



THE ORAC OUTLOOK

OAK RIDGE ARTS COLLECTIVE'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

BISTRO BOPS

ORAC's adult students performed at Bistro 150, a restaurant and live music venue in Oak Ridge. Students performed selections from a wide range of genres, from classical to contemporary.

It is hard to believe that most performers in the showcase have only been playing their instruments for a few months! One student, Danny Amos, told the audience, "If you had told me one year ago that I would be standing here singing for an audience, I wouldn't have believed you! Taking lessons with ORAC has been such a wonderful experience."

Thank you to Jennifer Mun and the staff at Bistro 150 for providing ORAC with a fun space to share our students' many talents.



DRUM, STRUM, PLAY!

Our young learners (K-5th) had a great time exploring new instruments in our first night of "Drum, Strum, & Play: Music for Community." See **Page 4** for more details on all of the cool instruments that students will make music with during this 12-week program. There is still time to sign up! Click here to sign up: [Drum, Strum, Play.](#)



CHOOSIN' TEXAS

With both sadness and gratitude, ORAC wishes our low brass teaching artist, Dr. Nicholas Lewis, the best of luck as he embarks on a new professional endeavor in Texas. The ORAC Outlook took some time to speak with Nick about his new opportunity as he reflects on his time teaching lessons at ORAC.

Outlook: Tell us about your new and exciting role!

Nick: I accepted a position as the Assistant Director of Admissions & Camp Coordinator for the University of North Texas College of Music. I will be coordinating audition days, processing applications, supervising the Student Ambassadors program, and serving as the liaison between UNT and College of Music offices as it relates to summer camps and workshops. I'll represent the College at conferences across the country such as the Midwest Clinic, Texas Music Educators Association, and others.



Outlook: What will you miss the most about NC?

Nick: Saying goodbye to the community is one of the toughest things I've ever had to do. I have incredible colleagues and peers at UNCG, at ORAC, and in every group I've performed with over the last several years. Those lifelong friendships are what I will miss most, but I'm eternally grateful for every moment I've spent getting to know these incredible people. That and the hiking...I will definitely miss the hiking!

Outlook: What has been your favorite part about teaching with ORAC?

Nick: There are few greater experiences as a teacher than seeing the growth in your students before they even realize it themselves, musically, spiritually, emotionally, all of the above! The ORAC community is particularly supportive and I've cherished every moment.



Outlook: What do you hope ORAC will accomplish as it continues to grow?

Nick: I know ORAC will continue to grow and provide quality arts education to the residents of this area. The vision and mission of the organization is pointed exactly in the right direction. I am confident that Mary's leadership and the Board's support will continue the momentum and that the organization will thrive.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: SEBASTIAN LANDRESS

This month, we are shining the spotlight on Sebastian Landress, one of Ken Brown's dedicated guitar students! Sebastian is a sophomore at Northwest Guilford High School, and he has been no stranger to the ORAC stage!

Outlook: How long have you been learning guitar from Ken Brown, and what inspired you to learn how to play?

Sebastian: I have been taking guitar lessons with Ken for about 2 years now! When I was younger, I listened to a song a friend sent me, and I was so fascinated at how someone could play a guitar as perfectly as the guitarist in that song. It inspired me to start to learn how to play!

Outlook: What skills or techniques are you currently working on in your lessons?

Sebastian: We're mostly working on refining my overall technique and fixing small details, like my speed and timing!

Outlook: You have performed at just about every ORAC event, including Guitars on the Lawn, Porchfest, and Ridgefest. Do you get nervous before a big gig?

Sebastian: I'm always extremely nervous before a big performance! I get up there on stage and it feels like my heart is about to beat out of my chest, but it's that nervousness and adrenaline that helps me focus! It's okay to be worried about a big performance like that; it's being worried about not playing well that makes you play well in the end!

Outlook: Lastly, who are the 3 greatest guitarists of all time?

Sebastian: It's gotta be Mike Ness [Social Distortion], Herman Li [DragonForce], and Eddie Van Halen [Van Halen].



WHAT'S A DJEMBE?

ORAC was fortunate to receive a generous grant from Salem Presbytery, allowing us to purchase a set of instruments for our “Drum, Strum, & Play” program. The new instruments include xylophones, ukeleles, and djembes.

If you are asking, “**What’s a djembe?**”, worry not! A djembe (“JEM-bay”) is a West African drum invented around 1200 AD. It has a wooden body and a drumhead made from goatskin. It uses a rope tension system to tune the drum to the correct pitch.

Fun fact: the Mandinka people say that a skilled drummer is one who can “make the djembe talk”, meaning the drummer can tell an emotional story using just their bare hands and the drum. ORAC’s new djembes were crafted and shipped all the way from Ghana. How cool it will be for our students to play an instrument made all the way on the other side of the world!



A vibrant poster for an outdoor music event. The background is a lush lawn with fallen autumn leaves in shades of orange, red, and yellow. In the center, a light blue classic Ford Mustang is parked. To the left, a young girl with long dark hair is playing a violin. To the right, a person in a Mario costume is playing an acoustic guitar. A large orange electric guitar is leaning against the car. The title "October Music On the Lawn" is written in large, white, bold letters at the top. Below the car, a red banner contains the text "Enjoy a festive day student showcases, autumn charm, and fun! Halloween costumes invited!". At the bottom, there are three orange boxes with white text: "October 17, 2026 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM", "SPECIAL FEATURE: CLASSIC CAR SHOW", and "Oak Ridge Arts Collective 2614 Oak Ridge Rd, Oak Ridge". A small logo for Oak Ridge Arts Collective is in the bottom left corner.