



## A Musical Philadelphia: Music Educator and Violinist Heather Kani

Written by Stephen J. Trygar  
January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020



It is with great pleasure that I get to introduce you to a dear friend of mine, Heather Kani! Heather is a music teacher at Anne Frank Elementary School here in Philadelphia. She teaches General Music to students in grades Kindergarten through 5th grade and Choir to 4th and 5th grades. During Heather's first years teaching at Anne Frank Elementary School, she was obtaining her Masters degree in Music Education through the University of Florida's online program. She recently completed that degree in August of 2019.

Heather and I have been friends for several years. We both attended Marywood University as Music Education students obtaining our Bachelors degrees. While I eventually changed my major and career focus, Heather continued to pursue her Music Education degree while also teaching at the Marywood-hosted String Project and gaining ground as a performer. As a performer, Heather continues to perform with the Wyoming Seminary Civic Orchestra in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area and the Bryn Athyn Orchestra. Since moving from Scranton to Philadelphia, Heather has flourished both as a music educator and a performer. Because of her success, and to celebrate her obtaining the Picasso Project Grant from Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), I asked her to share some of that success with you!



WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED YOUR CAREER AS AN UNDERGRADUATE, I REMEMBER THAT YOU WERE INITIALLY A MUSIC EDUCATION MAJOR WITH A

CONCENTRATION IN VOICE. HOW DID YOU COME TO BEING A VIOLINIST INSTEAD OF A VOCALIST?

I ended up switching my concentration solely based on how I was feeling during my lessons. I played violin for just as long as I was singing in choirs when growing up, but felt I was a better vocalist than violinist. I was taking voice and violin lessons simultaneously, but always felt discouraged after my voice lessons and empowered after my violin lessons. I attribute that feeling to my violin teacher, Sophie Till. After talking with her and my department chairs, we decided I could very easily switch my concentration if I did a short audition and I never looked back.

ALTHOUGH YOU HAVE MOVED TO PHILADELPHIA, YOU STILL REGULARLY RETURN TO THE SCRANTON/WILKES-BARRE AREA TO PERFORM WITH SOME OF THE AREA'S ORCHESTRAS. HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO KEEP UP WITH BOTH SIDES OF YOUR CAREER? (TRAVELING ASIDE! HAHA)

I try very hard to leave work at work so it doesn't stop me from doing things that I enjoy outside of being at my school. Since the majority of the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre rehearsals happen on the weekend, I am able to travel back and forth. It does help that I don't go alone and drive with a friend so that keeps the travel time feeling very short. I really enjoy playing with the Civic Orchestra so the time commitment is something I definitely don't mind. It's been difficult to find a high-quality orchestra in the Philadelphia area that doesn't interfere with things I do Monday-Friday, so my weekend rehearsals in Wilkes-Barre fit in perfectly.



I'VE OFTEN HEARD YOU PRAISE YOUR SCHOOL AND ITS OVERALL ARTS PROGRAM. WITHOUT GOING INTO ANY DETAIL ABOUT YOUR SPECIFIC SCHOOL, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE QUALIFICATIONS ARE FOR A GOOD MUSIC PROGRAM?

I think the biggest contributing factor for a good music program is to have a teacher that cares and a teacher that only wants what is best for their students. In the ever-changing community that teachers serve, it is important to take risks and try new things in order to keep content relevant and engaging. If the students are at the forefront of every decision, a program is being built that suits them and their needs. Having a good music program requires support and if the kids are enjoying your program and getting something out of it, you'll get the support you need.



OF COURSE, BOTH OF OUR PROFESSIONAL MUSIC TRAINING STARTED IN SCRANTON DURING OUR UNDERGRADUATE, BUT HOW DO YOU FEEL THAT MOVING TO PHILADELPHIA HAS CHANGED YOUR CAREER?

Teaching students in the Scranton area through my undergrad was definitely different than the students I teach now. Managing behaviors was definitely something I struggled with when I first moved here, but over the past two and a half years, I've found management tools that work in my classroom and aid in a successful class period. I was also always convinced that I would be teaching high school strings throughout my undergraduate career, but now that I'm in a school where I teach elementary general music, I couldn't imagine myself teaching anything else. I teach some of the greatest kids and we have a blast every day together.

Thank you, once again, Heather for taking the time to sit down with me and discussing your involvement in the Philadelphia classical music scene! Congratulations on all your accomplishments thus far, and good luck with all your endeavors.