

BUFFALO STRING WORKS

ANNUAL

REPORT



NEIGHBORHOODS UNITED BY EMPOWERED YOUNG MUSICIANS





“Tuang Pi is I think the most self-sufficient 9 year old I’ve ever met... the kid’s got the entire world in the palm of his hand.”

– Kailey, BSW Teaching Artist

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Dear Buffalo String Works family,

2021-22 was a pivotal season in our 8-year BSW history.

We adopted our most ambitious and intentional strategic plan to date – a plan which takes us through 2024 and provides a blueprint of our priorities moving forward. Our planning process, led by Andrea Stevenson from Stevenson Wallace, allowed our Board and 37 stakeholders across New York State to reflect on our work and to dream big about what the future holds for us. What was most monumental about the process, however, was the opportunity to truly unite around our mission and vision.

When Buffalo String Works first opened our doors in 2014, our immediate purpose was to fill an opportunity gap by offering the West Side community – primarily refugee and immigrant families – free, after-school music lessons. As we began to dig into the work, we connected with other music programs nationally and internationally through Carnegie Hall. We learned about El Sistema, the social action music program founded in Venezuela in 1975 by Maestro José Antonio Abreu. Year after year, Buffalo String Works continued to develop our own approach to music education. We increased the number of program hours to 6 hours per week for every student. Our Teaching Artists wrote our own music curriculum based on state and national standards, including elements from Suzuki pedagogy to improvisation. We started our own string orchestras and refocused our repertoire on music that lifts up the voices of our students and families. And finally, with the help of our students, we launched a Student Leadership Program to empower our teens to develop their own agency at BSW and beyond.

And so, when our Board and staff dove into our mission and vision in fall 2021 as part of our strategic planning process, we found ourselves acknowledging our newfound maturity as an organization. We are so proud to share with you, our most fervent BSW cheerleaders, the Buffalo String Works mission and vision.

MISSION

To ignite personal and community leadership through accessible, youth-centered music education.

VISION

Neighborhoods United by Empowered Young Musicians

Thank you for being such an integral part of the Buffalo String Works journey, for seeing us off in September 2014, and for cheering us on, class after class, concert after concert. We hope you look through these next pages with pride, knowing that you continue to play an important part in developing our young musicians and leaders.

With gratitude,



James Sampson, Board President



Yuki Numata Resnick, Executive Director



Student Spotlight

“[Playing music is] very fun and it can make you very happy, and it’s exciting. When [I] play, it feels like the nicest thing.

When I play music, I actually learn more in school and I focus more in school. It helps me calm down and makes me relaxed.”

- Hseh Nay Soe, BSW student

HSEH NAY

SOE



Hseh Nay Soe is a second-year BSW cellist.



To watch Hseh Nay’s interview with BSW Teaching Artist Lisa Gagnon, click on the thumbnail above or visit <https://bit.ly/hsehnay-22>.

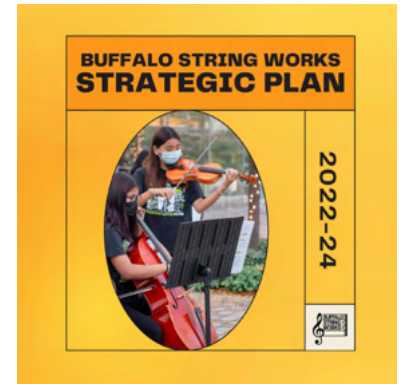
Strategic Plan Pillars

This year, Buffalo String Works unveiled our **2022-2024 Strategic Plan**.

This plan outlines our new mission and vision, guiding principles, and goals that will guide BSW towards developing programming focused on leadership development through accessible music education. As we implement this strategic plan, BSW commits to fulfilling every goal and strategy in ways that are:

- Equitable and inclusive
- Nimble and responsive to our students' evolving needs
- Replicable and sustainable for the long-term

For more information on our 2022-2024 Strategic Plan, click on the thumbnail to the right or visit <https://bit.ly/bsw-strategicplan>.



1.

Adapt and expand
our core neighborhood-
based program into
NEW communities.



2.

Develop program
partnerships
that provide musical access
points for a
wider range
of ages, abilities,
and backgrounds.



3.

Invest in the development
of our staff, faculty, and
board leadership in
alignment with our core
values and culture.



4.

Strengthen and diversify
our financial model
to support long-term
growth.





“It feels really good to be a role model because the younger kids look up to people who like playing in orchestras, and hopefully that persuades them to carry on learning their instruments.”

- Ethan, BSW Cellist & Student Council member

Reflections on Resilience

Andrew Borkowski, Education Director

In partnership with Carnegie Hall, BSW launched "Reflections on Resilience," a project which explored improvisation, composition, and what it means to be resilient as a student and teacher. Through the help of two facilitators, Damon Banks and Gwen Laster, we held a 4-day residency in which they worked with BSW Teaching Artists and students on developing improvisation techniques and composition tools. To complement the musical skills development, we interviewed students about their evolving experiences at BSW and their ideas on resilience.

As we look towards the future, the next phase of this project is to establish pathways for students to directly influence their musical repertoire and continue increasing their impact on program development.

What Does RESILIENCE mean to me?

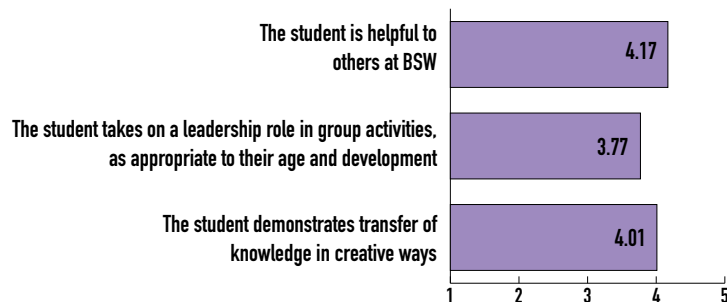
- To never stop & to keep going
- Staying strong through tough times
- To persevere through the odds
- TOUGH ♥
- To keep going

To watch our "Reflections on Resilience" video, click on the thumbnail above or visit <https://bit.ly/bsw-reflections>.

More Than Just Music

Buffalo String Works engages students in comprehensive music education that develops not only their musical skills, but also skills that are essential to their personal development. With the support of Community Connections of New York (CCNY), the essential skills of Leadership, Communication, and Resilience were formally measured by Teaching Artists for the first time in Spring 2022. Below is an excerpt of CCNY's report and recommendations.

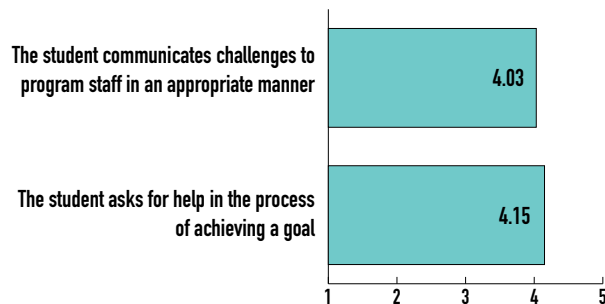
LEADERSHIP



"Ba Cho was a great Practice Partner. She worked hard to find solutions for her scheduling conflicts, showing a strong commitment to BSW."

- Amy Kelly, BSW Teaching Artist

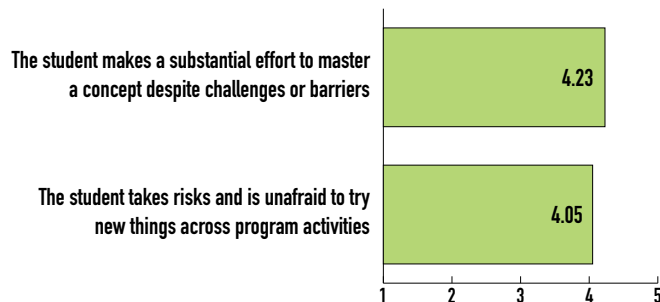
COMMUNICATION



"Josiah has done very well with concentration and focus for being a 2nd grader in a class with 5th and 6th graders."

- Lisa Gagnon, BSW Teaching Artist

RESILIENCE



"To me, Cherry shows what BSW is about. She is always so excited and unafraid to learn and try new things."

- Julia Port, BSW Teaching Artist

Next Steps: Using this data, BSW's Education Director, Andrew Borkowski, has adjusted our curriculum to emphasize 4 priority areas during our 2022-23 season: Problem Solving, Collaboration, Curiosity, and Leadership.

Summer Camp

Sarah Cole, Program Manager and Teaching Artist

Summer Camp at Buffalo String Works this past summer was a blast!

25 brand-new BSW students learned bucket drumming songs and Dalcroze rhythms. They made their own model instruments with Vicente Rondon. Then they graduated to holding and handling actual stringed instruments, and by the end of summer camp, they performed their first piece, "The Ant Song!"

45 returning students participated in daily orchestra rehearsals, chamber music coachings, and music theory and composition classes. Special guests included Nusantara Arts, Buffalo Chamber Players, Locust Street Art, Reginald Johnson and Ahshon Haykal, Ji Hyn Woo, and Vicente Rondon.

And of course, the best part of camp was a field trip to ArtPark and lots of Popsicle eating!



"That's passion in practice, and it's clear that that's what Buffalo String Works is all about."

– Vicente Rondon, BSW Guest Artist



BSW Families on the BSW Team

Our 2022 Summer Camp presented an incredible opportunity for us to **embed BSW families even deeper into our community** by providing employment for Eh Tah Mu, parent of Snow, Peace, and Rolland, and William Sen, BSW cellist.

Eh Tah's family joined BSW in 2016 and she has been instrumental in recruiting for our program, interpreting for Karen families, and being our constant cheerleader. We were so honored to finally bring Eh Tah on staff in summer 2022 to provide direct support in our classrooms as a teacher's aide. With the training she received from our long-term partners at the West Buffalo Charter School, Eh Tah made sure each student received the attention they needed to flourish during camp. Eh Tah returned to school in the fall to pursue her degree in Health Services Administration and we're hopeful that she'll come back as a permanent staff member in the future!

"I like to have fun with children because I love to learn new things in life."

- Eh Tah Mu, BSW Parent and Staff Member



A few words from William about his experience as a Site Staff member:

"I definitely think more about time and managing it. I have to know when it's my time to act as site staff and when it's my time to be a student. I learned to be more communicative, how to make suggestions, and how to pass along a concern to other staff."

At first, it definitely felt different interacting with staff in my new role but the other staff made me feel comfortable in the space. They treated me just as if I wasn't even a student. And it was great to see what goes on in the background!

As I continue to work at BSW, I'll continue assisting in classrooms. I hope to be more involved in planning events and I definitely want to keep playing, even after graduation. I had a great experience working at summer camp and plan to keep up this energy throughout the school year!"

Staff Spotlight

Josh Carter joined the BSW team in 2020-21 as an AmeriCorps VISTA and quickly became such an integral member of our family that he stayed on past his VISTA term to be our very first Communications Manager. Josh's intuitive eye for design and his ability to tell the BSW story in playful and thought-provoking ways are complemented by the leadership development and formal graphic design training he is receiving as a 2021 Cullen Foundation Fellow.

Josh

“What makes BSW so special is the care everyone puts in—from the staff and Teaching Artists to the volunteers and donors, and of course the parents and families.

We bond with our families on a deeper level so everyone knows they always have a second home at BSW.”

– Josh Carter, Communications Manager





Photo by Josh Carter

BSW's New West Side Home

Aye Min Thant, West Side Site Manager

In September 2021, Buffalo String Works moved into our first leased home on Niagara Street. 12 miles long, Niagara Street begins at Buffalo City Hall and ends at River Road in Tonawanda, providing a home to diverse communities all throughout our city. BSW's vision is to Unite Neighborhoods by Empowered Musicians, and so, it only seems right to build our program on this main corridor.



Photo by Josh Carter

Our site is a place where students from all over the world can grow as leaders and musicians. Our 6,500 square foot space is divided into 11 classrooms and one large room for orchestra. And of course, we have an instrument storage room!



Photo by Andrea Wengrowski



Photo by Andrea Wengrowski

As BSW's West Side Site Manager, I run and delegate day-to-day operations on our site. I communicate with students, parents, staff, and teachers, and ensure safety for all. I love to work with youth, especially first-generation students. We speak different languages, we all come from different cultures, and we all have different lifestyles. But one thing we have in common is our love for music; it is a universal language, and **together it makes us one.**

Pop-Up Lessons

Sarah Cole, Program Manager and Teaching Artist

Buffalo String Works introduced Pop-Up Lessons in September 2021 as a fun and accessible way for curious people of all ages to try their hand at playing a stringed instrument. Throughout 2021-22, we were present at events from the After School Network of WNY's Summer Day of Learning at Buffalo's Outer Harbor to Say Yes Saturday Academies at PS 43, 76, and 208. We've reached hundreds of people across our city from 3-year-olds to 83-year-olds! Our BSW Student Leaders assist at these events which offers them the joy of sharing music with others, even in a thirty second cello lesson. Plus, it certainly doesn't hurt that Pop-Up Lessons have become a form of earned revenue for Buffalo String Works.

It's a win all-around!

Look for a Pop-Up Lesson at an event near you!

B.S. Double You!



Photo by Andrea Wengjowsky



Photo by Andrea Wengjowsky

In June 2022, BSW held our first in-person Benefit since 2020 and to truly mark our return, it was dubbed B.S. Double You: A 2-in-1 Benefit + Spring Concert for Buffalo String Works. In keeping with our superhero theme, we showcased our own BSW superheroes – our 93 students! – through an hour of music culminating in a performance of “They Would Only Walk,” a piece written FOR our families by composer, Mary Kouyoumdjian. Student Leaders spoke from the stage, sharing about their own BSW journeys and taking a public stand against the racially-motivated attack on May 14, 2022 at Tops Supermarket on Buffalo’s East Side. The evening was a moment for both reflection and celebration and we were grateful to our 220 audience members who came together in support of our BSW students.



Photo by Andrea Wengjowsky



Photo by Andrea Wengjowsky



Photo by Andrea Wengjowsky



Photo by Andrea Wengjowsky



Photo by Andrea Wengjowsky

Parent Spotlight

MARIANA



“Every time I go to a show...he will look at me while he’s playing. We have this signal where we do this [tips hat]. He knows I’m proud of him.

I try to show up for him.”

– Mariana Gonzales, BSW Parent

Mariana is the parent of Jariel, a sixth-year BSW violinist.



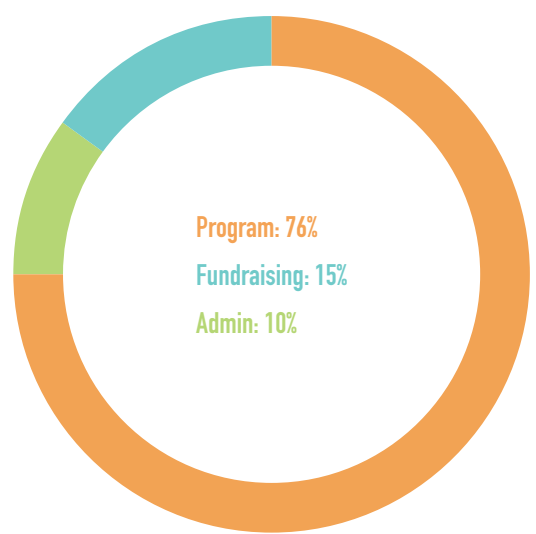
To watch Mariana’s interview with BSW Executive Director Yuki Numata Resnick, click on the thumbnail above or visit <https://bit.ly/mariana-22>.

2021-22 Financials

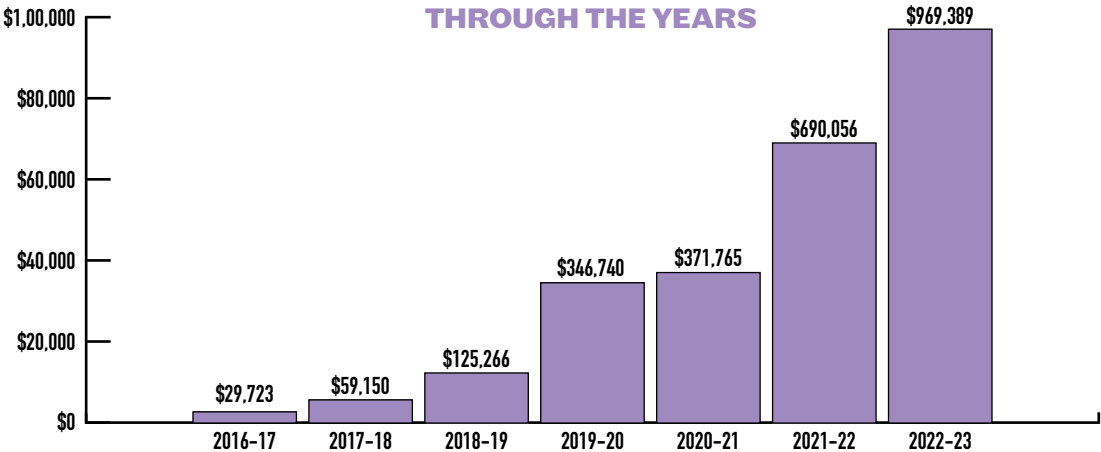
WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM:



WHERE OUR MONEY GOES:



BSW BUDGET THROUGH THE YEARS



Due in large part to the generous contributions of our Foundation & Government granters,
Buffalo String Works continues to thrive.

**CARNEGIE
HALL**



M&T Bank



Baird Foundation
Cameron and Jane Baird Foundation
Children's Foundation of Erie County
Office of Councilmember David Rivera
Office of NY State Senator Sean Ryan



“The mission promoted by Buffalo String Works is an important one. Bringing the gift of music to kids who otherwise may not have access enriches the life of the student and uplifts the community.”

– Sean Ryan, New York State Senator



NEIGHBORHOODS UNITED BY
EMPOWERED YOUTH MUSICIAN

OUR MISSION: *To ignite personal and community leadership through accessible, youth-centered music education.*

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