

“Let’s Start a School!”

Trustee Jennifer Melkonian



Jennifer Melkonian can recall when Concord was a very different place. Some saw it as an arts and culture desert. "I remember walking down the street and seeing a t-shirt that said, 'Concord, NH: City in a Coma,'" she says.

Melkonian, a passionate theater and music lover who was then teaching music at a school in Henniker, wanted to have a hand in changing Concord into a culturally vibrant, artistically happening place. So she responded enthusiastically to a call from a friend of hers, Ford von Reyn, inviting her to be one of the first people to join the Music School's Board of Trustees in the 1980s.

The board was small, she says, but chock full of idealists. "We were too naive to think it wouldn't work. We always saw this vision of it growing bigger, growing into its own home." And so, along with the other trustees, she hosted fundraisers, painted rooms, and stripped wallpaper, all in the name of bringing arts and culture to the community.

Now Associate Head of the Derryfield School, and once again an active member of the Music School's Board, Melkonian doesn't strip wallpaper anymore. But she's still a "get-it-done" person, and is delighted that the Music School *has* grown over these 30 years, reaching beyond Concord with its Music in the Community Initiative.

"Who starts a school?" Melkonian often says incredulously. "Especially in our 30s!"

And she wants it to keep going strong. She isn't shy about inviting donations to the Music School, and sharing the fact that she and her husband are donors.

"I'm never embarrassed to ask people to join Greg and me in making a gift to the Music School," she says. "We're asking people to join in supporting something that we helped create. There are few people that have in their legacy that they founded a school together -- and that it's still going, 30 years later."