

## **Worcester Mag | The Alternative Source for News - Art - Dining - Nightlife Worcester, MA**

[Print this article](#)

---

# **Empowering youth through music**

*Originally printed at <http://www.worcestermag.com/home/top-stories/Empowering-youth-through-music-185376232.html>*

By Taylor Nunez / photos by Steven King  
January 3, 2013

Not every neighborhood boasts professional musicians but with Worcester Chamber Music Society's new community-based program Neighborhood Strings, in just a few years this could become a reality for Worcester's Main South community. Neighborhood Strings will be offering free music lessons in violin, viola and cello to children between the ages of 6-12 each week after school in the Main South-area school, Woodland Academy. In close proximity to where Neighborhood Strings resides, Clark University, host of the society's Summer Music Festival for the first time this coming year, will participate in the new program as it offers unique internship programs to those currently studying at the school. Breaking the long-believed notion that classical music is experienced only by the elite with the means to attend performances and costly lessons, Neighborhood Strings provides an inclusive, shared experience of the genre.

Formed by artistic director Peter Sulski and executive director Tracy Kraus, Worcester Chamber Music Society was created to feed both Sulski's and Kraus's desire to play chamber music with local musicians. "We invited several of our colleagues who quickly signed on. From its inception, Worcester Chamber Music Society was a great success as it was musically satisfying for us and satisfied the need in the community to hear great chamber music performed locally," Kraus explains.

As the music society sought to create educational program Neighborhood Strings, this past spring cellist Ariana Falk was added to the team as the education director. Falk's history was fitting for the role as she comes from Community MusicWorks, where she worked as a fellow in a string program for inner-city kids.

Despite the number of other neighborhoods in Worcester that also could benefit from the program Neighborhood Strings, Main South and Woodland Academy seemed befitting. "The school has been incredibly supportive, and all the families in our program live in close walking distance, so the idea of building a tight-knit, inclusive musical community feels very possible," says Falk.

Another major deciding factor on where Neighborhood Strings would serve was Clark



University's established relationship with the Main South area. "Clark was eager to engage in a partnership with us as we added a music component to their programming," Kraus states. Currently, Worcester Chamber Music Society has two graduate student interns on the administrative side and

several Clark music students who volunteer with the Neighborhood Strings program. Falk noted that the volunteer opportunity should provide much to the Clark students. "It's great for the Clarkies to engage more deeply with their community and even to see a different model of musical engagement. It's part of our hope for a big, inclusive, connected musical world."

As mentioned, Clark's partnership will ascend beyond Neighborhood Strings and will venture into another of music society's education programs. The society's seasoned Summer Music Festival, now in its eighth year, will host the program for the first time. The Summer Music Festival provides an intensive summer camp that is still short despite its high concentration. "Traditionally, music camps tend to be day programs geared for lower-level students or are highly intense and expensive, lengthy programs focused on kids in the music fast-track lane. We saw a niche for a highly intense but noncompetitive camp for students who take their music studies seriously but also have other interests, like sports or academic camps, they want to attend in the summer," explains Krista Buckland Reisner, Summer Music Festival director and violinist. Now, the Worcester Chamber's summer concerts will be held at Clark's Razzo Hall and will provide an airconditioned haven for hot summer nights.

With programs like Neighborhood Strings and Summer Music Festival, the society's goal is simple - to provide the experience and benefits of classical music that is accessible to all and not limit those without financial means. "Studies show that children who are exposed to music and learn to play an instrument develop intellectual capacity, discipline, creativity and positive self-esteem," says Kraus. Though the programs may not reach large masses of those residing in Worcester, their significance is real. "While our programs do not serve thousands of children at a time, they are equally important. If we can empower one child to change his or her environment through music, then we have done our job," affirms Falk.



Buckland Reisner echoed these sentiments, reflecting on her own musical upbringing. “I grew up in a town in Northern Canada, somewhat similar to Worcester, and had it not been for the efforts of one man who came to my town and built a music program and performance series, I would not have been so fortunate as to have been exposed to music, let alone master it and become a professional and now do what I do

for WCMS.”

With budding music education programs, the music society will surely bring good classical music and maybe even inspire a future professional musician.

*For more information about Worcester Chamber Music Society, Neighborhood Strings and the Summer Music Festival, visit [worcesterchambermusic.org](http://worcesterchambermusic.org).*