

## There's Music in the Air...

The music program has long been an integral part of an Erskine education, a significant fact when many schools are apportioning their music curriculums on a part-time basis. Students are arriving in high school less trained, and Music Director Johnson must start some students "from scratch." In recent years, he has worked especially hard and creatively to ensure the music curriculum at Erskine continues to grow. A tangible improvement was the purchase of new choral risers, made possible through a grant from the Oak Grove School Foundation. Student fundraisers help defray the cost of traveling to regional competitions and instrument upkeep.

Efforts to ensure Erskine's music program continues to grow and improve include increased outreach in surrounding communities. Music students are participating in a variety of workshops and performances at area elementary, middle schools, and local venues. In November, music students brought an instrument tour to the Vassalboro Community School, a vocal tour to the China Middle School, and had a casual jazz gig at the Green Bean Coffee Shop in South China.

On November 21, three music students auditioned for the All-State Music Festival, an audition process that is one of the most competitive and challenging musical events that high school students experience. With that in mind, Mr. Johnson congratulates Erica Basham, Richard Preston, and Rebecca Reed for their acceptance; their hard work is admirable and appreciated.

In December, students in the choral, percussion, jazz, and orchestral groups performed at the annual Winter Concert for the public, and nearly 30 students in the Jazz Combo, Vocal Ensemble, and Percussion Explosion went on tour at the China Middle School.

It is exciting for younger students to experience and be inspired by music through these tours. The hope is that



The Erskine Orchestra in its early years.

they will be equally inspired to participate in Erskine's music curriculum in high school.

Erskine students also hone their musicianship through competition. In October, 12 music students from Erskine participated in the District III Honors Festival auditions at Medomak Valley High School, a competition open to instrumental and vocal students from the Eastern, Central, and Mid Coast regions of Maine. Congratulations to the following students who will be performing in the Festival: Rebecca Reed - Mixed Choir; Ian Goode, Jennifer Kochaver, and Madison Michaud - Band; Erica Basham - Timpani; and Richard Preston - Percussion Mallets. The selected students join forces to rehearse and perform at the Festival at the end of January 2014. The Festival will take place at Cony High School on January 24- 25, ending with a concert for the public that Saturday afternoon.

The latest great news from the Erskine music department is that Richard Preston, Rebecca Reed, and Jennifer Kochaver have been accepted to the Maine Music Outreach: Project Haiti 2014. These students have gone through an involved application process and are to be congratulated! Mr. Johnson and the students will participate in six intensive training sessions to prepare for their July departure. Maine Music Outreach (MMO) was founded in 2012 to empower Maine high school musicians to make a difference in the lives

of others. Using music as a universal language, MMO prepares and sends selected students to developing countries to work alongside other musicians, share their love of music, understand cultures different from their own, and learn how through service and outreach they can make a difference.

Project Haiti is a ten-day summer trip to a music camp in Cange, Haiti. For the past two summers MMO has piloted its program with four Lincoln Academy musicians and two adult leaders participating in all aspects of this residential camp; eating, sleeping and participating as campers and teachers. Students raise funds to contribute to relief efforts at the Cange camp for such needs as supplies, scholarships, and instrument repair.

This year's Annual Fund appeal offers an option for donors to designate their gifts for the Erskine music program—we gratefully thank those generous donors who have done so already. Monies raised cover needs above and beyond the operating budget such as major repairs of older instruments and music technology materials for a new class that will focus on music recording and amplifying as well as digital media. Donations may be made securely online at Erskine Academy Support Us (\$10.00 minimum) by clicking on the "Donate Now" button or by mailing your check made out to Erskine Academy with the memo "Music Fund" in the donor envelope included in the appeal. The Annual Fund continues until June 30, 2014.

*"Music brings peace to a complicated world."* —Finn Welsh '09

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