VICTORIA CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Community Impact Report 2026



Message from CEO Nathan Medd

When the Conservatory's Board of Governors invited me to join this special community four years ago, they asked me to paint a picture of where Victoria Conservatory would be in 2026. All of a sudden, we're here! How does our progress match that painting?

At the time, the Conservatory was adapting to COVID-19 restrictions; to an emerging digital revolution in education; and to powerful social movements that have changed what people expect from arts and culture spaces.

We discussed three areas of focus looking ahead: sustainability through ambition; upgrades to facilities and instruments; and profile-raising activities locally and nationally.

I promised that two things the Conservatory is known for—large vision and prudent planning—would continue as we build a proud home for music education, performance and wellness in the heart of our city.

Since then, we established the **Music Therapy Fund**, and claimed status as a national leader in music as care through the **Centre for Music Therapy and Wellness**. We launched the **Roy Barnett Scholarship in Advanced Piano**, to fully support our most promising future performers through their academic journeys. We marked 20 years serving talented and dedicated youth through our Collegium program by expanding its scope, relaunching as the **Gary Karr Young Artists Performance Academy**. We welcomed our first guest faculty in music and reconciliation, and are deepening our engagement with partners in **Indigenous arts and education**. New programs were created in **hip-hop, music tech, and vocal improv**. An explosive surge in voice programs continues, and our two largest study areas—piano and postsecondary studies—are also growing. Our mortgage is now within close reach of being retired.

Turning a corner on challenges outside the Conservatory would require focus too. By working tirelessly with our neighbours, including faith groups, social services, businesses, media, government and law enforcement leaders, leveraging the expertise of volunteers and peers, and at times using our voice, the conversations have changed.



> "Our work is to create this together, through your ideas, participation, and investment. There is so much more to do, and the potential is limitless."
>
> NATHAN MEDD, CEO

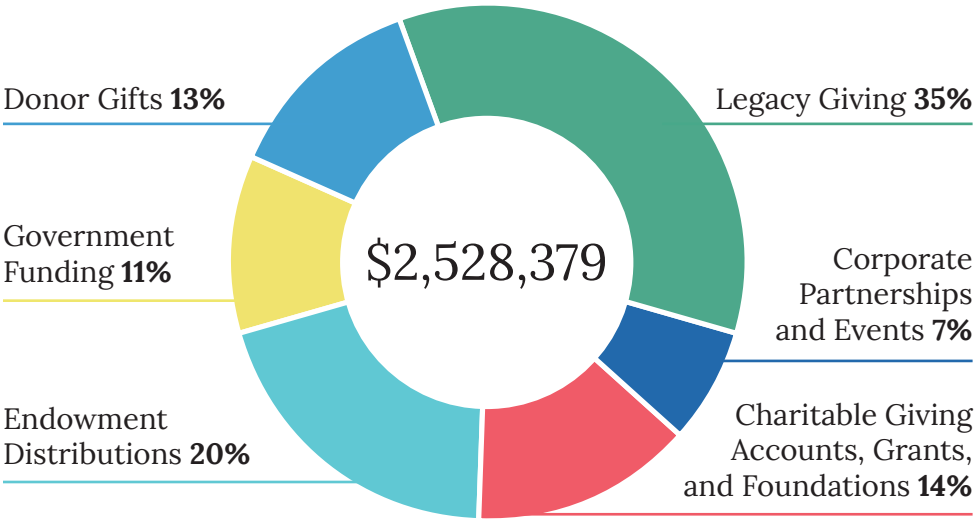
I'm pleased to share that the balcony in **Alix Goolden Hall will be fully open this fall** following an addition to the courtyard around it, and we also **unveiled the Greenhouse**, our new 185-seat performance and learning space in the Conservatory's south wing. I can't wait for you to enjoy a concert or a class there.

In 2022, the Board also asked me to imagine what success will look like after five years, which is now very near. Our work is to create this together, through your ideas, participation, and investment. There is so much more to do, and the potential is limitless.



Postsecondary Bandemonium concert, 2026
Photo credit: Megan Harton

In 2025/26, your support represented 40% of our operating revenue!



Figures reflect unaudited results and are provided to illustrate the community impact of your support.

28,000+
Lesson Hours

500
Educational Program Offerings

5,041
Participants

61
Community Locations



> “Your support was felt in classrooms, rehearsal halls, community spaces, and on stages across the region: when a child discovered rhythm for the first time, a student performed with courage, a choir lifted voices together, or faculty shared their artistry with care and purpose.”
>
> TRICIA BALDWIN, DEAN

A Year Made Possible by You

Because of your generosity, and the dedication of our artistic directors, faculty, and students, the 2025/26 academic year has been a year of momentum, joy, and meaningful growth at the Victoria Conservatory of Music. Together, we advanced both **access and excellence**—opening doors for more learners while nurturing the artistry, confidence, and dedication of students at every stage of their musical journey.

Renamed this year as the **Gary Karr Young Artists Performance Academy**, Collegium continues to honour Gary Karr’s extraordinary legacy under the artistic leadership of **Mûge Büyükçelen** and **Emily Nagelbach**. Students also shone on local, provincial, and national stages, including Felicia Ma, who earned first place at the Federation of Canadian Music Festivals’ National Music Festival, and Max Francis, the youngest person ever to win the British Columbia Old Time Fiddling Championship.

Performance remained at the heart of the Conservatory experience, from **Spark to Flame**, the **Chamber Music Competition**, and **Voice Competitions** to the return of Opera in Concert as OperaFest, culminating in a beautiful production of *Dido and Aeneas*, conducted by **Sahara Sloan**.

Donor support also broadened access to music education. Through **ChoirKids**, children experienced the joy of singing during the school year and through a free music camp, including a wonderful joint performance with Jack Boomer’s Arbutus Singers. We also laid groundwork for the future **Centre for Early Childhood Music Education** and school programs, and our **Music Technology and Creativity** team created a meaningful new program for Indigenous students, led by **Nikky Ermineskin** in partnership with the Esquimalt Nation.

As enrolment continues to grow at both our downtown and Langford campuses, more students are discovering their abilities, more families are finding a musical home, and more communities are benefiting from the lifelong gifts that music education provides.

We are profoundly grateful for your support and your investment in the next generation of musicians and citizens. The gift of music education is a gift for life. Thank you for helping make that gift available to so many.

From Dedication to Achievement



Your support helped make extraordinary student achievements possible this year. Through exceptional instruction, inspiring programs, performance opportunities, and scholarships, our students developed their talents, pursued ambitious goals, and achieved success at the local, provincial, national, and international levels.

At 15 years old, Felicia is already achieving remarkable success as a young musician. A dedicated Conservatory student for the past six years, studying with longtime instructor Ingrid Henderson, **Felicia recently earned first place in the National Music Festival's Developing Artist category**, adding to an impressive list of provincial and regional honours.

Yet for Felicia, music is about more than awards. **"Studying new repertoire and having the privilege to share it with others is one of my favourite parts of making music,"** she says. **"I especially enjoy seeing the audience's reactions and how the music connects with them."**

Through Conservatory programs and donor-supported scholarships, including the prestigious Roy Barnett Scholarship in Advanced Piano, Felicia has accessed exceptional learning opportunities and advanced studies at the renowned Mozarteum University International Summer Academy in Salzburg, Austria.

Looking ahead, Felicia hopes to continue her studies and one day inspire others through music, just as she has been inspired. Her journey reflects the impact of your generosity: nurturing talent, opening doors to opportunity, and helping young musicians realize their full potential.

Photo credit: Jayden Beaudoin

Recent Festival and Competition Results

BC Provincial Festival

Hope Syyong - Hon. Mention, Jr. A Strings

Max Francis – 1st, Jr. B Strings

Arbutus Quartet *(Daniel Lum, Hope Syyong, Victoria Zhang, Jeremy Zheng)* 1st, Jr. Chamber Group

Cedar Treeo *(Tristan Abbink, Troy Rees, William Rees)* - Runner-up, Jr. Chamber Group

Georgia Ungstad Macoun Runner-Up, Jr. Brass

Cairo Haq - 1st, Int. Brass

Canada West Performing Arts Festival Winners

Adrian Zhang - 1st, String Solo, 13 & under

Isidora Uhlman - 2nd, String Solo, 22 & under

Federation of Canadian Music Festivals National Music Festival

Felicia Ma - 1st, Developing Artist Category, Piano

Emilia Vozian - 2nd, Emerging Artist Stream, Flute

Arbutus Quartet - 1st, Junior Chamber Ensemble

West Bay Trio *(Max Francis, Filbert Zhang, Daniel Sanabria Torres)* - 1st, Advanced Chamber Ensemble

BCRMTA Student Composer Competition

Nathan Syyong - 2nd, 15 & under

Louis Sherman Concerto Competition for Young String Players

Adrian Zhang - Winner

Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival

52 Winners are Conservatory students!

A Year of Impact, Made Possible by You

Because of your generosity, students of all ages were able to learn, perform, create, and grow through music this year.

From young musicians taking the stage for the first time to advanced students pursuing artistic excellence, your support made extraordinary experiences possible. Across our programs, students gained confidence, developed new skills, and discovered what they could achieve through music.

The Conservatory continues to attract students from well beyond our region. This year, specialized programs welcomed participants from across Canada and as far away as France and Morocco, reflecting the Conservatory's growing reputation for excellence in music education.

A significant milestone this year was the completion of the first full year of the **Gary Karr Young Artists Performance Academy**, alongside the successful return of CelloFest. Through donor support, young musicians learned from and performed with leading artists, including violinist and alum **Timothy Chooi**, cellist **Desmond Hoebig**, and conductor **Grant Harville**. These experiences helped students refine their artistry, build lasting friendships and mentorships, and achieve success at regional, provincial, and national levels.

This summer, students also participated in a range of specialized programs. The **Winds and Brass Intensive** expanded to serve more students than ever before, including advanced musicians. **Robert Holliston** launched a new **Music Appreciation** program *Curtains Up: Music of the Golden Era of Broadway*, which filled up. A new **Art Song** program, led by acclaimed sopranos and educators **Nancy Argenta** and **Anne Grimm**, provided exceptional mentorship for emerging singers. Finally, **OperaFest** gave voice students valuable role and chorus experience through a semi-staged production of *Dido and Aeneas*, helping performers build confidence, artistry, and stage presence.

One of those students was 13 year-old classical voice student Lauren, who has already achieved remarkable success. Under the guidance of faculty member **Sahara Sloan**, she has developed as both a singer and performer while embracing every opportunity to learn and grow.



"I love being able to tell stories through my songs and deliver them to an audience."

LAUREN, STUDENT AND PERFORMER,
DIDO AND AENEAS

Lauren's dedication has earned recognition at the local, provincial, and national levels, including Most Outstanding Junior Singer and the Tom Lee Music Trophy at the Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival, as well as top honours at both the Provincial and National Performing Arts Festivals.

Lauren's story reflects the difference your support makes, helping young musicians develop their talents and pursue their aspirations.

Photo credit: Kyron Basu

Creating Opportunities That Last

Your generosity continues to create opportunities that extend far beyond the classroom.

This year, your support helped students in the Conservatory's **Fiddle groups** participate in specialized learning opportunities and prepare for performances beyond Victoria. This October, they travel to Cape Breton for the internationally recognized Celtic Colours International Festival, representing the Conservatory on an international stage.

That same spirit of opportunity can be seen in siblings Adelaide and Oliver, who have studied cello at the Conservatory from a young age. Alongside their private studies, they have found community and inspiration through our fiddle programs. Thanks to your support, these experiences have helped them grow as musicians while fostering a lifelong love of music.

Their mother, Heather says "Music has become such a meaningful part of our family's life, and this gift allows my children to keep growing in something they truly love. **We are especially thankful for the Conservatory's excellent programs**, particularly **Daniel Lapp**'s program—it has been an amazing experience for both of my children. The warmth and joy he brings to making music together, in such a non-pressure and loving environment, has been one of the best experiences they've had."

The **School of Music Technology and Creativity** expanded programming to meet increasing demand for advanced courses that prepare students for careers in sound design, recording, and live production. Through **Live Sound 101**, students gained hands-on experience supporting live concerts and collaborating with artists, while new **Creative Coding with Sonic Pi** and **Hip Hop Production** courses connected the Conservatory with the home-school community for the first time. Several students showed exceptional promise and continued working with Artistic Director **Daniel Brandes** to develop a digital album for release later this year.

From first lessons to international stages, your support continues to shape the lives of students across our community. Thank you for making these opportunities possible.



> Thank you again for investing in young musicians and for making opportunities like this possible. We don't take this generosity for granted, and we're deeply grateful to be part of this community."
>
> HEATHER, CONSERVATORY PARENT

$242,675
Scholarships and Bursaries Awarded

159
Recipients

▲ Adelaide and Oliver prepare to perform at the Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival



Tyler with a Summer Camp participant, 2026

Photo credit: Quinton Gordon

Where Generosity Meets Musical Excellence

Tyler Henderson's path to music therapy began at the Conservatory, where he studied in the Postsecondary Studies Diploma in Music Performance program. While pursuing his diploma, he observed a music therapy session and **witnessed firsthand the powerful impact music can have** on health, wellbeing, and human connection. Inspired by that experience, he is pursuing a career in music therapy, building on a strong foundation of classical piano studies with distinguished faculty members **Robert Holliston** and **Anna Cal**.

Today, Tyler is a graduate of **Capilano University's** Bachelor of Music Therapy program. Since joining the Conservatory's faculty in 2023 as a piano instructor, he has also become a valued member of the Centre for Music Therapy and Wellness team, serving as a **Music Wellness Instructor** at community program sites and supporting Music Therapy **Summer Camp** programming under the direction of Department Head **Dr. Johanne Brodeur**. His return to the Conservatory as both educator and wellness practitioner reflects the many pathways through which music can enrich lives, support wellbeing, and strengthen communities.

5,099
Music Therapy Sessions

17
Community Locations

32
Bursary Recipients

1,900
Served

138
Camp Participants



Photo credit: Quinton Gordon

Your support helped move the Centre for Music Therapy and Wellness forward in meaningful and deeply human ways this year, expanding our ability to serve people across the Capital Region while investing in the next generation of music therapy professionals. In response to a two-year average waitlist, we advanced our **Adaptive Learning Program**, creating a more responsive pathway for individuals with diverse needs. Participants are assessed and matched with either Certified Music Therapists or instructors trained in adaptive learning, ensuring appropriate levels of support.

One of the year's clearest examples of your impact was the Music Therapy Summer Camp, which expanded again to serve participants ages 1 to 19. What began as a small program for children under six has grown into a vibrant, multi-age community where participants and caregivers find connection, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. As Johanne writes, the camp offers "knowledge, sharing, understanding, comfort, laughter, giggles, encouragement and participation, joy, and pride" for every participant and caregiver. Children and youth explore instruments, improvise, compose, and discover new strengths. Families often continue together in year-round music therapy groups, building on the momentum and friendships formed at camp.

Your support also made space for emerging practitioners. Music therapy interns Tyler and Ferdinand completed year-long clinical placements that expanded access to services while preparing skilled therapists for the future. Tyler's leadership at Summer Camp offered a vivid example of donor impact. Reflecting on his experience, he shared:

"Music therapy summer camp offered a blend of clinical support and active group play, giving participants a low-pressure environment to build friendships, practice social skills, and simply enjoy making music together."

His words capture what families tell us year after year: that the camp helps their children feel confident, connected, and understood—often for the first time.

Out in the Community

This year, your generosity helped children and youth experience moments of joy, growth, and breakthrough in classrooms and community centres across our region. By investing in music education, you strengthened teaching capacity, expanded culturally grounded programming, and removed financial, geographic, and social barriers, creating opportunities for young people to build confidence, find connection, and explore their creative potential through music.

In **30 Early Childhood Music Education Outreach sites**, new instrument banks and educator certification brought fresh energy and possibility to every classroom. Our growing team of early childhood specialists created spaces alive with rhythm, laughter, and discovery; where children found their voices and families found connection. These research-informed classes strengthened language, emotional regulation, and social bonds. As one parent shared, **"It gave me so much confidence as a first-time parent..."**—a reminder that your support nurtures not only young learners but the families who stand beside them.

In elementary and middle schools, **Daniel Brandes** and the Music Technology team brought **Children's Music Journey** including **Sonic Pi** and **Hip Hop Kids** to five schools, helping hundreds of students turn curiosity into creativity through hands-on music making. Meanwhile, **Annika Sauser** led **ChoirKids** in four elementary schools, giving children a joyful space to raise their voices together, celebrate belonging, and experience the thrill of performance.

This year, donors made something extraordinary happen: the launch of **Indigenous Youth Through Music Creation**, led by Indigenous artist **Nikky Ermineskin**. Youth wrote, recorded, and produced original hip hop tracks that celebrated identity, storytelling, and cultural pride—powerful expressions of voice and belonging made possible through your support. Watch their music videos on our YouTube Channel or scan the QR code: **youtube.com/@victoriaconservatory**

Your generosity ignited belonging, resilience, and possibility.





Youth are given the opportunity to record in a professional setting and star in their own music videos

40

Schools and Community Locations

1,077

Children and Youth Reached

5

Original Youth-Created Hip Hop Recordings

Amplifying Voices

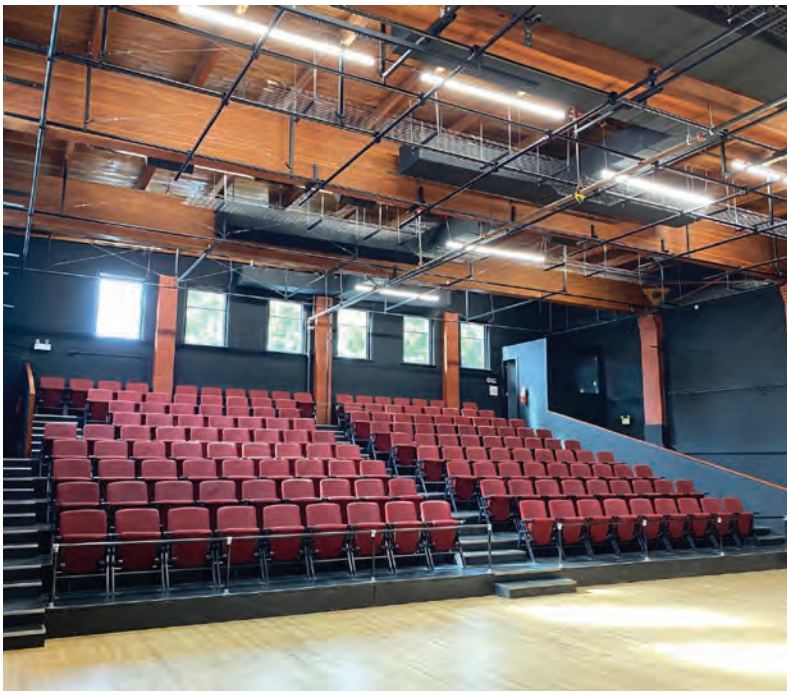
Donor support brings artists, audiences, students, and community members together through unforgettable shared experiences. Across our performance venues, live music fosters learning, cultural exchange, and connection.

This year, **Spark to Flame** gave seven exceptional young musicians the opportunity to perform as soloists with orchestra under the direction of **Grant Harville**, Artistic Director for Civic Orchestra of Victoria, sharing the stage with professional musicians in a milestone experience that nurtured confidence, artistry, and the next generation of musical talent.

Three events highlighted Indigenous voices, artistic practice, and community connection throughout the year. **An Evening for Truth and Reconciliation** brought audiences together through music, storytelling, and shared experiences, featuring performances by Indigenous artists Good Medicine, **Nikky E**, and Conservatory alum Tyler Evans-Knott. The event also celebrated the unveiling of ***Raven's Song***, a mural by Kwakwaka'wakw artist Francis Dick and Michif muralist Jesse Campbell. Later in the year, **Francis Dick in Conversation** offered audiences a personal reflection on the acclaimed artist's life and work, while **National Indigenous Peoples Day** welcomed community members of all ages for music, dance, visual art, and hands-on cultural activities, including a beatmaking workshop led by Nikky E, and a Métis jig workshop and performance by the Joyful Jiggers.

Thanks to our donors, we are opening an exciting new chapter with the **Greenhouse**, a dynamic new hub for music, learning, and community connection. Built through a shared vision for a vibrant cultural community, the Greenhouse expands opportunities for performances, educational programs, creative exploration, and community gatherings in the heart of Victoria. As artists take the stage and audiences fill its seats, the Greenhouse will stand as a lasting legacy of donor generosity and an investment in the cultural life of our region for generations to come.





▲ Top: Spark to Flame 2026 soloists take a bow.
Bottom: The newly renovated Greenhouse space, ready to nurture and grow student talent.

11,000+
Audience Members

50+
Free Community Performances

185
Seats in the New Greenhouse

3
Performance Venues



Joy of Life Concert, 2026
Photo credit: Dominic Hall

Your Impact, Your Community

The achievements and stories shared throughout this report are possible because of donors like you. Through your generosity, aspiring artists are discovering their potential, communities are connecting through shared musical experiences, and more people than ever are gaining access to the benefits of music education. Thank you for helping make this impact possible and for your partnership in building a stronger, more vibrant community through music.

Development Department

development@vcm.bc.ca
250.419.4312

900 Johnson Street
Victoria, BC V8V 3N4

Charitable Registration
10817 2255 RR0001

VICTORIA CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

The Victoria Conservatory of Music is located on the traditional lands of the Songhees, Esquimalt, W̱SÁNEĆ, and Beecher Bay Nations, where we are privileged to learn, work, and perform.