

Keynote Independent Theory Service

KITS Newsletter

October 2024

Dr. Sonja Mihelcic, Director

Christine A. Murow, Founder

A LEADERSHIP CHANGE AT KITS

In the spring of this year, KITS founder Christine A. Murow retired from the position of Director when Dr. Sonja Mihelcic of Aurora, Illinois, volunteered to take on the role, administering both the annual exams and the **National Music Theory Honor Roll**. After almost forty years as KITS Director, Mrs. Murow was gratified to receive the offer from Dr. Mihelcic, and an amicable agreement was reached. Sonja is not only an experienced educator but also Founder and CEO of the Naperville Music Academy in Aurora. A Serbian by birth, she began her career as an opera singer, and has now been teaching voice and piano for thirty years. Her biography appears on the website of the Academy.

The new Director's experience and leadership have brought greater digital accessibility to the program; for example, payment apps such as PayPal may now be used. An interactive KITS website was launched, meaning greater convenience for busy teachers, especially the younger generation. The new web address is musictestkits-awards.com. There participants will find the Test Kit order forms and forms for Honor Roll registration. These may be submitted by email or post. The **National Music Theory Honor Roll** itself will appear on the new website, updated once a year in September with the names of honorees from the current year's exams. Teachers having honor students listed may receive a copy either by email or post.

The annual **KITS Music Theory Examinations** will continue to come from a 15-year archive of editions reissued sequentially, and they will be available from March 1 through September 1 as before. KITS subscribers may contact Director Mihelcic by email at kits.hr.exams@gmail.com, phone 630 730 0148, or write Naperville Music Academy, 4260 Westbrook Dr. Suite 102-103, Aurora IL 60504.

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 just 200 students since it was inaugurated in 1996. Both of the KITS awards bear the individual student's name, and represent a unique program of music theory testing with a 39-year history. There is now a nominal fee for them.

A total of sixteen students earned medals for the 2024 exam. They are: **Will Sommers**, student of **Terry Klinefelter**, PA; **Kira Haebler** and **Colin Lu**, students of **Silvia Atmadja**, PA; **Nam Bui**, student of **John VanLierop**, WA; **Sebastine Rodriguez-Tapia** and **Paarta Guduri**, students of **Joyce Byers**, MD; **Audrey Wolfe**, student of **Lindsay Wolfe**, CO; **Grace Canny** and **Ayden Reilly**, students of **Ann Alletto**, CO; **Levi**

Legnon, student of **Sue Steck-Turner**, LA; four students of **Carleen Graff**, NH, **Rose Amtmann**, **Shelby McDonald**, **Kangsan Aaron Lee**, and **Reagan Graff**; **Genevieve Lynch**, student of **Erica LeRoy**, NH; and **Rachel Evans**, student of **Miriam Shingle**, PA. Earning the 7-step trophy is **John Hoang**, student of **John VanLierop**, WA, bringing the total of these awards given in our history to 201. Many of the teachers of these fine scholars have been KITS subscribers for many years, serving to show how the program helps students commit to longterm goals. Congratulations to them and to their wonderful teachers on their consistent achievements over the years.

In past years, there have been a spring and a fall honor roll listing those who make a score of 90 or better on the test. Last year the total number of honorees, spring and fall together, was 266. For 2024, the **National Music Theory Honor Roll** lists 221 honorees, an excellent result for the first season under new leadership. This list will now appear on the KITS website: musictestkits-awards.com. Teachers having honorees listed may also request to receive a copy by email or post.

Teachers may register qualifying students whenever testing is done. The honor roll, however, will in future be updated once a year in September to reflect results from the annual edition.

REPORT ON THE 2024 ANNUAL EXAMINATIONS

There have been 443 students participate on the 2024 edition of the **KITS Music Theory Examinations**, a commendable turnout, commensurate with the 471 participants in 2023. Exams were available as always until September 1.

The exams have been published and distributed each year for 39 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.

KITS WORKBOOKS ON AMAZON

All eleven student workbooks of **The KITS Music Theory Course** are available online, with 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. Over the past year and eight months there were 950 workbooks sold on Amazon, the total for all seven levels of the course.

The workbooks and *The KITS Curriculum: Step by Step* 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, 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 OUR NEW DIRECTOR:

Dear KITS Community,

It was a great, and not particularly challenging, pleasure serving our community this year. First and foremost, thank you to Christine Murow for writing these amazing exams and for offering me great support in the past year. Thank you to the teachers for your understanding about occasional delays and thank you for responding quickly to my communication. Please feel free to contact me any time if I can offer additional information. We even figured out PayPal and Venmo payments!

I would like to offer 2 quotes by our colleagues. The positive feedback we receive is very meaningful to me – it lets me know that this program is valuable to our teachers and their students. **John Van Lierop, Jr.** of Seattle, WA, told us that his students really enjoy this approach to music theory and our rewards system. **Linda Densmore** in Colorado Springs, CO, thanked us for continuing this wonderful program.

I very much look forward to continuing to serve this wonderful program and our community in years to come.

Sonja

FROM CHRISTINE MUROW:

In 1985, at the age of forty, I inaugurated the KITS program, a national music theory testing service for independent music teachers. Starting small, it grew quickly, and the next year I introduced an honor roll for students making high scores. The program thrived for many years into the new century, reaching thousands of music students nationwide. It was crippled however in 2020 by the pandemic crisis. Then age 75, I began to think of the future of KITS and to nurture the hope of finding a capable successor.

Last year, the summer of 2023, that hope was fulfilled when I received a letter from Sonja Mihelcic, founder and CEO of the Naperville Music Academy near Chicago. Having entered students from the Academy in the KITS exams in recent years, she offered herself as the very person I sought. We spoke and quickly reached an agreement. There was much to be done, and I have been amazed at how smoothly the transfer of leadership has been. With energy and resourcefulness, Dr. Mihelcic was able to take over management of the exams and honor roll by spring; and with the new interactive KITS website, she is set to continue as Director of KITS.

We have both been appreciative of those KITS subscribers who continue to participate, and as they grow familiar with changes, hope to retain that loyalty. At the same time we look to extend participation, especially among younger teachers now that KITS is more digitally accessible. Perhaps some of you receiving this via our mailing list are active in your communities, schools or music organizations, and might help us spread the word about this valuable service that has contributed much for decades to the promotion of music theory education.

Christine

KEYNOTE INDEPENDENT THEORY SERVICE

Date ordered: _____

TEST KIT ORDER FORM

Date needed: _____

The annual KITS Music Theory examinations and the Honor Roll are administered under the auspices of the Naperville Music Academy, Dr. Sonja Mihelcic, Founder and CEO. Exams are issued every March and are available until the first of September. The TEST KIT includes a test paper, keyboard scoring form, and Certificate of Merit for each student, an Answer Key and Teachers Guide for each Step, and a Registration Form for the NATIONAL MUSIC THEORY HONOR ROLL. Orders placed before March 1 are mailed first class on or before March 10. By ordering your TEST KIT, you become a KITS subscriber, and will receive our fall Newsletter. Provide your email address to receive the Honor Roll, newsletters, and forms in digital format. You may also send a PDF of this order form by email to: **KITS.HR.EXAMS@gmail.com**.

(The KITS curriculum and student workbooks may now be purchased online from Amazon and other book sellers.)

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 _____ @ \$5.50 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. (Note: there is a 5% surcharge for Venmo and PayPal payments.)