

# Keynote Independent Theory Service

KITS Newsletter 2025

January 2026

Dr. Sonja Mihelcic, Director

Christine A. Murow, Founder

## NEWSLETTER TO HAVE ANNUAL DATA

With a deadline of December 1 for Honor Roll registrations, all information regarding the yearly KITS exams will be compiled in December and published in this January newsletter. New Director, Sonja Mihelcic, and her staff at the Naperville Music Academy are due our many thanks for compiling and recording this data, and coordinating with former Director, Christine Murow, who will continue to write the newsletter.

## SPECIAL AWARDS FROM THE NATIONAL MUSIC THEORY HONOR ROLL

The **National Music Theory Honor Roll** gives a personalized medal to those who have been listed in five different years, and a custom trophy to students making the Honor Roll on all seven levels of the annual examinations, having been listed at the primary level before the age of 13. The KITS trophy is a prestigious award earned by 213 students since it was inaugurated in 1996, including twelve who received the award this year and last. Unique to KITS, both of our awards bear the individual student's name, and represent a program of music theory testing with a 40-year history. There is now a nominal fee for them.

Eight students have been awarded the 7-step trophy for the 2025 exam, including:

**Andrew Nguyen**, student of **John VanLierop**, WA;

**Sarah Dang**, student of **Janet Swaney**, MD;

**Muskaan Lodha**, student of **Sue Steck-Turner**, LA;

**Ashton Bui**, student of **Caitlyn Vo**, CA;

**Erica Chen**, **Andrew Fan**, **Howard Shui**, and **Ray Yang**, students of **Deborah Rodgers**, PA.



Pictured far left is Andrew Nguyen, listed above. He has studied with loyal KITS subscriber John Van Lierop for 11 years. Andrew is a high school senior who began the KITS exams in 2015 at age 8.

In the photo next to Andrew is one of Sarah Dang, also listed above, who has studied for 13 years with another longtime subscriber, Janet Swaney. Like Andrew, she was age 8 upon her first KITS exam in 2015. She is now enrolled at the University of MD.

Four students of **Caitlyn Vo**, CA, earned the trophy for the 2024 exam: **Alvin Bui, Angeline Ho, Peyton Ngo,** and **Haley Nguyen.**

These fine scholars have participated in the annual KITS music theory exams for many years, for example, the two pictured above. Alvin and Ashton Bui have also taken part since 2015, while six of the twelve have worked toward this award for nine years, including Erica Chen, Andre Fan, Angeline Ho, Haley Nguyen, Ray Yang, and Howard Shui. Muscaan Lodha began the program in 2019 as a third grader and qualified for the award this year at age 13, while another prodigious young student Peyton Ngo, now 15, started the exams in 2018. To these students and their teachers, our hearty congratulations on their history of consistent achievements, serving to show how the program helps students commit to longterm goals.

Earning the 5-Year medal for the 2025 exam are a total of nine students:

**Violet Legnon, Samaira Srivastava,** and **Arman Ehsan,** students of **Sue Steck-Turner**, LA;  
**Juliana Graff, Sylvie McKenney** and **Corva Hannon,** students of **Carleen Graff**, NH;  
**Sydney Merrow,** student **Erica LeRoy**, NH;  
**Minh Nguyen,** student of **Caitlyn Vo**, CA;  
**Lily Glista,** student of **Susan Yoe**, MD.

A list of students who make a score of 90 or better on the annual KITS exams, qualifying for the Honor Roll, now appears on the KITS website: [musicestkits-awards.com](https://musicestkits-awards.com). Last year the total number of honorees was 221. For 2025, the **National Music Theory Honor Roll** lists 259 honorees, representing 35 teachers. Teachers may register qualifying students whenever testing is done, using the registration form on the website. The Honor Roll, reflecting results from the annual edition, will be updated after the submission deadline, December 1.

## [REPORT ON THE 2025 ANNUAL EXAMINATIONS](#)

There have been 415 students participate on the 2025 edition of the **KITS Music Theory Examinations**, commensurate with the 443 enrolled in 2024. Thirty-five teachers gave the exams, which were available until December 1. The next edition will be published February 1, 2026.

The exams have been published and distributed each year for 40 years. Since 2018 we have drawn upon our large archive of exams to reissue editions going back fifteen years. The fundamentals of music theory never change, of course, and we do our best to continue challenging both students and teachers on the tests.

## [REVISED KITS WEBSITE](#)

The old address for KITS music theory materials is still online at [www.keynotetheory.com](http://www.keynotetheory.com). Please do not confuse it with the new site, which is dedicated to the management of annual services: the exams and the National Honor Roll. This new site address is [www.musicestkits-awards.com](https://www.musicestkits-awards.com), which is handled by our very capable new Director, Sonja Mihelcic, and her staff of the Naperville Music Academy, Aurora IL.

The old site was revised last March to focus on the *KITS Music Theory Course*, its origins and contents, and especially the student workbooks that continue to serve independent teachers in the field with needed teaching materials. This course was written by KITS founder, Christine Murow, who taught piano for close to 40 years before retiring. Fellow piano teachers find in the *KITS Music Theory Course* not only her broad knowledge of the subject but also reflected, the depth of her experience with piano students of all ages.

Whether you are a current participant or a young teacher newly discovering KITS, please visit the revised site, and share the link with others!

### [KITS WORKBOOKS ON AMAZON](#)

Over the past calendar year 582 student workbooks of **The KITS Music Theory Course** were sold on Amazon, the total for all seven levels of the course, four supplemental workbooks, and the *KITS Music Theory Curriculum: Step by Step*. The student workbooks have covers suggesting the colors we have used in the past, and continue to use on the exams, to code by level. These straightforward lessons used for decades in teaching music theory fundamentals are also the best way to prepare your students for the annual exams.

All the workbooks and *The KITS Curriculum* were published on Amazon by former Director, Christine Murow, who nevertheless still has a stock of books on hand. These are the same books, in the former covers and bindings, and teachers may order them at the old email address, [musictheory@verizon.net](mailto:musictheory@verizon.net), while supplies last. In case the full order cannot be filled, do not send payment. An invoice will accompany the books, payable as before by check made out to KITS. The Teachers Manual, which has answer keys for the upper level workbooks and convenient copies of the teachers guides and vocabulary lists, has not been published. But copies are still available from Mrs. Murow.

### [FROM THE DIRECTOR:](#)

Dear KITS Friends,

It has been a privilege serving you again last year and I hope we continue our music theory journey for many years to come. I very much appreciate your patience with my occasional delays. I am sure your students feel accomplished and enjoy learning the fundamentals of what we do. Maybe they are having some fun, too?

I am working on getting the 2026 tests printed by Feb 1, and hope for another busy year of music theory fun! Thank you to Christine Murow who made this all possible and without whose generous help and support I wouldn't be able to navigate this.

*Sonja*

## FROM CHRISTINE MUROW:

I am much encouraged and delighted to note the continued success of the annual **KITS Music Theory Examinations** and the **National Music Theory Honor Roll** under the able Directorship of Dr. Sonja Mihelcic. Her experience and leadership have brought greater digital accessibility to the program through an interactive KITS website offering greater convenience for busy teachers. At the new web address, [musicestkits-awards.com](https://musicestkits-awards.com), participants find the Test Kit order forms and forms for Honor Roll registration, and can view the latest update of the **National Music Theory Honor Roll** itself. This newsletter is posted there also.

Participation in the exams in 2025, the second year of Sonja's leadership, again keeps pace with previous years. Seeing the familiar names of loyal subscribers who continue to participate is most gratifying. Quite naturally, the many students listed on the Honor Roll and those receiving the special awards have studied with certain of those loyal subscribers, experienced teachers, who demonstrate the value of the program and set an example for a younger generation.

I include here a message and photo sent by one of the most loyal of KITS participants, John Van Lierop, Jr., who has been with the program since its inception, garnering a worthy history of honor students and special awards, including this year, the trophy to Andrew Nguyen! Sincere congratulations to Andrew - and to John our heartfelt gratitude!



Pictured on the left is John Van Lierop, JR. of Seattle, WA, in a photo taken when he was honored by his Methodist church "for his 40 years of dedicated service" as the church organist. Along with the photo, he also wrote: "This email message is to let you know that all your hard work in devising and putting together the KITS Theory Program is being maintained quite well by Sonja.

A grateful KITS subscriber since 1988."

With dedicated and enthusiastic teachers like our KITS participants our music heritage will be carried on. In service of this goal, please share the news - and the links - with other music teachers in your community!

*Christine*

## TEST KIT ORDER FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Independent teacher (instrument: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_ Association representative or other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

**TEST KIT:** Indicate number of students at each step.

\_\_\_\_\_ Primary

\_\_\_\_\_ Step 3

\_\_\_\_\_ Step 1

\_\_\_\_\_ Step 4

\_\_\_\_\_ Step 2

\_\_\_\_\_ Step 5

\_\_\_\_\_ Step 6

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$5.80 each..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to NMA. Mail to: Naperville Music Academy, 4260 Westbrook Dr, Suite 102-103, Aurora, IL 60504. For Venmo and PayPal payments contact Sonja Mihelcic at [KITS.HR.EXAMS@gmail.com](mailto:KITS.HR.EXAMS@gmail.com). (Note: there is a 5% surcharge for Venmo and PayPal payments.)**