50 students!

About 15 years ago I start teaching as an adjunct professor of music at the local Pima Community College, and about 6 years ago started conducting a local church choir here in Oro Valley, Arizona. I've been lucky enough to still perform classical and jazz music on my trumpet, picking up local gigs and touring musicals, so I consider myself a true sideman. I've been very fortunate to be able to do what I love for living and that love started right there in Vermont with the wonderful program of VYO.

## CHAD HOLLISTER (percussion, VYO '83-'86, SBHS)

I have been recording and touring for over 20 years now. I have a wife, Katie, and daughter Riley (10) and son Bodi (8). I'm now working on my 7th release to be recorded in Mexico at VT veteran Chuck Ellers studio. The 9-piece band has been an amazing adventure with 3 horns, pedal steel/mandolin, percussion (of course), bass, drums and 2 guitars. My band is truly amazing and has been selling out theaters such as The Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center in Stowe where we'll be on Jan. 16, 2016!

Music has been a true gift to me and hope to perform someday at the amazing Elly Long Center. My VYO friends still surface and are a great part of my life. I'm working on music for a TV show "Food Truckers" which will be filming some episodes in VT in August. I hope to see you in your home town and you can find all dates at <http://www.chadmusic.com> as well as on Facebook as Chad Hollister Band and Twitter at @chadhollister. How's that for a social media blitz! Now put down your phone and go make some music.



## BRIAN MESSIER (percussion, VYO '97-'99, BFA St. Albans)

Brian writes that after high school, he attended Ithaca College for a degree in Music Education and then taught for several years in VT and MA before earning his Masters in Wind Conducting from UMass Amherst in 2011 and his Doctorate in Conducting from the University of Minnesota in 2014. He is currently living in Amherst, MA with his wife Ashley and his three-year old son, William.

He has been very busy in Amherst, working as the Instrumental Music Teacher at Belchertown High School, as CEO and artistic director of Elastic Bands ([elasticbands.org](http://elasticbands.org)), which produces educational methods that facilitate creativity and imagination, and as creator and Artistic Director of The Valley Winds ([www.TheValleyWinds.org](http://www.TheValleyWinds.org) and [www.facebook.com/PioneerValleyWinds](https://www.facebook.com/PioneerValleyWinds)). The Valley Winds is an artistically-driven wind ensemble comprised of professional brass, woodwind, and percussion players from the Pioneer Valley and beyond. Their concerts are designed to be accessible and enjoyable by all potential audience members, with pay-as-you-can admission and unconventional performance styles and venues. Most recently, they traveled to Boston to perform at The Festival of Bands at Faneuil Hall.

Brian tells us, "My favorite memory from the VYO was when I had the impromptu opportunity to conduct in rehearsal while conductor Troy Peters went out into the hall to listen for balance, I think it was Liszt *Les Preludes*. Apparently he thought I did a pretty good job, so later that year, he let me conduct a rehearsal of Dvorak's Ninth Symphony. That was a very formative experience on my path towards becoming a conductor, and I've tried to pay it forward by giving my own students those same types of opportunities."



Continued from page 1

Preparing for a tour is both exciting and tiring. Luckily, we had a great selection of music to perform. In Iceland, we had the privilege of playing Chabrier's *Marche Joyeuse*, Jón Leifs' *Icelandic Dances*, Lecuona's *Andalucia Suite*, Tchaikovsky's Waltz from *The Sleeping Beauty*, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> movements of Borodin's Second Symphony, Saint-Saens *Danse Bacchanale*, and finally Copland's "Hoe-Down" from *Rodeo* as an encore. It was a joy to bring such varied repertoire on tour. The music was engaging for both the orchestra and its audiences. When we played *Icelandic Dances*, I took a moment to look at the audience and see their reactions. I was pleased to see recognition on the faces of the audience, and some people even singing softly. I am so grateful that we got to play and experience their culture in this way. Jeff Domoto had introduced me to the music of Jón Leifs before the trip, and I took it upon myself to download some of his choral music (*Elegies* and *Requiem*). Both highlighted traditional Icelandic texts in an *a capella* setting. Listening to these pieces in the USA was just like listening to any other piece of comparable music, but listening to it while in Iceland was magical.



Photo by VYO oboist Gabe Harter



Photo by Mia Fritze

The Icelandic culture is one that I don't think I will ever understand, but we got a small glimpse of it on the trip. Like I said before, they value their country's natural beauty and rich heritage, but they are also a very charming and lovely people. We were greeted everywhere we went by smiles and waves. One notable thing about Iceland is that English is spoken everywhere. Our tour guide, Thora, told us that in Icelandic schools, they teach Icelandic, English, then Dutch. In some places, the Icelander's English was better than ours! At the end of the trip, after all of the concerts and sights, I believe the whole group was changed by our individual and shared experiences. One thing that will stick with me is how well the VYOA has prepared me for life ahead. Musically, they have prepared me to achieve my musical ambitions, whether it be in Vermont, Iceland, or in college. Personally, the VYOA has helped me grow into someone who respects and values their peers and who finds the best in people. For this I will be forever grateful. When the VYOA travels to other countries, they not only share our love of music, but they help the students grow as musicians and people. These memories of Iceland will stay with me forever.

—Jacob Morton-Black

*Above right—Enjoying the sunshine near the mud pots in Dimmuborgir*

*Above & below left —Rehearsing in Reykjavik*

*Below right—Whale-watching near Akureyri*



Photo by Mia Fritze



Photo by VYO oboist Gabe Harter

# IN MEMORIAM

## **COLLIN REYNOLDS (1995-2015)**

Percussion, Sinfonia '06-'09; VYP '09-'11; VYO '11-'13, MMU

Collin Reynolds, 20, of Jericho, passed away peacefully on March 11, 2015, at home, surrounded by his family and pets. Throughout his life-long battle with cystic fibrosis, he always managed to make those around him feel better no matter how he was feeling at the time. As an active member of the Burlington music community, Collin was happiest playing his drums and making great music with others. He is remembered here at the VYOA as a positive presence and having an intense passion for music. UVM Medical Center staff who knew Collin for many years wanted to do something in his memory. A new glockenspiel with a plaque that reads "This glockenspiel was given in memory of Collin Reynolds, a member of the VYO percussion section and friend to many," was purchased as a tribute to him. The glockenspiel will be presented at the VYO's first concert of the season on September 27<sup>th</sup>.

## **GREGORY TYLER (1992-2014)**

Double bass, Sinfonia '06-'07; VYP '07-'08; VYO '08-'10, Essex

Gregory Michael Tyler, beloved son of George A. Tyler and Roberta O'Brien of Essex Junction, passed away on Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2014, of medical complications. Greg suffered a severe fall in 2013 which required multiple surgeries. He never fully recovered physically or emotionally from the trauma, but struggled nonetheless to regain his health. He was 22 years old. Gregory was a senior student of classical piano at the University of Vermont and talented musician and composer who played in bands in the Burlington music scene. His life revolved around his music and being with his many friends.

Gregory was a double bassist in the VYOA from 2006 to 2010. He performed in the VYO on our concert tour of Quebec and France and was also an accomplished pianist. We remember him for his kindness and sincerity.

The VYOA was saddened to learn that **Meng Chun-Chi (Mong)**, violist, who taught for many years at Reveille, passed away in June at the age of 41 after battle with cancer. Music Day Camp director Tim Buckingham shared, "Mong was a blistering musician and was a joy to watch perform. She was an enthusiastic and kind soul who became life-long friends with so many of us on the VYOA staff. She loved coming to Vermont and treasured her time at VYOA."



## **ELIZABETH WALLMAN (1916-2015)**

*Vermont Youth Orchestra Founder*

The VYOA sends our condolences to the family of Elizabeth Wallman, one of our founders, who passed away on May 25, 2015, at the age of 99. Liz was a kind and generous soul, a lifelong supporter of the arts and youth programs, and always strove to make the world a better place. We were lucky to have her at our 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee last year, where this picture was taken. Elizabeth's grandson, **ROB RICKNER** (French horn) was in the VYO '93-'96.

## **LINDA WELCH (1954-2014)**

Clarinet, VYO '68-'70, principal '70-'72, CVU



Linda moved to Boulder, Colorado, in 1997 when her husband, Wallace Orr, got a job there. The VYO marked her leaving with a major Alumni Newsletter article titled FAREWELL. Job openings in Vermont occasioned by Linda's departure from Vermont included: conductor of

the Burlington City Band (weekly summer concerts at Battery Park); principal clarinet in the Bach Wind Philharmonic (the ensemble played a benefit for the VYOA); music teacher at Williston Central School (which hosted two VYO Days); organist at St. Catherine's Church in Shelburne. She was on the search committee that selected Troy Peters to be the conductor of the VYO in 1995.

In 1984 Linda was named "Young Career Woman of Chittenden County Business & Professional Women's Club."

Vermont's loss was Colorado's gain. Linda was Orchestra Director at Boulder High School, taught woodwinds in four elementary schools, and played in the Colorado and Wyoming National Guard Bands. She concluded one of her entries for the VYO Alumni Newsletter, "Long live the VYO!"

Linda visited her family in Ferrisburgh this past Thanksgiving, but left hurriedly on an emergency flight back to Colorado, where she died the next day. She had a brain tumor that was related to an earlier battle with cancer. She will be missed.

# The VYOA Annual Fund

**Become an alumni donor!** Alumni support plays a vital role in the VYOA's mission: *to develop young people as artists, citizens, and leaders through the shared pursuit of musical excellence.* With tuition covering only 50% of our income, the VYOA counts on donations from alumni, parents of alumni, and other community members to close that gap and continue to provide excellent ensembles, music education, and outreach programs.

In the 2014-15 season, **75 alumni** donated to the VYOA's Annual Fund, raising nearly \$8,000. In the 2015-16 season, our goal is to get even more alums to participate, and **raise a total of \$8,500.** Donations can be made online at [www.vyo.org](http://www.vyo.org) or by sending checks to: VYOA, 223 Ethan Allen Avenue, Colchester, VT 05446. Thank you!!!



Students at JFK Elementary in Winooski take part in after-school violin lessons as part of our outreach programs targeting underserved communities in Vermont.



## 5 Ways to Stay Connected to the VYOA

- 1. Become a sustaining donor** by setting up a recurring monthly gift on your credit or debit card. A gift of just \$8.33 each month adds up to \$100 per year!
- 2. Attend a VYOA concert** (BONUS: Bring a friend, or two!) Not only do you get to hear beautiful music, but you make sure that our students get to play to a full house.
- 3. Join the Alumni Facebook group.** Connect with other alumni and stay informed about happenings at the VYOA. Email [martha@vyo.org](mailto:martha@vyo.org) to request an invitation to join.
- 4. Read the Alumni Newsletter** and tell us what you're up to! Whether it's musical or not, we want to hear from you. Email your news and updates to [martha@vyo.org](mailto:martha@vyo.org)
- 5. Get your parents involved.** Why not encourage them to make their own contribution to the Annual Fund or invite them to a concert? Tell them what is going on at the VYOA lately - they're sure to be inspired.

**BONUS: Make some music of your own!** If you haven't touched your instrument in a while, dust it off and play a few notes. Remember how much fun you had playing music with the VYOA. Many of you have become music teachers and professional musicians, so you may already be doing this every day!



## ***WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!***

Send your stories and address updates to Martha Pullen at [martha@vyo.org](mailto:martha@vyo.org). Let us know what's going on in your life and share memories and photos of your time with the VYOA!

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ALUMNI NEWSLETTER  
SPRING/SUMMER 2015



## ***FLASHBACK FEATURE***

Name those alumni!  
Do you recognize these  
young musicians? If so, send  
an email to [martha@vyo.org](mailto:martha@vyo.org)  
and let us know!

