

Vol 7 Issue 10 Spring 2019

Opus Notes

OPUS 118 HARLEM SCHOOL OF MUSIC

What's So Great About Opus 118?

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A Lifetime Spirit Award for Roberta

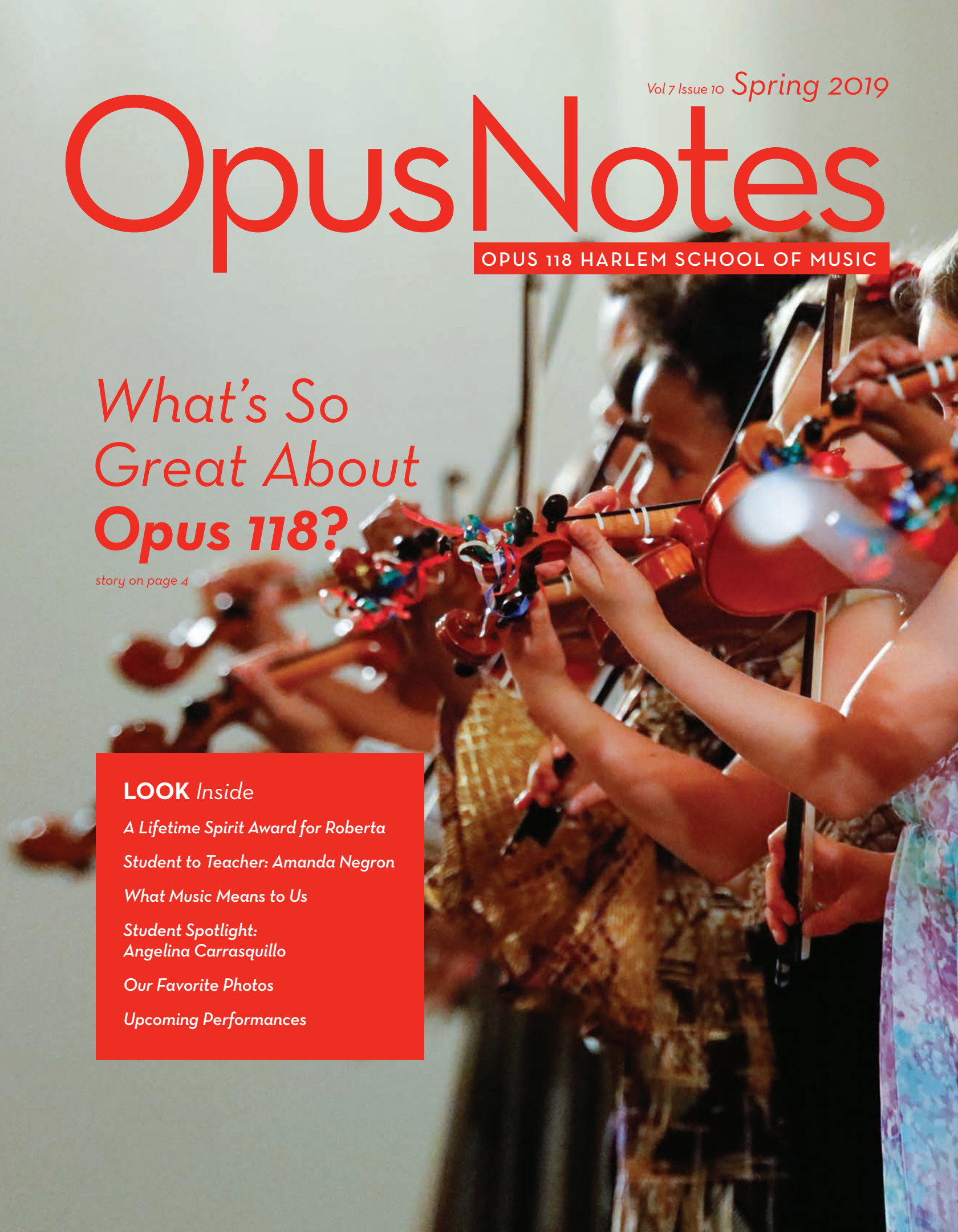
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A photograph of Roberta Guaspari, a woman with dark curly hair, wearing a black top, playing a violin. She is smiling and looking slightly to the right. The background shows an ornate wooden structure, possibly part of a stage or a building facade.

Roberta to Receive Lifetime Spirit Award

On Monday, May 20th, 2019, Opus 118 Harlem School of Music founder, Roberta Guaspari, will be honored with a Lifetime Spirit Award by fellow East Harlem organization Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service (LSA) at their annual gala.

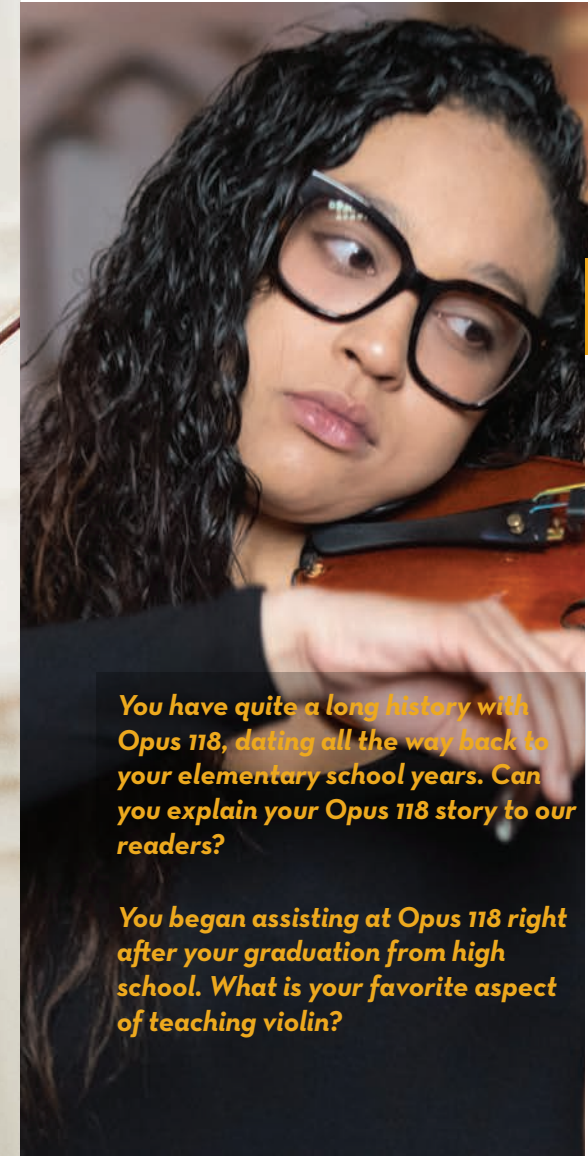
Members of Opus 118's After-School Ensembles will also join Roberta that evening to play a handful of selections for the event's guests.

LSA has been in the East Harlem neighborhood since 1958 with a mission that strengthens and empowers vulnerable families and children by meeting their basic needs for food, healthcare, education, and a safe home, in the belief that affirming families in their own dignity improves the entire community. Their programs include food advocacy and a pantry, environmental health services, nursing needs, parenting and child development, preventative services, and a thrift store called The Sharing Place. They provide food, healthcare, clothing, education, and parenting help to more than 2,200 area families each year.

This award will be celebrating Roberta's nearly 40 years of service in the East Harlem neighborhood and her commitment to the well-being of area students. LSA wrote that her "passionate struggle to keep music instruction alive in East Harlem's public schools is an inspiration for every child who grows up in this community aspiring to success in the face of enormous odds that include deep poverty, food insecurity, toxic stress, fear of deportation, poorly performing schools, and much more" and that this dedication led to her selection for this award. The Lifetime Spirit Award is a tremendous honor that in past years has been awarded to area legends such as Chita Rivera and Ronnie Spector.

All of us here at Opus 118 would like to congratulate Roberta on this fabulous achievement and thank LSA for their recognition for the work she has done in our area!





Student to Teacher:

Amanda Negron

Private lesson instructor and group class teaching assistant Amanda Negron started her Opus 118 journey as a Kindergartener in founder Roberta Guaspari's classroom at River East Elementary School. Amanda studied privately with Opus 118 faculty member Lynelle Smith and also attended Special Music School for middle school. Returning to Opus 118 as an intern in 2014, Amanda is now assisting in the violin classes at Central Park East I and PS/IS 171 Patrick Henry, teaching private lessons through our After-School Program, and assisting with the preparation of our performing ensembles. We caught up with Amanda to discuss her musical journey.

You have quite a long history with Opus 118, dating all the way back to your elementary school years. Can you explain your Opus 118 story to our readers?

You began assisting at Opus 118 right after your graduation from high school. What is your favorite aspect of teaching violin?

What is one of your favorite Opus 118 memories as a student? As a teacher?

With many years at Opus 118 already under your belt, what is your best advice for our current generation of young students?

AN: It all began at the age of 5 (Kindergarten) at River East Elementary School. Roberta singled me out and introduced me and my mom to Lynelle. Nothing in my musical studies from that moment on was simple, but with the support of my family who understood this was a great thing for me and showed me how special violin was, it became a natural routine in my life.

AN: I love the fact that I can see growth within myself from when I first started teaching and now. I was scared at first, but now that I realize that the students are there seeking help and guidance, it's not just about telling them what to do, getting a result, and moving on, it's about how we go about improving any and every thing we do. Why do I want to do my best in violin? Because if you can accomplish learning an instrument, you can go on living life doing the best you can in everything... you will never say you can't. I'm either going to give my all or not be there at all.

AN: As a student I remember traveling with Opus 118 a lot for performances. I might have to say my favorite Opus 118 moment was traveling to Cancun for a fundraiser. I can't remember how long we were gone, but I remember spending days at this beautiful hotel with the sun rising every morning looking as if it were coming straight out the ocean. I also remember feeling home sick but with all the fun we had after every rehearsal (and Roberta worked us very hard!) I eventually lost that feeling.

My favorite moment as a teacher has to be walking into each one of my schools and seeing how happy the kids are to say "Hi Miss Amanda!" The best part of each day is starting my morning off like that. I also look forward to the Opus 118 End-of-Year Concert, seeing all of us teachers and students under one roof to show our families and friends how hard we all worked together to make that concert special every single year.

AN: I'd like to let the kids know that nothing happens overnight, to learn at your own pace—slow practice is fast learning. I used to practice for hours because I knew anything new Lynelle or Roberta gave me to practice was always in preparation for a concert and I did not want to fail myself. It wasn't about my family or anyone else, it was about me being strong and confident enough that I practiced so hard to be able to get in front of a crowd and have them enjoy what I played. Again, it wasn't easy (my stomach was always in knots before performing) but I always had a feeling of relief afterwards and always got the chance to say I did it. NEVER GIVE UP! 🎻



What It Means: Opus 118 In Our Own Words

At Opus 118 Harlem School of Music, our first priority is to provide East Harlem children access to quality music education. The impact of music on a child's life is great; it inspires them, makes them stronger students, and fosters expression, self-confidence, creativity, and engagement. Music is a key part of a well-rounded education and a joyful childhood.

To celebrate the power of music, we asked our current Opus 118 students, family members, and faculty to share with the broader community what music education means to them personally.

To our family music is a very integral and important part of our life. Music education can and does mean a lot of different things, and in my mind it's about getting as much and as diverse exposure as possible. I love that at Opus 118 our kids are learning classical pieces, traditional songs, and are exposed to a wide variety of instruments and styles. A big part of music education is learning to be a performer, and the recitals have been wonderful experiences. Lastly, the 100 day practice challenge was a point of great pride and discussion at our house, mostly around developing good habits and a strong routine. Thanks for all you do in bringing music to the lives of our children.

- Anand, parent

It makes me feel all these different feelings all at once; it makes me feel I can do anything; I feel creative; it can inspire you.

- Malaika, student, 7 years old

I think music education means a way for students to express their feelings through music.

- Valerie, student, 13 years old

I like music education because of the beautiful sounds I make on the violin.

- Juliana, student, 7 years old

Once you start violin it's fun because you get to play games to learn the parts of the violin. Once you have private lessons and learn each song, it gets easier and easier, and then harder and harder until it's a good kind of challenging. Violin is fun!

- Keanu, student, 8 years old

Music education means learning to play an instrument. It's fun, especially learning to play the violin.

- Haruki, student, 11 years old



Students perform at the End-of-Year Concert; Juliana prepares for a Recital Hour; Ramsey and Wren rock out on their violins!



Clockwise from top left: Maggie and Wren celebrate participating in the practice challenge; Lynelle meets Adriel's new sister, Aria; Mia and Nicole finish a lesson; Kai smiles after performing; Amanda and Lynelle pose with their students.

It's fun to learn how to play an instrument. I like getting to learn new things.
- Wren, student, 9 years old

It's a good way to express yourself that isn't only academic. You can make the music sound the way you're feeling.
- Ramsey, student, 11 years old

You can express yourself by teaching people how to play any instrument.
- Adriel, student, 9 years old

Music education means commitment, new opportunities, and legacy.
- Linnetta, parent

Music education means I get to listen to my brother practice and smile about it. **- Aria (through her brother, Adriel), sibling, 6 months**

2019 End-of-Year Concert

On Thursday, June 13th, please join us for our 28th Annual End-of-Year Concert taking place in the beautiful auditorium at The Academy of Arts and Letters (entrance on West 156th Street between Broadway and Riverside Drive). Approximately 200 students from our in-school partners and our after-school ensembles will join together to perform and show the audience all that they have learned this year. We look forward to seeing you there!

To me, music is the universal dialect. It has the power to make everyone feel, and it has no boundaries. No matter where someone is from, what language they speak, or what they have been through, music can touch a person in ways like nothing else. People may interpret a song or a melody in different ways, and it may make two separate people feel completely different things, but that is what I find beautiful about music. There is never only one way to hear or feel a melody. For me, music can build meaning: the more I listen to a song, the more meaning I add to it from the intricacies or distinctions I hear throughout it. A song can be an emotional experience and can lead you to separate poles of joy and sorrow all at once. With many songs, I hear a story or a scenario that appears between the melodies, between the notes, or between the chords. The meaning may shift depending on the time or on the day, but, nevertheless, meaning and feeling will always penetrate the mind and the heart. Music has the power to tell a story, to uplift a community, and to truly do anything anyone may need in a single moment.
- Mia, student, 17 years old

Music education is something I look forward to every week. It's a way to improve your skills on an instrument you feel passionate about and meet amazing people in the process. People and teachers are so supportive and patient and it's a great environment to be in every week.
- Camila, student, 15 years old

Music is my heart! It is my way to share the language of music to others. Even though I play the violin, I also love piano.
- Kai, student, 8 years old



Student Spotlight:

Angelina Carrasquillo

Angelina Carrasquillo, PS 30 graduate, started playing violin in Opus 118's In-School Program in second grade.

Since then, she began private lessons in Opus 118's After School Program and eventually joined the violin ensemble led by Roberta - her favorite part of Opus 118, particularly performing in concerts. Angelina loves performing, even though she admits she doesn't "like dressing up."

As she's studied, she's learned to tackle the different challenges that come with playing the violin. Playing the right fingerings and not going to the wrong string are two particular difficulties Angelina has faced. However, she feels she has overcome them with regular practice even though "it can still be challenging."

Despite the continuous work and the fact Angelina has only been playing the violin for five years, she fully embraces Opus 118's mission and love for the violin. Like Roberta and her private lesson teacher Nicole (who also started playing the violin as an Opus 118 student), Angelina wants to pay her music education forward. "I'd like to pass what I've learned on to others by teaching when I grow up." Until that happens, "I'll keep learning about the music I play."

Opus 118 violin student and PS 30 graduate Angelina Carrasquillo watches at the End-of-Year concert, above; below, Angelina performs at a Student Recital.



Recent Photos & Upcoming Performances

We hope you'll join us at one of our student recitals. Below are the remaining performances scheduled for this year. Dates are subject to change; please visit www.opus118.org or call (646) 842-2775 for the most up-to-date information. All recital hours are held at Central Park East II (433 E 100th Street; enter from First Avenue) beginning at 7PM, unless otherwise stated.

Opus 118 Recital Hours

Wednesday, May 8

Thursday, May 23

Guitar and Piano Recital

Monday, June 3

Honors Recital

Friday, June 7, 6:30PM

End-of-Year Concert

The American Academy
of Arts and Letters

Thursday, June 13th 6:30PM



We Need Your Help!

For the last three years, you helped us match donations 4:1 during our June fundraising events. This year, we are hoping to exceed our prior year totals! Check out our website, Facebook, and Twitter on Monday, June 3rd for more information on this exciting and essential opportunity for Opus 118.

Our Favorite Photos: Top and center photos: scenes from our annual concert with The Harlem Chamber Players. Bottom row: Students prepare for and take a bow at the Practice Challenge celebration. **On the Front Cover:** Young violinists at the End-of-Year Concert.

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