

## Learning moments at Berkshire High Peaks Festival

Annual Buddy Day pairs musicians young and old



IMAGE 1 OF 8

Berkshire High Peaks Festival senior student Hannah Cohen, in white shirt, works with younger students during a past year's Buddy Day at the festival. This year's Buddy Day concert, pairing older students with ... [more](#)

String players from around the world converge in the mountains as students and faculty for the Berkshire High Peaks Festival. Hailing from the U.S., Europe and Asia, they have many native tongues but share the universal language of music. And for one of the festival's 10 days, the senior students — most current college students, grad students or recent graduates — work and perform with 25 to 30 elementary and middle-school kids from disadvantaged backgrounds in Albany and Pittsfield, Mass., who are beginning their string studies, again united by music.

"We come from so many different places and different cultures, but when we come together to make music, it's amazing," says DoYeon Kim, a 31-year-old cellist from South Korea who is finishing her doctoral degree in music at the University of Cincinnati. She first came to the High Peaks Festival, held in the Catskills and now the Berkshires, in 2012 as a student; this summer she's in her third year as a faculty member and coordinator of the program that pairs older students with kids from Albany and Pittsfield, called Buddy Day.

"This event, Buddy Day, is very memorable for me. It's really precious," says Kim. "It gives the younger students the opportunity to work with the most awesomest musicians. And for us, we have the opportunity to work with people at different levels." Buddy Day's younger students are drawn from participants in the Empire State Youth Orchestra's CHIME program (Creating Harmony Inspiring Musical Excellence) and Kids 4 Harmony, run by the Pittsfield-based social-services organization Berkshire Children & Families.

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The Buddy Day concert this year will be Aug. 14 in the Allen Theater at the Berkshire School in Sheffield, about 8 miles southeast of Great Barrington. After starting in the Catskills, in the Hunter-Tannersville area, the High Peaks Festival moved to the Carey Institute in Rensselaerville before relocating this year to the Berkshire School.

"We were very happy at the Carey Institute, but our audience base is in the Berkshires, and it was just such a long way for them" X

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The festival, now renamed the Berkshire High Peaks Festival, runs from Monday through Aug. 15. In addition to the Buddy Day concert, there are two faculty concerts and almost daily talks, master classes and "moonlight sonata" concerts featuring High Peaks students. One of the talks is by New York City psychiatrist Arnold Cohen, who will present a program titled "Music and Cognitive Enrichment — Does Classical Music Make You Smarter?" on Aug. 14.

"We talk about music therapy and (music's) role in worship and dance, but research has show that what music can accomplish, its effect on the brain, is so much more than that," says Hanani. "The people in government who canceled music education have no idea the damage they're causing."

A Buddy Day alum who is a champion of the program is Taichi Fukumura. The 25-year-old, going into his second year as a doctoral student in music at Northwestern University, north of Chicago, started as a violinist but is focusing on conducting. He says interaction with Buddy Day students helps the festival's older students, many of whom are top-level players at colleges and conservatories, grow toward roles as mentors and perhaps teachers.

"As artists, it's important that we remember to share and give, rather than just going around receiving," Fukumura says. "Music is about collaborating and sharing; it's not a competition. What's wonderful about the festival is that it's really for any level of music student."

Hanani agrees, saying his festival charges, from a fifth-grader just beginning the violin to a conservatory concertmaster, learn lessons that will help them as citizens as well as musicians.

"We don't expect them to make it to Carnegie Hall. If they do, more power to them," he says. "But the festival is really about helping them to maintain an individual voice and at the same time belong to a group, which is my definition of an ideal democracy."

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#### More Information

##### If you go

##### Berkshire High Peaks Festival

**Where:** Berkshire School, 245 N. Undermountain Road, Sheffield, Mass.

**When:** Monday through Aug. 15

**What:** Faculty artist concerts, Aug. 11 and 14; student "moonlight sonata" concerts on multiple days; talks and master classes daily; Buddy Day concert, 4 p.m. Aug. 14

**Tickets:** \$50 for all-festival pass; faculty artists concerts, \$25 for both; talks, master classes and Buddy Day concert all free, donation accepted.

**Info:** [berkshirehighpeaksmusic.org](http://berkshirehighpeaksmusic.org)