

## A Message from our Executive Director

First, I would like to say my sincerest thank you to the OrchKids team of staff, teachers, and volunteers. Thank you for all your outstanding work during this virtual journey. Thank you for your hard work pre-COVID! Thank you for all you do for the program and our students! I also want to thank our parents and students. Your commitment has been truly inspiring. Finally, I want thank our donors and cheerleaders. Your support has made this critical work possible despite a global pandemic.

When I think back to March 12th, the day we found out that schools were closing, I am so amazed at what this team has accomplished. Because of all of your tireless efforts, we delivered over 1,000 hours of private lessons! 1,000 lessons!!!! That's incredible! We also had recitals, ensembles, and workshops. We DID NOT miss a beat! We delivered quality, impactful programming, and our students made great musical gains! And we did this while trying to manage an unprecedented global pandemic and all the tragedy, trauma, and heartbreak that came with it.

Even though we could not be together over the past several weeks, I feel like our bond as a community is stronger. And that bond is more important now than ever before as we stand together and work towards a better collective/inclusive future.

Like you, I am angry, sad, and heartbroken by the continued racism and violence being perpetrated against black people in the US, specifically black men. As you know, the murder of George Floyd is unfortunately just the latest incident in a long history of police brutality against black people. And like you, I know this MUST stop! But what I don't always know is what I can personally do to bring about the change that I know we so desperately need. The change that my five year old son needs me to work towards.

In 2015, at the time of the uprisings in Baltimore, I was working at a for-profit company, Learn It Systems, and I wanted to help. I helped by working with others to clean up Pennsylvania Avenue and other areas hard hit during the unrest. I also supported efforts to help businesses in West Baltimore recover. But it didn't feel like I was

doing enough. As the new mom of a black son, I felt like I needed to do more for him. I wanted my day to day life to be more meaningful. I wanted to be part of the transformation that I knew Baltimore so desperately needed. And one year later I left Learn It to join OrchKids. I was so excited to be in the community and supporting the communities most ravaged by inequity and racism. And during these last four years, I have felt like I'm living that life of meaning that I so desperately wanted as I watched my city burn that April in 2015.

And yet, here we are AGAIN! During the first weekend after George Floyd's murder, I struggled because I kept saying, "I don't know what to do." "I don't know how to make people treat black people with the most basic of human dignities." "I don't know how to protect our community, our families, or even my own family." "I just don't know what to do."

More recently, however, my anguish over what has felt like a helpless and doomed situation, has turned more hopeful. And I realized that while I don't know exactly what to do, I do know some things. I know that change will not happen unless we are ALL fighting for it together! I know that my SON is watching me and counting on me to help figure this out. I know that all our OrchKids across Baltimore are looking to us to make sure their experience is different than what they may see on TV.

I'm not sure what my exact role is in this anti-racism battle outside of raising awareness, lending my support however possible, and protecting my son but wherever I am needed, I promise to heed the call. And I appreciate that all of you are in this fight with me!

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Executive Director Raquel Whiting-Gilmer with OrchKids students

## Congratulations to all OrchKids 2020 Graduates!

### High School Graduates:

Nyshae Cheatham  
Keith Flemming  
Aaron Palmer  
Andre Palmer

### 8th Grade Graduates:

Purnell Anderson  
Rickerra Bassett  
Shanita Bell  
Jeremiah Brockington  
Jeremy Castillo  
Melanie Contreras  
Clinton Dunnock  
Jesus Gamboa  
Ana Gomez  
Cristofer Gomez  
Fatima Hernandez  
Jasmine Holden  
Jaylin Johnson  
Isaiah Magruder  
Mark McFadden  
Brandon Midgett  
Stephanie Stevenson  
Alberta Quintanal  
David Ward  
Raniya Williams

### 5th Grade Graduates:

Amani Duke  
Viahn Green  
Ja'Nasia Hall  
Ezekiel Hamilton  
Morgan Headspeth  
Ilide Itheme  
Jerrel Jones  
Donovan Marcus  
Judia Parker  
Jasiyah Patterson  
Amari Powell  
Na'Kayla Robinson  
Christopher Smith  
Autumn Taylor  
Jahvin Williams  
Tymarei Williams

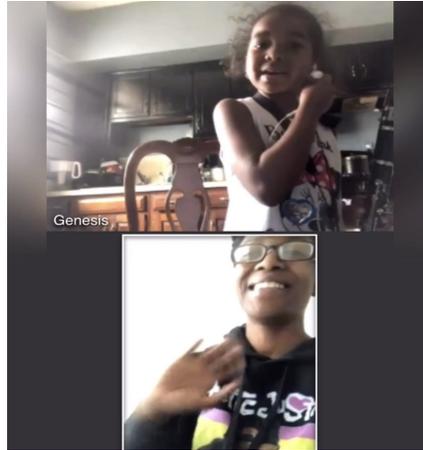
We are so proud of you!!

## A Message from our Executive Director cont.

And while we must continue the fight, we must also celebrate the accomplishments that are all around us. I have hope because of our awesome OrchKids students, in particular, our awesome graduates! Because of COVID-19, we weren't able to celebrate our graduates in person but we are so proud of them and so appreciative of their determination and commitment to their studies. Please watch our OrchKids graduation video [here](#) and join us in celebrating and acknowledging the bright futures they have ahead of them!

Sincerely,

Raquel



Ms. Rachel and student Genesis in their online lesson



Ms. Mollie and students in a Collective Composition Workshop

## What Will Summer 2020 Look Like at OrchKids?



Students at previous Summer Programming at the SEED School

While all of OrchKids' summer programming will be taking place on-line, as opposed to at our usual summer home on the beautiful SEED School campus, we will still be offering a full schedule of musical learning, academic enrichment and fun activities! As with our regular summer session, OrchKids will host a variety of on-line classes and activities— including ensembles and creative composition – 5 days per week, for 4 weeks (June 29-July 24, 2020). Program offerings will include:

- ◆ Small group music lessons (50-minute group lessons with no more than 6 students in a class); and some private lessons
- ◆ Online Enrichment Classes: These 50-minute classes include topics such as music theory, life skills, and mindfulness to support our students musically and emotionally. Due to COVID19 and other traumas (i.e. gun violence, food insecurity, homelessness,

etc.), mindfulness is becoming an integral and engrained component of our programming to help teach our students how to support themselves emotionally and to keep strengthening their over-all health and well-being.

- ◆ Online Workshops: Creative Composition workshops in which students take the lead in creating original music, based on a particular topic or theme. Past compositions have explored racism, diversity and hopes for the future.
- ◆ We're using innovative tools like Chrome Music Lab for students to have an outlet for musical creativity in an electronic format—teaching new skill sets with recording, editing, etc.
- ◆ Book Club and Summer Reading Challenge: All students enrolled in our summer program will receive a FREE OrchKids book bag filled with donated grade-level books (generously provided by our friends at the Enoch Pratt Library as well as individual donors). Students will have the option to sign up for fun book clubs, as well as participate in a summer reading challenge which includes reading a minimum of 5 books and earning points for weekly raffle prizes
- ◆ Community Time: We have non-mandatory drop in sessions for students to participate in and see their friends and

OrchKids community members. We will have anything from discussions to "watch and learns" to fun games

As many of you are aware, in addition to hosting our own summer program each year, OrchKids also sends students around the country to prestigious outside summer music camps and special programs. While many of these camps have had to close due to the pandemic, we are excited to announce that we will still have OrchKids students attending on-line programming at Interlochen as well as YOLA National Festival for young musicians from Sistema-inspired programs, like OrchKids. Selected students will participate in a series of open-source online music courses, masterclasses, keynotes, and project-based learning opportunities throughout the month of July.



Backpacks being made for Book Club participants

# In Case You Missed It



Watch the recital from our first year of Saturday OrchKids Academy students!



Watch OrchKids Latin Ensemble performance of Mambo No. 5 by Perez Prado!

## Bravo! To OrchKids Fellows



Fellows Christy Grace, Maddi Bohman, Autumn England, and Daniel Morrison

Each year, as a requirement of OrchKids' two-year fellowship program, our fellows develop, plan and implement a final student project/performance. Last year, our fellows organized a community concert at the opening of Baltimore City's farmers market. This year, OrchKids fellows, Daniel Morrison, Christy Grace, Maddi Bohman, and Autumn England have found a way to make music together, despite the physical distance of Covid19 quarantine. In online sessions, fellows gathered student recordings for a collaborative video project. Students listened to a pre-recorded track – composed by OrchKids student, Lowrider James, on tuba, and OrchKids alum, teacher, and percussionist, Devron Dennis - and wrote their own music to go along with the recording. We invite you to view the video project [here](#).

Everything you hear in the video is an original composition by students, with only a few small additions from the fellows. Through the recording process, students developed intonation, rhythm, and the ability to play along

with a track. It takes a great deal of courage to create something new and the resulting sense of accomplishment helps to increase students' self-esteem. When students feel a sense of control over what they have created, it provides them with a new perspective on the power of their own voice.

Since working on this project, a few students have started to compose more music on their own. Their connection to musical learning is strengthened as they write songs about subjects that they love and can relate to, and it fills each lesson with smiles and laughter. As teachers, our fellows work to instill a deep love of music in our students. Love is the most powerful motivator and this passion drives students to overcome incredible obstacles in order to learn their instruments, which is no easy task even in the best of times.

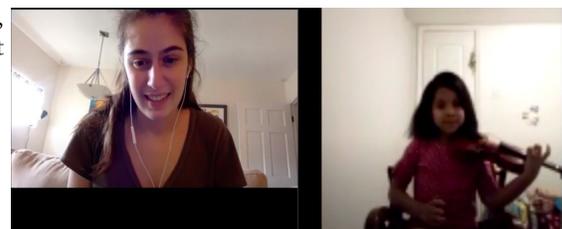
It is a great responsibility to play a part in helping a young person achieve their dreams. We strive to let students know that they are not alone and that there are people there to help, guide, and encourage them. Perhaps the most valuable gift we can give each other is a feeling of hope. When you listen to their compositions, you will hear skill and artistry, of course, you will also hear joy, kindness, humor, creativity, and inspiration. But also – and maybe most importantly – you will hear hope!



Ms. Christy and Byron working on their piece



Violin student Cameron alert and ready to record!



Ms. Maddi and Kary composing during their session